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Merchant, revolutionary, and statesman : a re-appraisal of the life and public services of John Hancock, 1737-1793.

Robert Z. Finkelstein
University of Massachusetts Amherst

MERCHANT, REVOLUTIONARY, AND STATESMAN:
A RE-APPRAISAL OF THE LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OF JOHN HANCOCK, 1737-1793

A Dissertation Presented

By

ROBERT Z. FINKELSTEIN

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Approved as to style and content by:

Winfred E. A. Bernhard
Chairperson of Committee

Hugh F. Bell, Member

Paul S. Boyer, Member

Patrick J. Sullivan, Member

Leonard L. Richards, Department Chairman
History

DEDICATION

To Harriet, Jeremy and Jared -

With love and appreciation for your

great patience and support.

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ABSTRACT

MERCHANT, REVOLUTIONARY, AND STATESMAN: A RE-APPRAISAL OF THE LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OF JOHN HANCOCK, 1737-1793

February, 1981

Robert Z. Finkelstein, B.A., University of Akron,

M.A., University of Massachusetts

Ph.D., University of Massachusetts

Directed by: Professor Winfred E.A. Bernhard

This study argues that John Hancock (1737-1793) has never received a proper historical evaluation and as a result his career remains largely misunderstood. Furthermore, in most studies of this period, Hancock is negatively portrayed as a vain, weakwilled, ambitious egotist, lacking ability, insight and purpose. This view is dangerously one sided and fails to give Hancock proper credit for his substantive contributions, especially for his important role in the pre-revolutionary war struggle with Parliament, his evolutionary role in the establishment of the American Presidency, his unheralded services on behalf of the Continental Congress, and his crucial part in securing Massachusetts' ratification of the Federal Constitution.

I have sought also to fill in some other important gaps in our understanding of Hancock's life; specifically the sources of his adroit political skills which enabled him to dominate Massachusetts politics for almost two decades; the history of his bitter and continuous rivalry with Samuel Adams; the basis of his political beliefs; and finally some insight into his ambition for popular applause rather than real power.

The first three chapters, therefore, explore Hancock's family back-

ground, his formal education, and his apprenticeship as a merchant in his uncle Thomas Hancock's counting room. Chapter four examines Hancock's short lived career as a merchant, tracing his attempt to corner the supply of whale oil shipped to England. The failure of this scheme soured him on trade and made possible his transformation from merchant to politician.

Chapters five and six examine his rapid emergence as a skilled politician; one whose unerring sense of the public's mind and mood propels him into the forefront of the resistance movement against Parliament's enactments. The "Liberty Affair" adds to his patriotic public image while also broadening the base of his support.

In Chapter seven Hancock's activities during the brief lull that existed prior to the tea crisis is examined with particular emphasis placed on his bitter struggle with Sam Adams for leadership of the popular party. His flirtation with the Tories is also examined and interpreted as an attempt on Hancock's part to become the mediator in Massachusetts' highly partisan political arena. In Chapter eight we see him forced to abandon this role as the political struggle gives way to open hostilities.

Chapter nine examines Hancock's long unheralded contributions and services on behalf of the Continental Congress. Although he has never received any credit for his part, the energy he invested in his office as President of Congress, began the slow evolutionary process of transforming that office into what eventually emerged as the Executive branch of government under the Federal Constitution. Meanwhile his feud with Sam Adams continued to fester and deepen.

Chapter ten explores Hancock's role in Massachusetts politics following his resignation as President of Congress. With great skill he used the controversy over a new state constitution to construct a political following which propelled him into the Governor's seat in a landslide election victory. His hold on the Governorship remained secure until his death.

Chapter eleven concludes this study with an examination of Hancock's final public service, his part in securing Massachusetts' ratification of the Federal Constitution. Ironically, soon after his death in 1793, many, if not most of his contributions to his state and country, were quickly forgotten and only his faults as well as his signature on the Declaration of Independence were remembered. Hancock suffered the unfortunate fate of having his enemies and political foes write the subsequent history of his life. They were both unfair and unkind to his memory.

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INTRODUCTION

Considering the widespread familiarity with his name, it is surprising how obscure and even misinterpreted John Hancock remains, even to historians of the American revolutionary era. Much of this misunderstanding stems from the absence of any modern examination of his life and career. In fact, Hancock has never received anywhere near the amount of study due such a colorful and interesting personality, not to mention one who was so deeply involved in the American revolutionary struggle. Even with the recent surge of interest in the American Revolution, spurred by the national bicentennial celebration, studies of John Hancock are noticeably absent. There is little justification for this continued gap in the literature of the American Revolution.

Fortunately, a re-appraisal of Hancock's career is made possible today by the availability of previously inaccessible source materials. The recent publications of the complete papers of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton are but isolated examples of the massive increase in source materials, permitting new research in familiar areas. In addition, the work of contemporary historians are providing students of the Revolution an entirely new perspective by which to gauge events and personalities. Increasingly, we are made aware of the significance of ideology, regional political factions, mobs, social pressures, deference, as well as the importance of rhetoric. It is in this light that Hancock's life should be examined. As a consequence of such an investigation, our knowledge and understanding of the American Revolution can only be enhanced.

Regarding Hancock's life, special study is needed on his career as a colonial merchant, his involvement in Massachusetts politics, his activities as a revolutionary patriot, his part in the Continental Congress, and of course his private life, particularly the development of his mercurial personality which decidedly affected all of his public activities. Where these topics are central to any real understanding of Hancock, in the past most historians generally seemed more interested in recalling his bold signature on the Delcaration of Independence and relating his visible disappointment at George Washington's appointment to command the Continental Army. But how Hancock came to attend the second Continental Congress and why he might have regretted Washington's appointment are left unexplored. Indeed, Hancock's entire public and private life have been dismissed as trivial for too long.

Much of this antipathy towards Hancock can be traced back to James Truslow Adams's malicious article, "Portrait of an Empty Barrel." So labeled, Hancock continued to suffer even greater defamation by a generation of historians unwilling to investigate Hancock's career. Reflecting their era's anti-heroic posture, they shunned anything that might remotely suggest a cult of personality, and Hancock continued to be depicted as a wealthy, vain, egotistical pawn of Sam Adams. Furthermore, he was negatively portrayed as an unthinking fop, whose sole goal in life was public praise and high office.

This one-sided image is patently shallow and grieviously incorrect. True, Hancock was vain and ambitious, but no more so than many of his more revered contemporaries, such as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington. Criticism of Hancock's vanity then, although valid,

is frequently viewed out of context. Hancock was also righlty accused of being ambitious, but then so were most of his fellow revolutionaries. His keen sense of disappointment and frustration were no greater or worse than that often experienced by Alexander Hamilton. But what has long been neglected in pursuit of these foibles, were Hancock's real contributions.

Even his most sympathetic biographer, Herbert S. Allen, failed to place him in the true context of his times. Allen's book, Patriot in Purple, portrayed Hancock as the Hamlet of the Revolution. This is absurd. Hancock was no more a Hamlet figure than he was the purely egotistical fool depicted by James Truslow Adams. If anything, he was a representative figure of the composite American personality as it existed in the mid to late eighteenth century. But this was beyond the scope of Allen's narrowly conceived portrait.

To his credit, Allen was more objective in his judgement than Adams or anyone else for that matter who has written at length about Hancock. Nevertheless, his study failed to provide either an explanation or interpretation of Hancock's checkered career. Instead, only apologies and rationalizations were offered. Rather than analyze Hancock's seemingly erratic behavior, Allen omits any mention of it. Consequently, Hancock remains as misunderstood today as he did before Allen's study.

The fundamental problem with both Adams and Allen's work is their inability to understand Hancock as a person. Where from the start Adams was prejuidiced against him, and Adams was at least sympathetic, they both fail to explore the development of Hancock's personality. It is here that they laid the groundwork for their later misunderstanding of Hancock's subsequent career. For it was in the evolution and development of Han-

cock's personality that much of his later actions became comprehensible. And the factors affecting Hancock's personality development were extraordinary to say the least. He was the eldest son of a less than brilliant Braintree, Massachusetts minister, but became heir to his wealthy uncle Thomas Hancock's vast mercantile fortune. Overnight, John Hancock became an early symbol of the American success story, gaining enormous riches in literally one afternoon. There are few ways to prepare a person for this kind of transformation. How he adjusted to this improbable situation offers greater insight to his later career than does any snide comment or embarrassed apology about his enormous vanity.

Hancock's subsequent career as a merchant was largely decided by events beyond his personal control. But as a merchant, perhaps the wealthiest one in Boston before the Revolution, his activities have received scant historical treatment. As heir to his uncle's mercantile empire, John enthusiastically began developing a scheme to corner the supply of whale oil sold in England. The plan ultimately failed convincing him to change his career from trade to politics. But the decision was motivated less by financial concerns than by emotional needs and personal ambition.

Hancock's inability to compete successfully with the better established and more experienced Nantucket whale oil merchants is a particularly interesting example of his mercantile difficulties. His troubles are also symptomatic of the general problems and increased intricacies of trade confronting an entire generation of American merchants as they sought to adapt to rapidly changing trade patterns. This process of change was greatly intensified by the Revolutionary War. Exploring some

of these difficulties should be an integral part of any study on Hancock's life. But the only really solid investigation of Hancock's commercial activities is in W.T. Baxter's House of Hancock. But unfortunately, Baxter's attention is primarily focused on Hancock's uncle. Once again, John Hancock is more casually dismissed as a minor figure. In all fairness, it must be noted that John's activities as a merchant were made more complicated by changes in the commercial world beyond his ability to control. Nevertheless, his difficulties as a merchant were a source of great embarrassment to him.

It was to spare himself from just this sort of humiliation that Hancock sought an escape from the preoccupation of business and trade. Politics and the public arena offered him an immediate refuge from his business failures. Here he found success as well as approval. To attest to his success, Hancock's entire public career saw him as the popular idol and hero of the Massachusetts citizenry. From 1764 to 1793, with great political skill he retained his claim as the most popular citizen in the state. How he managed to survive, and even prosper politically in the midst of the revolutionary turmoil is instructive, not only as a clue to his own peculiar talents, but is equally insightful as to the true nature of Massachusetts politics during the entire Revolutionary era.

Hancock, however, was not a deep political thinker, at least in any theoretical sense. Rarely do his words reveal any political or theoretical statement or insight that is particularly original. But, he was a first rate politician, if survival is any measurement of ability. His popularity with the laboring classes of Massachusetts, both before and after the War for Independence, never weakened. Even when the merchant

class turned against him for pardoning the Shaysites, Hancock retained his hold over the loyalties of the majority of Massachusetts' voters. His uncanny ability to land on the popular side of an issue suggests that greater respect is due him for his political insights and organizational abilities than has yet been given. Hancock's involvement in post-war Massachusetts politics should also indicate that he played a more significant role in the development of American political parties than formerly credited.

Hancock's relationship to Sam Adams is another area often misunderstood. He was never a blind, subservient follower, who responded to every tug of the strings manipulated by the master puppeteer as has often been suggested. On the contrary, Hancock was always his "own man;" keeping a foot in both the loyalist and patriot camps so long as it was politically feasible. This tactful balancing act enabled him, unlike most prewar Boston merchants, to survive the war relatively unscathed. As one of the few who did, Hancock's career provides a unique vantage point from which the decimation of the merchant community in Boston may be observed.

In addition to his commercial activities and involvement in local politics, Hancock's frustrated attempts to gain recognition on a larger political stage than that provided by Massachusetts also needs to be examined. As President of the Continental Congress, where his abilities as a moderator were never appreciated, Hancock's efforts were often ignored and even ridiculed by later generations of historians. Nevertheless, he was never accused of personally profiting from the war or his position, as many of his colleagues were rightly judged. And if Hancock had some minor troubles with the trustees of Harvard College over the account books

he failed to return, this was more a result of his vanity and incompetence than any attempt at private gain.

But ultimately, any examination of Hancock must by necessity go beyond just a study of his involvement in the economic and political affairs of revolutionary America. My own interest is primarily aroused by Hancock's quixotic temperament and fickle personality. Whether one liked him or not, he knew how to command the public's attention. For almost thirty years he stood near or in the lime light of American revolutionary politics. Anyone possessing such a magnetic attraction needs to be better understood and examining Hancock's personality development more closely is a primary theme of this study.

Hancock's life, in spite of his wealth, popularity, and political successes, was not a happy one. Although his boyhood poverty was permanently eradicated by his uncle's generosity, Hancock paid a price. Aside from the loss of old friends, and the loneliness he experienced in his new urban residence, Hancock's daily activities were always closely supervised by his overbearing and childless Aunt Lydia. Her dominating influence remained intact until her death, by which time she selected Dorothy Quincy as her successor and wife for John. This arranged and manipulated marriage was later tragically marred by the early deaths of all their children.

Although this study is not intended to be a psychobiography, Hancock's enigmatic personality demands a fuller explanation than any yet given by those who have studied him. Since much of his career is interpreted in terms of personality, be it his vanity, egotism, or ambition, the actual development of Hancock's character is pivotal if his life is

to be made historically meaningful. But to date, only one side of his multifaceted personality has received attention and generally without much concern for his environment. To correct this imbalance, one must trace Hancock's growth squarely within the context of eighteenth century colonial American life. In the process, it should become clear that Hancock was in fact a far more complex person than the one dimensional figure that is typically portrayed.

A modern reinterpretation of Hancock's life is in order if only to compensate for the lack of work done in this area. Beyond that, it is increasingly clear that Hancock's contributions and involvement in commerce and politics were significantly important to the revolutionary struggle. Placing him into the proper context of his time is not a simple task, but one very well worth the effort, and long overdue.

CHAPTER I

FIVE GENERATIONS

On January 12, 1737, John Hancock was born in his father's home, the Hancock Parsonage, in Braintree, Massachusetts. Located only ten miles south of Boston along the Old Plymouth Road, Braintree like Boston was a coastal community facing Massachusetts Bay to the east. Unlike Boston, it was not a commercial seaport town. The land not the sea dictated the local life style. Grudgingly, the rocky soil of Braintree was forced to yield sustenance for its fifteen hundred inhabitants.[1]

As a rural agricultural community, Braintree was remarkably similar to all the other country towns of Massachusetts. The peculiar history of its initial settlement gave the town a degree of unwanted uniqueness, but that was all.[2] Few of its townsmen were wealthy; fewer lacked the basic necessities of food and shelter. It was overwhelmingly a middle class society consisting of hard working, god fearing, and law abiding farmers. In spite of this preponderant middle class, the town was governed by an upper class which usually, but not always, meant the rich. This system was not imposed by law, nor maintained by coercion. It was voluntarily subscribed to out of a belief that mankind was divided into two classes, the rulers and the ruled. The ministers lent their authority to affirm this widely held belief. "If we look round the Earth," one argued, "we see it is not cast into a Level; it has Mountains and Plains, Hills and Vallies. Even so in the political World, there are the Distinctions of Superiours and Inferiours....".[3]

Along with the rich, the clergy and the well educated were expected to provide leadership. Even as the concentration of wealth into fewer hands accelerated in the eighteenth century and merchants replaced ministers as the principle source of authority in the community, the clergy retained vestiges of their once powerful position. They continued to be ranked among those who deserved special marks of recognition and were considered part of the elite.

As a son of Braintree's Congregational minister, John Hancock began life in a more enviable situation than most of his contemporaries. But, the Hancocks had not always ranked this favorably in the estimate of their neighbors. How John came to be born in Braintree as part of the local hierarchy is the story of his family's slow rise from obscurity to prominence. The accomplishments of four generations of John's American ancestors were a compelling force in shaping his own later ambitious assault on the highest levels of Massachusetts social and political power. And no less important, his family helped formulate his value system and shaped his complex personality. For better or worse, John Hancock was a product of his family's ambitions and the conditioning of the Braintree environment.

Nathaniel Hancock, John's great great grandfather, was the first of his family to settle in Massachusetts. He left England and arrived in the new world near the beginning of the great Puritan migration of the 1630's. Accompanied by his wife Joan, they are the most obscure of John's earliest American ancestors. Nothing certain is known of their motivation for leaving England, nor why they chose Newtown, later renamed Cambridge, for their new home. But Nathaniel Hancock was definitely

among the town's earliest inhabitants, receiving a modest homestead lot in town and an equally small two acre lot behind the Pyne Swamp, north of town.[4]

Because of his lowly social status and limited needs, he fared poorly in all subsequent divisions of town lands conducted by the proprietors. In August, 1635, he received a mere half acre in the recently divided Fresh Pond Meadow which was allotted "according to every mans several proportion."[5] In spite of his meager land holdings, Nathaniel was apparently satisfied. His needs could not have been great as his only dependents besides his wife were two infant daughters both born in Newtown.[6] Consequently, when a wave of land fever seized the town in 1635, eventually leading most of the original settlers off further west to the Connecticut region in search of more fertile and abundant land, Nathaniel Hancock chose to remain behind.[7]

Other considerations may also have influenced his decision not to emigrate to the Connecticut valley. The exodus from Newtown was primarily a church organized migration. The Reverend Thomas Hooker, minister of the First Church of Newtown, provided most of the leadership and direction. Although inconclusive, circumstantial evidence suggests that Nathaniel was not and never became a member of the Church. Therefore, he was not under any strong social pressure to join the congregation's collective departure.[8] He might even have secretly welcomed their removal, hoping he would benefit more substantially in future divisions of the town's remaining common lands. If this was his wish, he was soon disappointed.[9] Even with a large influx of new immigrants pouring into Newtown to replace the original settlers, Nathaniel's

economic and social position in the community did not change appreciably. Less than a year following the birth of his first son, Nathaniel sold off all his acreage behind the Pyne Swamp, probably to ease his financial burdens.[10]

The sale left him in a more precarious economic situation than before. A new birth recorded almost every two years for the next half dozen years added to his difficulties.[11] Exactly how he provided for his family of seven is an interesting question; the answer to which must have taxed all of his resourcefulness. Conceivably he had some artisan skills which helped supplement his income, or he might have worked for one of his wealthy neighbors. He may even have owned a parcel of land unrecorded in the proprietors' records.[12] His problems were partially relieved in late 1646 when the town granted him, "foure acr of upland & swamp more or less lying in the sest feilds," provided that "goodman Hancocke shall leave a High way where not It is for the convenient passage for wood to the swamp, throw the midle of his lott."[13]

Nothing so clearly articulates Nathaniel's obscurity and insignificant social status as the confusion arising over the precise date of his death. But, somewhere between 1648 and 1652 he died, leaving his family to fend for themselves.[14] His passing intensified the family's economic plight without altering their social condition which was transmitted intact to his heirs. Materially there was some improvement for them in August, 1652, when his widow received another ten acres, her share from the latest division of the common lands. But the size of her allotment only confirmed the Hancock's lowly status in the community. For it was agreed, "that every man shall have a proportion of the land more and

less, according to his proportion now allotted him."[15] A little over 10,000 acres were to be divided among one hundred and thirteen families. Yet, only three other households in town received as small a share as did Hancock's widow. After one full generation in Massachusetts, the Hancock's were as near the bottom of the social and economic ladder as they were when they first arrived.[16]

In spite of his marginal social and economic attainments, it would be reckless to regard Nathaniel Hancock as ambitionless or even a failure. Without more specific knowledge of his earlier life in England, it is impossible to gauge how successful he considered himself or how improved his life really was. The negligible amount of surviving documentary evidence only indicates his relative status within the town of Newtown, and not how much better off he was because of his fateful decision to settle there.

We also know that for all the Hancocks' presumed financial need, they were never dependent upon the community for assistance, aside from their legitimate share of the common lands. And by having only one surviving male heir, Nathaniel at least was able to hand down a consolidated inheritance enabling his son to have something upon which to build. As for his widow and daughters, the records leave no clue as to their eventual fate.[17]

If Nathaniel Hancock, senior's, principal accomplishment stemmed from his decision to immigrate to Massachusetts Bay, then his son, Nathaniel Hancock, junior, fully justified it. He succeeded where his father failed and advanced himself as one of Newtown's more substantial and respected citizens. His achievement enabled him to promote his

own children's interests far more effectively than his father was ever able to do for him. Several specific conditions accounted for his brighter prospects.

Of primary importance was Nathaniel's acquisition of a commercially useful skill. He became a shoemaker. How or why he chose this trade is only conjecture. But considering his small inheritance of approximately sixteen widely scattered acres and a small town house lot, any skill that relieved his dependence on farming was an advantage.[18] He also inherited his father's claim to future divisions of the town's common lands. Before his own death this would increase his estate by an additional fifty plus acres.[19] The first ten of these acres were allotted in February, 1665, less than a year after his marriage to Mary Prentice and a day before the birth of their first child.[20]

Although born in February, the child was not baptized until the end of May, and only then because Nathaniel's wife, Mary, was admitted by the church to received full communion.[21] It was almost two full years later, at age twenty nine, that Nathaniel Hancock was also admitted as a member and was properly baptized.[22] His entry and subsequent invovlement with the Cambridge Congregational Church marked a decisive turning point in his own personal fortune and that of the entire Hancock family.

Nathaniel's church membership acted as an economic stimulus, which in turn improved his social standing. Participation in the church was still restricted. Prospective members not only had to demonstrate an understanding of the principles of religion, assent to the covenant, and in their lives be morally free of scandal, but they also had to

present testimony of the way God's saving grace came to them.[23] In theory, church membership was not equated with social status and political authority. In practice, as long as church membership was restricted by this test of saving grace, members were more equal than nonmembers.[24] Collectively they exercised a disproportionately greater amount of influence which extended beyond simple church affairs and affected the entire community. Consequently, Nathaniel's admission not only suggested his spiritual awakening, but indicated a significant social elevation.

Proof of his newly improved social standing soon followed. Suddenly all his requests to the selectmen were approved. They continually granted him permission to fell trees on the commons in order to make sills for his house. They allowed him to dig a sluice so he could drain a nearby pond. Additional requests to fell more trees to fence his garden, leave to enclose part of an adjacent swamp, and even more trees to construct posts, pales, and rails were all granted.[25] Concomitant with these privileges came added town wide responsibilities. In 1673 he was elected constable and later was asked to "looke after the swine for the town." The selectmen also asked him to "haue Inspection into familyes that theare be no drinking nor any misdemenor wheare by fine is Comitted."[26] Nathaniel was eventually elected a Deacon in the church and a Tythingman for the town.[27] These two honored positions of trust and responsibility were far beyond anything his father would have dared hope to achieve. But Nathaniel's aspirations, once whetted by his first taste of public prominence, soared even higher. Fortunately, an avenue for fulfilling his aroused ambitions

had literally been erected in his own backyard.

On the twenty-eight of October, 1636, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony "agreed to give L400 towards a schoale or colledge," and a year later selected Newtown as the proposed site.[28] The town proprietors willingly assisted the project. They provided grants of land to the school and accepted the General Court's decision to rename the town, Cambridge, in honor of the school.[29] By the end of 1638, the college held its first classes. After surviving a rocky start, Harvard College steadily grew in reputation and stature. In Nathaniel Hancock's day it was already acknowledged as the pre-eminent center of learning throughout New England.

Designed to provide Puritan New England with a learned ministry, Harvard was a unqualified success. In the seventeenth century over half its graduates became ministers, most of them presiding in New England Congregational churches.[30] Graduation from Harvard was also perceived as a major social advancement; especially in a society where ministers and educated gentlemen were widely revered and looked to for community leadership. With this in mind, Nathaniel Hancock and countless other New England fathers sought to put their eldest son through Harvard and promote their family's reputation. The principle drawbacks were the academic entrance requirements and the ruinous college fees.

The first difficulty was resolved by ensuring sufficient study time for prospective applicants. This of course meant a severe financial drain on most families' income. All the children in a household were regarded as an essential source of labor. Nevertheless, Nathaniel was determined to bear this loss. But as his eldest son and namesake was

too valuable as an assistant shoemaker, the honor of attending school was reserved for his second son, John. The problem of college expenses could only be solved by belt tightening and self-sacrifice. Nathaniel accepted his temporary financial burden, no doubt convinced he would be more than compensated for it when his son entered the ministry.

His father's expectations placed an enormous responsibility on John's youthful shoulders. Born in 1671, and only fourteen years old when he entered Harvard, he was fully aware of his family's sacrifices which enabled him to attend. And even though ranked next to last in his class, a reflection of his father's social standing within the province, his graduation in 1689 was another milestone achievement in his family's quest for greater social recognition and status.

John, it seems, was motivated by ambitions similar to those of his father, only more so. A ministerial calling, he resolved, offered him both the potential for realizing his spiritual goals of service to man and God, but also an equally important opportunity to fulfill his social and economic aspirations. This ultimately reasonable, even pragmatic approach to his own life was characteristic of his entire ministerial career.

"Bishop" Hancock, as he affectionately came to be known, began his ministry on November 2, 1698 in the small argicultural community of Lexington, Massachusetts. He constructively spent the previous eight years since his graduation from Harvard doing various activities designed to prepare him for this moment. He briefly taught school in Cambridge for a year and then served as temporary minister in Groton for two years. After another temporary ministry in Medford, he accepted Lexing-

ton's call for his settlement and installation as their pastor. With that he began a fifty-four year public ministry that was noteworthy not just for its length, but for the rapport he developed with his congregation based on his fundamental belief in reason.

The same reliance on reason which he adopted during his college studies marked the tone of his messages from the pulpit. In his Commonplace Book begun as a student at Harvard he wrote, "All voluntary actions are done with some deliberation, more or less; because it is the nature of the will to Consist with the Understanding in Every act."[33] By this he testified to his belief that all human conduct was grounded in reason. Moral decisions and actions had to be held accountable in terms of intelligible ends. Several anecdotal incidents concerning "Bishop" Hancock survived his death and demonstrate the application of his philosophy.[35]

As he introduced his own liberal brand of theology, through his sermons and by the force of his personality, he helped lead his congregation away from the melancholy sense of hopelessness that characterized Puritan thought for much of the seventeenth century. Under his firm, yet temperate persuasion they moved out from under the shadows of predestination as he instilled a more rational attitude into the community. He willingly took part in settling boundary disputes, with a combination of reason and wit. As he increasingly participated in the everyday concerns and affairs of his parishioners, less time was spent arguing moot points of theological belief. In his approach, "Bishop" Hancock represented a new type of New England minister, one whose voice was heeded

because of its logic and not out of fear.

Nathaniel Hancock lived long enough to see and savor his son's growing fame. Before his death in 1719, he witnessed the "Bishop's" marriage to Elizabeth Clarke, daughter of the Reverend Thomas Clarke of Chemlsford, and the birth of their five children.[36] He died, secure in the knowledge that his esteemed son was prepetuating the family's recently won success. Nathaniel Hancock was buried only a couple of months before his grandson also graduated from Harvard, continuing the tradition he labored so diligently to achieve. At his death the family's future prospects seemed infinitely brighter than its recent past.

"Bishop" Hancock, in relationship to the existing class structure, was securely established among that narrow strata designated as rulers.[37] His marriage into another equally revered minister's family reinforced his claim to special marks of deferential respect. But the honor he justifiably claimed was matched by a complementary set of responsibilities. He conceded as much in one of his few published sermons when he acknowledged that, "Unfaithfulness in the minister is more unpardonable than in another man, for hereby the cause of Christ and the souls of men are betrayed."[38] He might also have included his family in this self-imposed injunction, for the "Bishop" was equally concerned with his children's behavior. At an early age he assumed responsibility for their education. From then on there was never any doubt that his sons were destined to follow in his ministerial footsteps.

He was, in spite of his firm attachment to reason and common sense in the governance of daily affairs, a strong willed patriarch both at home and in the pulpit. This authoritarian side of his personality had

little patience with challenges to that authority. On one hand he could remind the representatives of the General Court, in an annual election sermon, that as rulers they must exert themselves for the good of the people and "defend their rights, liberties and protect them in all their valuable privileges."[39] But on the other hand, when his own congregation sought the right to elect ruling elders to assist him, "Bishop" Hancock tactfully consented, and then restricted their duties to "saddling" his horse and "holding the bridle."[40]

As a newcomer among the local elite, "Bishop" Hancock was overly sensitive to any suggested infringement on the rights and privileges which this class traditionally exercised. He enjoyed them too much to relinquish any. By virtue of his pride, he began to interpret his success in terms of his elevation to this social station. He went so far as to state pubicly that, "He that desires the office of Bishop desires a good work."[41] In spite of the tinge of Anglicanism in his message, a charge he never seriously accepted, "Bishop" Hancock's real triumph was the result of his diligent, witty, often facetious, but always human personality. He was a genuine man of peace, order, and tradition; and it was these qualities that endeared him most to his congregation and community.

At times the "Bishop" loomed as a foreboding and intimidating father figure, one whom you disobeyed at your own peril. But, his arbitrariness was usually aimed at settling disputes which disturbed his sense of community order. Yet, he continued to command respect because he was reasonable. He accepted change and even contributed to it by helping to alter the traditionally drab and fearsome image of the

minister into one of a compassionate human being. His respect for tradition in no way bound him to ideas whose day had passed. He was much too flexible for that.

When the excitement of the Great Awakening broke forth in a torrent in the 1740's, dividing congregations over such basic questions as ministerial qualifications and church membership, the storm barely caused a ripple in Lexington.[42] While neighboring churches in Concord and Medford were racked with internal dissension, and frequent councils were held, pamphlets written, and books published all fueling the conflicting emotional issues, "Bishop" Hancock side stepped the factious dispute. The prevailing calm in Lexington was largely his doing. Rather than resist this aroused enthusiasm, or recklessly encourage it, he sat it out. He viewed the entire awakening as a natural response to the periodic religious droughts that occur in the world. It was a wise response, one that ultimately enhanced his reputation for prudence and good judgment. As a result, his advice was increasingly sought by neighboring communities.[43]

The length of the "Bishop's" career eventually made him the senior minister in his part of the colony. Consequently, he was often asked to preside at Ordination Councils and during his lifetime he gave the solemn charge to over twenty young ministers. None gave him greater personal satisfaction than his participation in the installation of his two sons, who, as expected, also chose church careers.

His eldest son and namesake, John, was born June 1, 1702, in Lexington.[44] Compliant with the "Bishop's" wishes, he prepared and was admitted to Harvard College when he was thirteen. Among a generally poor

class, he was regarded as the house scholar and was noted for his orderliness.[45] The expense of keeping him at school, however, was a problem on the "Bishop's" modest salary.[46] As a result, a second brother, Thomas, who was a year younger than John, was unable to attend college. As it were, John's expenses still had to be paid in large part with commodities like veal, mutton and lamb, all destined for the school's kitchen.[47] Meanwhile, Thomas was apprenticed out for seven years to Samuel Gerrish, a prominent Boston book seller. This was one of the "Bishop's" wisest decisions as Thomas proved well suited for Boston's commercial life.[48] A third son, Ebenezer, was his father's youngest and favorite. He remained at hime with his two older sisters, Lucy and Elizabeth, until he too was ready to attend Harvard. By then the family's finances again permitted them to bear this additional burden.[49]

John graduated from Harvard with his class in 1719 and through his father's influence secured a grammar school teaching position at home in Lexington. At best this was considered a temporary situation until he could secure an acceptable ministerial opening. For the moment, however, his youth and obvious inexperience were insurmountable obstacles. In December 1722, while keeping school in Woburn, he was turned down as a candidate for the Westborough pulpit.[50] Faced with diminishing prospects, a year later he accepted the job as "Library Keeper" at Harvard College for the lowly salary of eight pounds a year.[51]

If this appointment was secured through his father's influence, which is highly conceivable, then it might explain John's subsequent confusion and hesitation in accepting a ministerial call from the Portsmouth, New Hampshire congregation. When their pastor, the

Reverend Nathaniel Rogers, died in October, they offered John a generous salary of Ll30 per annum as his successor. John mysteriously replied that he desired "time to consider it and confer with friends."[52] Meanwhile, he agreed to come to Portsmouth and preach temporarily until making his final decision.

Why John suddenly balked at this opportunity is not entirely clear. Cotton Mather obliquely refers to the incident in his diary, suggesting that John is "in danger of being detained" from accepting the offer "by the Humours of some foolish Relatives." In spite of Mather's plan to "exert myself on this occasion," nothing substantive came of his efforts.[53] The Portsmouth offer was later withdrawn and John returned to the college library. There he was greeted by the college overseers' instructions to "take Special Care that the Library books be kept in better and more decent Condition than here to fore."[54]

A possible motive for the Portsmouth congregation's withdrawal of their offer may have been the negative letter of recommendation they received from Reverend William Waldron of Boston. In it, Waldron admitted he did not personally know their prospective candidate. But, based on secondary sources, he gathered that, "He has no great Character." And as for his "Abilities Either Naturale or Acquired; The Professor told me He did not know but Hancock might Suit you, for He could make a very handsome bow, and if the first did not Suit, He'd Bow Lower a Second time."[55] Later Waldron recanted a little. In a second letter he suggested that, "If providence overules it," then John might still "be made a Blessing to your Church & People. He has the Character of a sober, Religious person."[56] But it was too late. The damage

was done and John was resigned to his work in the college library.

In the three years he served as Harvard College librarian, John lent inestimable service to the preparation of the school's first catalogue of its library collection. In 1725, he was voted a bonus of forty shillings for "his labor in writing the said supplement, getting it printed & correcting the Press."[57] By teaching grammar school during the winter vacation and occasionally preaching in a nearby meeting house he was able to supplement his meager income.[58] Yet, for the most part this was a frustrating period of his life as he longed to secure a permanent church position.

If there was any anxiety in the "Bishop's" household about John's inability to find a settled ministry, it abated in June, 1726. At a meeting in the First Church of Braintree, a "unanimous call was given to Mr. Hancock to settle in the work of the Ministry," in the town's north parish. Leaving nothing to chance, "Bishop" Hancock negotiated the delicate matter of salary and settlement fees on behalf of his son. An agreement was eventually reached whereby the town voted him a yearly payment of "L110, in good and lawful bills of public credit...and a settlement of L200."[60] John immediately notified the town, claiming, "Devine Providence calls and obliges me to an acceptance." As an after thought he added, "I would just take leave to recommend in your consideration the article of wood, which I understand is...scarce in this place."[61] Assured that this minor problem would be satisfactorily attended to, Reverend John Hancock prepared to assume his duties as Braintree's youngest and highest paid Congregational minister, he was just twenty-four years old.

His ordination was held on November 2, 1726, and as he recorded in the church records, "My honored father preached the sermon."[63] It was one of the "Bishop's" typically "vigorous and autocratic" ones.[64] Unable to suppress his swelling pride, the "Bishop's" message, "Behold I send the promise of my father upon you," implied a doubly significant meaning to his family. His personal prayer that his son might prove a man of "renown" and "be famous in Bethlemen" was an awesome burden of responsibility to transfer to the Reverend Hancock's inexperienced shoulders.[65]

As each generation of Hancocks' expected their children to enhance the family's reputation and status, the "Bishop's" sermon clearly stated his son's duty in that regard. Unfortunately, the optimistic promise of his son's future was never fully realized. Reverend John Hancock's half hearted efforts to free himself from his father's long dominating shadow never succeeded. He lacked the assertiveness, the drive, even the will, and assuredly the self-confidence to stand on his own. At best he was a pale watered down version of the "Bishop". At his worst he was a fair to middling nondescript benign country minister. What little success he had, stemmed from his family connections and a generally inoffensive personality. He was forever dependent upon the good will of the community he served, but he could never dominate it as his father did in Lexington. To his probable embarrassment he did little to enhance the family's reputation. To his credit he did nothing to tarnish it.

Either consciously or not, almost all facets of Reverend John

Hancock's life were dominated by his father. Having never bothered to question his father's authority, when it came time to assume his own ministerial duties, he naturally modeled himself after the "Bishop". Supported by Braintree's most powerful family, the Quincys, he asserted a posture of high clerical authority. Annually he felt compelled to dispense church discipline for sinful acts committed by his parishioners, usually for an instance of incontenence.[66] This was, however, expected of him.

On a more controversial issue he demonstrated a surprising combination of tolerance and tact. Within a year of assuming his ministry, the Anglicans living in Braintree complained about being taxed for his settlement and ordination expenses. In a rare instance of independence, Reverend Hancock broke with the Quincy family, who long favored taxing the Church of England People. Through Hancock's efforts a remission of their taxes was secured and future ones defrayed. Going a step further, he also invited all Anglicans to partake occasional communion in his church, in any posture of devotion they pleased.[67] Like the "Bishop", Reverend Hancock opposed divisiveness in all church and community affairs. His tactful handling of this and other potentially explosive issues spared Braintree many factional disputes.

Normally, Reverend Hancock was more responsive to the Quincy family's feelings. Rarely did he ever again stand against them on an issue of such deeply felt importance. Typically, he used his pulpit as a forum to instruct his congregation on the men they should support for public office at the annual May elections. But these were not men

Reverend Hancock independently decided upon; they were usually the Quincy family's hand picked choices.[68] Edmund Quincy, grandson of the town's original founder, and his nephew John Quincy were Braintree's two most influential residents. The former served as magistrate and was a select member of the Governor's Council. His nephew was equally distinguished. For twenty years he was Braintree's sole representative in the General Court and for most of that time he was elected Speaker of the House. Like his uncle, he too served on the Governor's Council and both men held high rank in the Suffolk County militia regiment. They were also active members of Reverend Hancock's north precinct congregational church.

From their seats of colony wide authority in Boston, down to the local town meeting in Braintree, and into the church where Reverend Hancock preached, the Quincy family's influence extended. They were not men one eagerly sought to antagonize.[69] In his accurate perception of Braintree's social hierarchy, the Reverend Hancock deferred to the Quincys' superior claim. As a presumedly independent minister, Reverend Hancock was a realist. He fully appreciated the fact that his authority was severely restricted and even his employment was dependent upon his relationship with the community's leading and most influential families. Consequently, an inner conflict raged as he sought to balance his own integrity with the need to compromise with these powerful individuals. It was a struggle between his vision of the ideal and the necessary. On one hand he sought to assume the authoritarian role he long observed in his father and wished to emulate. On the other hand, the

political and social realities of Braintree made this impossible, even self-defeating. As an outsider in the community, he had even less chance of asserting himself in the manner he wanted. Forced by these circumstances to restrain his authoritarian aspirations, the subservient side of his personality dictated his actions, just as it always did in relationship to his father. Reverend John Hancock was a repressed and frustrated servant of God and of his family's ambitions. But by yielding to his need to appease rather than provoke his superiors, Reverend Hancock served his church reasonably well. It was also temperamentally more comfortable, yet his internal tensions were never completely resolved. Occasionally he was known to demonstrate "a certain sensibility or keenness of feeling," which appeared to many as "a peevishness of temper."[70]

It was a full seven years before Reverend Hancock felt sufficiently secure in his new position to venture into marriage. His wife, Mary Hawke, of Hingham, was nine years his junior; precious little else about her has survived. They were married in late December, 1733 almost a year to the day following the death of her first husband, Reverend Samuel Thaxter.[71] No children resulted from her first marriage, but two of Thaxter's sons from his former marriage survived his death. They, however, did not accompany their step-mother to Braintree when she married Reverend Hancock. Almost a year and a half later she gave birth to their first child, a little girl called Mary, after the mother. Their son, John Hancock, was born twenty months later and named for his father and grandfather.[71] There was no doubt that he was obviously destined to follow in their respective footsteps.

For young John Hancock, growing up in a family of Congregational ministers presented both an opportunity and a burden. From birth his future appeared ordained. Even his mother's proclivity for marrying ministers suggests she also shared the Hancock's value system and ambitions. And if for some unlikely rebellious reason, John's father formed other plans for his son, there was still the awesome figure of the "Bishop" to confront. For under the "Bishop's" exertions the ministry truly became the Hancock family calling. Only recently he secured for his youngest son, Ebenezer, the desireable appointment as his colleague and designated successor in the Lexington Church.[73] Meanwhile, the "Bishop's" two daughters were married to established churchmen. The eldest, Elizabeth, married Reverend Jonathan Bowman of Dorchester and Lucy wedded Reverend Nicholas Bowes of Bedford. Except for his Uncle Thomas in Boston, all of John Hancock's closest adult male relatives were active Congregational ministers.

The prospect of a ministerial career and all that it represented to his family exacted a price on John's earliest childhood. His family's expectations were transmitted to him at a very early age. They had to if John was to develop the same drive and ambition which characterized and motivated his family for four successive generations. There were also perhaps some personal considerations involved. Did Reverend Hancock's frustration with his own career prompt him to push his son John even harder? Was he envious of his younger brother's appointment as their father's colleague and heir, and did he perhaps envision his son's success as a possible vindication in the "Bishop's" eyes for his own inadequacy? Whatever the exact combination of motives, great stress

was placed on John's education. John Adams, his boyhood friend and whose family also held hopes for their son's future in the ministry, recalled their boyhood together. He recounted how he and John attended Dame Belcher's school as soon "as we were out of petticoats."[74]

Life in a small agricultural community like Braintree made other demands on most children. More important than a formal education, which was a luxury enjoyed only by a few, the majority of children were required to assume important responsibilities around their father's farm at an early age.[75] This was not true for John, who as the minister's son, and whose family lived on a fixed annual income, had relatively little physical work to do on his father's twenty four acre homestead. Instead, almost all the chores were done by the family's slave, Jeffrey.[76] Although not pampered, John's boyhood was less physically demanding than his friends and though a country boy, the rhythm of the seasons were less important to him than his playmates.

No one's life in a farming village was easy, nevertheless there were countless ways for young boys to amuse themselves. In summer there was swimming in the clear deep ponds which in winter froze over to permit ice skating. Innumerable ways of creating mischief and experimenting with forbidden pleasures were always available. John Adams remembered the time when he was first introduced to the use of tobacco while playing about the Braintree ponds with his companions.[77] John Hancock found it more difficult to satisfy his natural curiosity in these adventures than his friend Adams. As the minister's son he was prone to be fearful of public exposure. His birthright demanded a more

severe moral conduct than for others. This unsought burden may have been partially relieved by the satisfaction he derived throughout his life from seeing others pleased with him, especially his parents and substitute parent figures.[78]

School and play were important developmental influences, but neither equalled the effect John's family had on his emerging perceptions of the world. His father's apparent social importance, his ceremonial functions, his solemn Sunday sermons, the polite manner with which everyone addressed him all made an indelible impression on John. Visits to his grandfather's home in Lexington, although infrequent, were happy occasions and contributed to the sense of his family's significance. So too, in times of emotional crisis he could see how comforting a closely knit family could be.

Death was an integral part of John's childhood. Children, particularly those of ministers, were rarely sheltered from this reality. When he was three years old, too young to fully comprehend, the entire Hancock family was thrown into a deep mourning over the unexpected death of his uncle, the Reverend Ebenezer Hancock.[79] "On thursday he was in good health," and "rode with his sister from Bedford to Lexington, the next day he was seized with the throat distemper...of which he died on Monday Evening...in the Prime of Life," reported a Boston newspaper.[80] His passing was a bitter loss to the "Bishop" who knew that of all his sons, Ebenezer possessed the finest ministerial abilities and was deemed his natural successor. As a student at Harvard, he had received an honored Hollis Scholarship and had been regarded as a man

of unusual promise, ingenuity, and piety.[81] His death created an irreplaceable void in the "Bishop's" future dreams.

Almost a year after his funeral the family had still not fully recovered from their shock. But their loss was partially tempered when Mary Hancock gave birth to John's younger brother, Ebenezer, named after his uncle.[82] This cycle of birth and death were familiar realities, always close at hand. The young, like John, were instructed to accept it passively as part of God's mysterious plan. The "Bishop", less easily accommodated, sought to reconcile his grief more actively. In spite of his age, which was nearly seventy, he vigorously reassumed all his former duties in the Lexington church; including those he once willing shared with his deceased son during their brief joint ministry. Meanwhile, John's father found an unusual release for his accumulated sadness and guilt.

The itinerant ministers spawned by the Great Awakening soon became a favorite target of Reverend Hancock's pent up emotions. In a number of aggressive sermons he attacked them with a fervor and single-mindedness that was decidedly out of character. In one of his few published sermons, The Danger of an Unqualified Ministry, he accused the itinerants of slandering the established New England clergy by "filling the minds of people with evil surmisings." Furthermore, he held them personally responsible for "those scandalous Separations where with some of our churches have been lately torn." Quoting from Cotton Mather, he went on to recount the true virtues of the New England clergy, who he implied like himself, "not only have and use a true piety, but also are most exemplary for it."[83]

His intense hostility directed at these itinerants, particularly against Gilbert Tennent, suggests more than a theological dispute over religious beliefs.[84] "Bishop" Hancock, the usual fountainhead of his son's religious principles, neither expressed nor shared any of his son's disdain or consternation over these enthusiasts. It was over this issue that they experienced their first and perhaps only real disagreement. It was also the first occasion that the Reverend Hancock challenged his father's long revered moral authority. But at its root, it was less a dispute over religious issues and more a question of Reverend Hancock's attempt to assert his own individuality.

In spite of, or perhaps because of his failing health, Reverend Hancock desperately sought to affirm his self-image as an independent adult, capable of exercising his own judgment. He perceptively saw in the itinerants enthusiastic doctrine a potentially fatal threat to his authority in Braintree, and consequently his family's hard won social position. Calling upon his and other congregations throughout New England, he enjoined them to "obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls."[85] But it was a sense of insecurity which prompted Reverend Hancock's onslaughts against the itinerants, while his more self-assured and confident father felt no similar anxiety or threat.

In the short run, Reverend Hancock's efforts succeeded. His hard line opposition to itinerants and their "New Light" theology spared Braintree any factional dissention on the scale that raged in neighboring communities. In the process, he preserved his claim as moral superintendent over his congregation, upheld the status of the minister

within the community, and retained, even enhanced his family's place in the social order. Yet, this was only half his fight. An intensely personal inner struggle went less well. "I have taken this work upon me, under great Infirmity of Body & Mind," he confessed.[86] It was to be his first and last attempt to assert his independence from his father and demonstrate his worth as his son and successor in his own right.

Ever since his ordination, Reverend Hancock was weighed down by the "Bishop's" stated hopes and anticipation that he prove himself wise, successful, and famous. Ebenezer's recent death only intensified his burden of obligation to fulfill some undefined sense of family ambition. Locally he had achieved only a modicum of sincere admiration and respect; nowhere on the scale his father enjoyed in Lexington. And although he was generally liked by his congregation, he was relatively unknown beyond his own immediate vicinity. His campaign against the itinerants was in large part an attempt to make himself better known as a staunch defender of New England Congregationalism. In 1744, at the height of his efforts he died. He was only forty two.

This was all beyond seven-year-old John Hancock's power of comprehension. It was part of a more complex adult world, none of which he was expected to understand completely. All that was required of him was that he honor his parents and respect his elders. Something else his grandfather once told his father also applied to him; "Sometimes God raises up a Minister's Sons to be prophets unto the Lord, and this is an honor unto them."[87] But when he asked where was his father, he was told, "weep not," for his father "had passed from death to life, even to

life eternal."[88] Whatever meaning this had for a child, John could see that everything at home was now drastically altered.

Reverend John Hancock was buried on May 7, in the unfenced cemetary across from the meeting house in which he tended his congregation for eighteen years. The highly respected Reverend Ebenezer Gay from nearby Hingham preached the funeral sermon entitled, The Untimely Death of a Man of God Lamented. In it, he called upon all those gathered to appreciate the great loss suffered by "Bishop" Hancock and his worthy wife who had "scarce dried their eyes for the premature Death of one of their lovely sons, before another is taken away from them."[89]

His father's sudden death irrevocably altered John's life, but he probably noticed his absence most conspicuously on Sundays. No longer was his father the commanding figure standing in the pulpit high overhead dressed in his fine long black robes. No longer did his gentle but authoritarian voice, or so it must have appeared to John, instruct the assembled congregation below on how they were expected to behave. Gradually all vestiges of his father's memory disappeared. First, his black robes were given away to John's uncle, Reverend Bowman. Then his father's black suit was given to another uncle, Reverend Bowes. Finally, even his father's favorite books, the works of Sir William Temple, were discarded by John's mother. Little matter to him that she was merely carrying out the instructions in Reverend Hancock's will.[90]

In retrospect, John Hancock might have realistically wondered if he had ever really known his father. His material inheritance was small, but what of intangibles? If he was even dimly aware of his father's

inner struggle, his frustrations, his sense of inadequacy, his thwarted ambitions, and his late attempt to set things right by asserting himself, it remained John's well kept secret. In all of his surviving correspondence and family papers there is not a single word, reference, or personal comment about his father. For all practical purposes it was if he never had had one. Yet, his father, because he was a Hancock, transmitted the family's collective history and aspirations to his son, thereby establishing values that John unknowingly accepted. As a proud old family of New England ministers, the Hancock's were determined defenders of Massachusetts' social, political, and religious institutions. Through four previous generations they had sought and succeeded in making these institutions, particularly the church, work to their advantage. Rising from obscurity and poverty they climbed their way up the social ladder, one generation preparing the way for the next. This alone made John Hancock's childhood unique. He might not have comprehended his father's anger against itinerants, but he was aware that his family expected something more of him.

Logically the premature deaths of the "Bishop's" two sons should have stalled, perhaps ended, the Hancock family's continuous social ascent. Since neither son attained their father's eminence, their deaths appeared to have only hastened an already evident decline in their family's status due to the changing relationship between congregations and ministers. As a consequence of the Great Awakening, congregations successfully challenged the once traditional authority of their ministers and accelerated a major shift in Massachusetts's social order.

The once preeminent role of the ministers was over. In their place a small wealthy class of merchants emerged, whose political and social influence rapidly outdistanced that of the declining clergymen. This trend should have adversely affected the Hancock family; but it did not. Ironically, the "Bishop's" second and sole surviving son, Thomas Hancock, was one of these successful merchants. Onto his shoulders the family's ambitions were transferred. His economic and social achievements elevated his family's importance in Massachusetts far beyond the "Bishop's" wildest expectations.

For John Hancock, therefore, the single most important inheritance he received from his father proved to be that of his name. Yet, it was not without irony that the Reverend Hancock, in death, eventually received something in return from his more illustrious son. After having served for almost half of his life as Braintree's conscientious but uninspired minister, ultimately Reverend John Hancock was not remembered for any professional accomplishments. Instead, the inscription on his gravestone, placed there many years after his death, cited his most important achievement as being the "Father of John Hancock the Patriot;" the first signer of the Declaration of American Independence.[91]

CHAPTER II

BOSTON AND CAMBRIDGE

The Hancock parsonage in Braintree, Massachusetts was safe, secure and familiar to John Hancock; it was home. Here since birth he unconsciously absorbed his parents' expectations and internalized their values. Anxieties and fears common to all children were offset by the feeling of security his parents provided. Their rigorous demands of piety, order, discipline and obedience, although difficult to maintain at all times, were nevertheless reassuring by reason of their familiarity. It was an environment happily devoid of surprises. Its very predictability was a constant source of comfort and stability.

His father's unexpected death, therefore, must have been a jarring disruption of John's sense of order. His emotional balance was again shaken when his mother surrendered her custody of John to his uncle and aunt within a year of his father's funeral. Unknowingly this proved the single most significant event of his life, one destined to influence and shape all subsequent events.

Initially John's resettlement in his Uncle Thomas and Aunt Lydia's huge Boston mansion offered a series of striking contrasts to his life in Braintree. In one bewildering afternoon his physical surroundings were completely transformed. Moving from the relative simplicity of village life, he entered the complex world of a bustling commercial port town. As the colony's capital and single largest community, Boston's population was more than ten times the size of Braintree's. The feeling of over crowdedness was everywhere. A town census in the

1740's listed 1,719 dwellings, less than enough to house everyone, forcing some families to share living space with others.[1] The diversity of shops, tradesmen, and activities, as well as the more hectic pace of life combined to suggest something larger, grander, and perhaps even more intimidating than anything John previously experienced. Nothing so clearly noted the extraordinary changes in store for him than a recent English visitor's impressions of Boston compared to London. "A gentleman from London," he observed, "would almost think himself at home in Boston, when he observes the number of people, their houses, their furniture, their tables, their dress, and conversation, which perhaps is as splended and showy as that of the most considerable tradesmen in London."[2] If Boston was comparable to London, the largest and most cosmopolitan city in the British Empire, then there was little about Braintree that could prepare one for the transition.

The changes in John's physical environment were matched by a similar alteration in his social status. In the course of his ten-mile ride to Boston, he abandoned the middle class respectability of his late father's home. In its place he acquired the enviably princely station only immense wealth could provide. Too young to attach significant meaning to this transformation, he was probably more impressed by the visual contrast between his austere Braintree residence and his uncle's material affluence. The differences between his father's and uncle's outlooks on life must have also been surprising. Yet none of these enormous discrepancies in environment, status, and attitude were as immediately important as his desire for security and affection.

Documentary evidence on John's childhood is unfortunately fragmentary. But even in the absence of accurate first hand accounts, this rupture in his normal routine must have affected his personality development and self-perceptions. In essence it precipitated a crisis in identity,[3] or as a noted psychoanalyst defines it, "a necessary turning point, a crucial moment when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation."[4] This was exactly John's situation. His move into his uncle's house represented a clean break with his past, necessitating a major adjustment to the possibly alien, certainly unfamiliar world of his substitute parents.

One's identity or self-image, however, is made up of a complex interaction of "simultaneous reflection and observation" of one's environment. It is also more, for an individual learns to perceive himself by what he imagines to be the way others judge him in comparison to themselves; and he in turn judges their way of judging him in light of his perceptions of himself in comparison to them. This process is largely unconscious and is in a state of perpetual change and development, nor can it be separated from external historical events. Ultimately, one's identity is never "established as an achievement in the form of personality armor, or anything static." Rather, it is constantly evolving which accounts for numerous contradictions and seemingly erratic, out of character behavior. Consequently, mere "roles" or self-conscious "appearances" or "postures" are not the real personality, but only possible "dominant aspects" of what is commonly referred

to as a "search for identity."[5] For John Hancock, this search can truly be said to begin in a historically meaningful sense only with his absorption into his uncle's wealthy, ambitious, and secularly minded world.

His uncle, Thomas Hancock, was better suited temperamentally to a counting room than a pulpit. Perhaps sensing this, his father, "Bishop" Hancock, had apprenticed him out to Samuel Gerrish in July, 1717. For the next seven years Thomas faithfully served his master by running errands, keeping his store, and doing a host of other minor chores for him. In exchange, Gerrish taught him the rudiments of book binding and the skills needed to manage a small business. In 1724, at age twenty one, Thomas was ready to set out on his own.[6]

His first enterprise was as an independent book seller, opening a small shop on Ann Street in Boston. Bookbinding and publishing were soon added to his growing list of services. Frequent advertisements in local newspapers also indicated his willingness to sell a wide variety of imported wares, including writing and printing implements, stationary products, and even cutlery, all "at the lowest prices, by wholesale or retail."[7] His burgeoning ambitions were sustained by a natural and acquired skill as a shrewd businessman. Success came so swiftly that wild rumors and extraordinary tales circulated thorugh town in an effort to explain his meteoric rise. One commonly told story recounted how "he purchased a valuable diamond for a small sum and sold it at its full price."[8] The truth was much less romantic but nonetheless extraordinary.

Thomas possessed an uncanny knack for knowing the right man at the right time and place who could favorably promote his interests. This was an instrumental component of his personal success. The first of these advantageous connections was with Daniel Henchman, the "most eminent and enterprising bookseller," in all of British North America.[9] Henchman took an early liking to Thomas and proved a valuable source of advice and encouragement to his young competitor. He also gave him more substantive assistance. Through Henchman, Thomas secured badly needed supplies for his shop and crucial letters of introduction to English exporting houses at a time when Thomas' credit there was still weak and unestablished. They also occasionally combined resources in several business ventures, ranging from the purchase of consignments of paper to publishing jointly, "A Dissertation concerning Innoculation of the Small Pox."[10]

Their most ambitious enterprise was an attempt to establish a paper manufacturing mill on the Neponset River under a ten year patent granted by the General Court. This ultimately proved too expensive. After many years of continuous frustration and discouragement they reluctantly abandoned the project.[11] But by then, Thomas was well launched as a Boston merchant and could easily absorb the financial loss. In no small way his financial success was the result of Henchman's interest in him; intentionally introducing Thomas to many of Boston's other leading merchants.

In the informal, casual world of Boston merchants, frequent short lived business partnerships were the rule in the eighteenth century

rather than the exception. This pattern was generally accepted as it tended to minimize the cost and risks of trans-Atlantic trade which was inevitably unpredictable. It also permitted a merchant to participate in a wider range of commercial activities than if he was personally responsible for financing an entire venture on his own. Participation in these collective ventures grew out of an intricate web of social contracts and intermarriages that linked many of Boston's leading commercial personalities together. Exploiting these newly made contacts, thanks mainly to Henchman's friendship, Thomas became an enthusiastic participant in a series of diverse commercial projects. These combined with his marriage in 1731 to Henchman's daughter, Lydia, helped solidify Thomas's acceptance among the small but powerful coterie of Boston merchants.

Increased competition from Boston's other booksellers in the 1730's impressed Thomas with the urgent need to diversify his interests. His frequent advertisements in the Boston News Letter indicates how seriously he took his own advice. Soon he was offering his customers, "Just imported and sold by Thomas Hancock. Best Russia Duck...Callicoes...Chints, Muslins, Cotton...Crapes, Cheloes, Buckram...Threads, Tapes...Fans, Ferrets, Girdles and Sundry other sorts of Haberdashery... shoes...hose, Bohea and Green Tea...."[12]

It was impossible for Thomas to pay cash for this recently enlarged inventory of foreign goods. A lack of circulating coin throughout the colonies and the absence of a sound monetary system in Massachusetts forced merchants to create other more complicated

schemes by which to conduct financial transactions.[13] But in spite of the difficulties, logic and the experiences of other American merchants dictated Thomas' entrance into the exporting and shipping trade. Largely by trial and error, he and his various partners constructed an elaborate, often bewildering pattern of transatlantic trade over the course of the next decade.[14] Their entire effort was designed towards one specific end, to provide the English suppliers with saleable commodities in order to offset their purchases of British manufactured goods.

Thomas's trade rapidly expanded in all directions throughout the 1730's eventually embracing three continents. Shipping was added to his list of economic activities, first as a part shareholder and later as sole owner in several American built vessels. His ships were soon carrying locally distilled rum to Newfoundland where he exchanged it for fish, skins, and whale oil. The latter, combined with oil purchased at Nantucket was immediately reshipped to London where it was in great demand. Oil sold in England for pounds sterling was applied directly against Thomas's debts for British manufactured goods. These were in turn freighted home in his own ships for sale in the Hancock store at either retail or wholesale. Meanwhile, the fish he acquired in Newfoundland he shipped to the Iberian peninsula. There it was sold for cash or exchanged, preferably for wine. Cash was immediately remitted to London; wine was usually brought back to Boston for his own personal use. Occasionally he permitted his captains to violate the English Navigation Acts and ordered them to take wine or some

alternative cargo to the Dutch colony of Surinam. Here European manufactured goods that were barred under the Navigation Acts could be illegally procured for reshipment to Boston. This example of Thomas's trading activities only suggests the countless possible variations and patterns that were frequently adopted.

To appreciate Thomas's enormous achievements, it was necessary to understand the great difficulties he surmounted. The shortages of circulating currency and the concomitant need to improvise an alternative method of payment was only one of the many problems facing colonial merchants. In addition, Thomas learned through experience what commodities to ship and where; to whom he should entrust their sale and on what terms; and what items he should order for his vessels' return voyage. Seated alone in his Boston counting house, Thomas was painfully aware of his vulnerability. He was almost totally dependent upon others to carry out his instructions, for market information, for loading his goods, protecting them at sea, and disposing of them abroad. The ability to choose dependable and competent agents and sea captains was the single "most important non political factor in business success."[15]

So too there were the constant concerns arising from events and conditions beyond his control. Adverse weather conditions were always a possible source of financial loss. The threat of warfare, so frequent in the eighteenth century, was always a possibility to disrupt the normal channels of trade. Then suddenly the protection of the Royal Navy was generally very welcome. Usually, the Navy was considered an interference as it helped enforce the Navigation Acts, which to

many merchants was an infringement on their right to trade with whomever they pleased. As these acts were only haphazardly enforced, however, they were borne with little more than an occasional complaint. But when all the problems and barriers to colonial trade were combined, they presented an incredible obstacle to the average merchant or trader. The handful of individuals who actually succeeded indicates that a rare combination of talent, hardwork, and luck were the contributing factors; and Thomas Hancock possessed more than his fair share of these attributes. By the time his nephew, John Hancock, was born in 1737, Thomas was thriving as a well-established and wealthy Boston merchant.

For all his apparent worldly success, however, Thomas never felt comfortable with his sudden good fortune. For he knew that as high as he sought to climb the colonial social ladder, his humble country origins barred his ever being accepted into the inner circle of elite families, dominated by the Belchers, Wentworths, Apthorps, Bowdoins, Faneuils, Olivers and Hutchinsons. He might match and even exceed them in wealth, join them in business ventures or compete favorably against them, but he would never be accepted as one of them.[16]

Stymied in his assault upon the upper levels of colonial society, he felt equally offended by what he imagined to be the more considerable respect shown his father and brothers as ministers than to himself as a prosperous merchant. His vulnerability to these real and imaginary insults led him each year into some gaudy display of his wealth. It was as if he thought he could purchase the respect and

recognition which otherwise seemed unattainable.

Thomas issued standing orders to all his English agents and correspondents that when they purchased items for his family's personal use they were to "send it of the very best kind cost what it will."[17] What money could not secure he thought a public display of his family's pedigree might. One of his London agents was commissioned to investigate his coat of arms in the Herald's office, and a copy of it was ordered, "in silver & fixt to Ivory for the use of a Compting Room."[18] The Hancock crest was soon seen regularly throughout the streets of Boston, emblazoned upon the brightly colored carriages he ordered from England.[19] By themsleves there were only minor examples of Thomas's passion for display. His single most extravagant demonstration of his need to call attention to his success was the massive stone house he erected atop Beacon Hill. From this vantage point, with its lavishly cared for gardens and orchards, the entire estate looked down upon the Common and the port of Boston below. In this way, Thomas Hancock announced his economic achievements and his own self-proclaimed social elevation, regardless of anyone else's opinion and judgement. There were many who saw the logic and justice of his symbolic statement.[20]

There were others who were less impressed. In spite of Thomas's best efforts, it was not until 1740 that he secured his first solid indication of his social acceptance by his fellow townsmen. In March, the Boston town meeting elected Thomas to the prestigeous post of town selectman. The only previous public office he ever held was as a lowly hogreeve ten years earlier. He also once declined serving as a constable, perhaps sensing it was too great an indignity for a man of his

material substance.[21] But while impatiently waiting for the town to acknowledge his accomplishments and honor him as he thought his right, his own plans for developing his hilltop mansion accelerated.

A year after purchasing his first lot on Beacon Hill, Thomas boasted to James Glin, the English gardner he hired, that "the Kingdom of England don't afford so Fine a Prospect as I have both of land & water. Neither do I intend to Spare any Cost or pains in making my Gardens Beatifull or Profitable."[22] It was typical of Thomas to envision a money-making scheme out of something as innocuous as landscaping his property. As a rule, his entire life was devoted to the accumulation of wealth and the planning of new business ventures. But wealth was merely the means of attaining an even more highly desired end, the recognition and acceptance as an equal among those who constituded the peak of the colonial social pyramid. It was a lifetime ambition; one that continually eluded this ambitious parvenu, or at least he believed it eluded him. Consequently, he never gave up his chase for additional claims for social superiority.

Actual construction of his three storied mansion began in 1736. True to his boast, no expense was spared on its execution. Based on a plan, probably drawn by the London designer John James, specifications for the stone work were issued, a local mason, Joshua Blanchard, was employed, and orders for wall paper, glass, and furnishings were dispatched to London.[23] These were followed by detailed requests to his English landscape consultant for bulbs, seeds, and a wide variety of fruit trees for his proposed orchards and gardens.[24] Meanwhile,

granite from Braintree, Massachusetts, and stone from Connecticut were contracted and delivered by boat to Boston. When completed after three years of intensive work, the Hancock house took its place as one of the architectural landmarks of colonial America.[25]

A low stone wall topped by a light wooden picket fence protected Thomas's house lot from the street.[26] A paved walk and a dozen stone steps led from the street gate up to the mansion's front entrance. And although not physically large, it was a solidly built home, situated on a rise a little distance back from the road. This combined with its massive stone walls, gave it the deceptive appearance of being much larger than its approximately fifty by sixty feet dimensions would indicate. It was also richly appointed as painstaking care was given to all its impressive details. The corners and windows were all ornamented with Braintree stone, the roof was tiled and topped with a wooden balustrade, three dormer windows jutted out from the roof, and the front entrance stood sheltered beneath a projecting second story balcony upon which a pair of large double windows opened.[27] Including the attached kitchen, the house had fifty four windows. A two storied wood and brick barn, as well as a coach house and an assortment of storage and maintenance facilities were gradually added to the estate's inventory. Inside, similar care and expense were employed.

On entering the house, one stepped into a large entrance hall facing a grand staircase leading to the second story bed chambers above. Around the hall, the walls were crowded with prints, colorful English landscapes, family portraits, and a tall imported London clock. The hallway ran through to the rear of the house where one could walk out

into Thomas's carefully laid out gardens and orchards. To the right of this main hall stood the parlor or reception room, richly covered with yards of expensive carpeting. A dozen mahogany chairs, armchairs, sideboards, and tables were carefully placed to accommodate Thomas's frequent guests and visitors.[28] Behind this room Thomas installed a small library which he later converted into his office. Here the gilded copies of Cato and other classics ordered from his London bookseller, Thomas Longman, were neatly arranged but rarely consulted.[29] The family parlor or sitting room was to the left of the center hall. In there, more chairs, tables, sideboards, and a card table were set; and behind this room was the family dinning room. Everywhere rich damask curtains framed the windows with matching cushions on the window seats. Upstairs were four comfortably furnished bedrooms and above these were garrets for storage and the servants quarters. A number of live-in servants were regularly employed to care for the house and grounds. To meet his increased responsibilities as a host, Thomas purchased the first of several slaves in 1738 to help attend to his numerous guests' needs.[30]

The Hancock mansion was in every respect an accurate reflection of Thomas's personality. Its imposing exterior complemented Thomas's external image of a man possessing wealth, culture, taste, and respectability. But by themselves, appearances are often deceptive. In Thomas's case they belied his inner emptiness, just as his house was overly spacious for the solitary figures of Thomas and Lydia to fill adequately. The very site of his Beacon Hill residence with its isolation from neighbors and its distance from the more densely populated

areas of Boston, reflected Thomas's sense of distance from his elusive goals and his social isolation. Though happily married for fourteen years, by 1744 he still had no children. As the likelihood of any diminished, the emptiness of his life and home intensified. Even with his concerted efforts to fill this void by prolonged rounds of entertaining, he and Lydia remained lonely and frustrated. If the futility of his social pretensions ever dawned upon him, the absence of an heir who might secure the social recognition that eluded him only doubly depressed him. But the unexpected death of his brother, Reverend John Hancock of Braintree, suddenly opened up a whole host of new and promising opportunities which his calculating business mind quickly grasped.

Thomas's offer to assume responsibility for his deceased brother's eldest son was, therefore, not entirely a selfless act. Little that Thomas did was motivated from feelings of detached benevolence, or love of relatives. Instead, for him such acts stemmed from the confluence of two less noble objectives, the anticipation of personal profit and the maintenance of appearance. It was not that he was completely without emotion or sentiment, that he had become a hopeless cynic; actually Thomas was a cunning, intuitive and opportunistic businessman. Above all he understood the importance of appearances and the social advantages of philanthropy, a type of charity that for him never failed to produce a profit in another seemingly unexpected quarter. His offer to adopt his seven-year old nephew, John Hancock, possessed several such opportunities both immediately and for the future.

Initially, John's presence in his uncle's home offered his aunt Lydia an object upon which her years of repressed maternal longings were immediately released. Throughout her long marriage to Thomas, Lydia Henchman Hancock was the perfect companion, sharing her husband's enthusiasm for material success and enjoying the good life he provided. A famed hostess and a women of remarkable grace, she was regarded by many as the most "lady-like" woman, "ever Boston bred."[31] Although a physically large woman, "you know Mrs. Hancock is none of the shortest; smallest of folks," in fact she was prone to frequent illness and was not in the most robust state of health.[32] Nevertheless, she continued to share Thomas's penchant for display and managed to carry it off without the same degree of awkward self-consciousness. Her husband's decision to adopt John suited her desires and alleviated many of likely feelings of inadequacy.

From Thomas's viewpoint, his wife's happiness was probably only one consideration. For John's presence suddenly conjured up the vision of an heir and successor; one whom Thomas could groom and cultivate as he pleased. Thomas's social aspirations, therefore, were rekindled, and the burden of fulfilling them were deposited in his nephew, John Hancock's, youthful lap.

Perhaps too, Thomas saw the poetic justice in his providing for his nephew's future, a task his respected brother proved incapable of doing. Finally, both Thomas and Lydia enjoyed the agreeable prospect of easing their loneliness, derived in part from their occupancy of a house too large for all parties concerned. John Hancock quickly demonstrated an eager willingness to reciprocate for his uncle's favors by

consciously striving to please them in every possible way. Several years later he confided to his younger brother, Ebenezer, "study to please your Uncle and Aunt," clearly indicating he understood that was expected of him in return for his uncle's generosity.[33]

John's desire to fulfill Thomas and Lydia's expectations sprang from deeper feelings than the mere "ties of gratitude."[34] Whether consciously or not, he strove to recapture the emotional security recently disrupted by his father's death and his removal to Boston. As the only child in the household and the center of everyone's undivided attention this proved a relatively simple task. Thomas's own insecurities prompted an effusive barrage of presents and rewards. Lydia doted on his every need as both sought to turn John into a proper little English gentleman of their own creation. John offered no resistence. The combination of constant attention, material rewards, and the feeling of security were too tempting to jeopardize by questioning their motivation. Instead he acquiesced to everything they asked of him. Again, John advised his brother, Ebenezer, "I need not tell you it is for your own Interest to please your Uncle & Aunt." Furthermore, "you are under the strongest obligations that, I should think, must Induce you to strive in all your power so to conduct as they may have no reason to think their Indulgences are lost upon you." Speaking from personal experience and self-imposed practice, John also warned Ebenezer to be "cautious in the choice of your company," and to always "Treat your Uncle & Aunt with great Respect & be sure to do nothing to forfeit their favor."[35]

In the art of currying Lydia's favor, however, John had no rival. In a brief note to her while on a visit to his grandparents home in Lexington, he wrote, "My Grandma will be happy to receive a Word or two from you as will your Nephew in committing to Memory what shall proceed from an amiable & beloved Aunt, and as the original will not be present the proxy must answer as a feeble representative."[36] No one, not even her husband was as delightful as her deal little "Johnny." And in return, "never was a nephew to an Aunt more affectionate or respectful."[37]

What began for John as a child's innocent effort to win adult approval and security in an unfamiliar and bewildering situation became an integral part of his maturing personality. The lessons of his earliest experiences on Beacon Hill became a model for him for life, as his emotional stability grew increasingly dependent upon his perceptions of other people's approval of him. Consequently, he consistently tried to please everyone he came into contact with. His insecurities prompted his submissive response to his uncle's authority and rendered him incapable of openly disobeying any of Thomas's requests. Simultaneously, he internalized their values, ambitions, and adopted their life style as his own, in order to secure their continuous love. What in his maturity later appeared to many of his contemporaries as an offensive, egotistical, self-centered vanity, was in actuality an affected posture that helped conceal the extremely fragile, insecure, and sensitive side of his personality.

John was no sooner adjusting to the demands of his new environment than he was placed under the temporary care of a private tutor. His in-

struction was primarily limited to reading, since this was the only admissions requirement to the South Boston Grammer School that Thomas decided he would attend the following year. Better known as the Boston Latin School, because of its emphasis on the classical languages, John was eight years old, a year older than the usual age of admission, when he appeared before John Lovell, the school's headmaster, to take his entrance examination. Lovell had a deserved reputation for classical scholarship and was generally regarded as a sound critic. His oratory was also widely respected. The town meeting only recently asked him to deliver the first public address ever presented in Faneuil Hall, commemorating the death of the hall's benefactor, Peter Faneuil.[38] But his students' opinion of him was less complimentary. To them he was a stern teacher, greatly feared as a severely rigid authoritarian and disciplinarian. Admission to his school necessitated John's demonstration of his ability to read the Bible to Lovell's satisfaction. Following that ordeal, John was enrolled in the class of 1745 along with twenty five fellow classmates.[39]

In John's day, the Latin School was on School Street in a one room single story building with an attic above with a cupola and a small bell in front. Every day Master Lovell greeted his students as they entered, sitting menacingly at his desk opposite the front entrance. The usher, Nathaniel Gardner, stood in the extreme left hand corner carefully supervising the boys' work. Classes began promptly each morning at seven with a prayer, except in winter when they began an hour later. At eleven there was a two hour recess and then classes resumed until five in the

evening. At nine each day all students were dismissed in order to go to Mr. Holbrook in West Street to learn to write and cipher. John's studies included the Accidence, Nomeclatura Brevis, Corderius, and later they learned to write Latin from a book entitled, "Introduction to Making Latin." The only Greek they were exposed to was reading from the Testament.[40]

Lovell's curriculum normally required seven years to complete. It was a taxing educational experience with a strong emphasis in rote memorization and almost none on original thought. Many of Lovell's students found their intellectual curiosity permanently stifled under his heavy handed repetitious approach. William Savage, several years John's junior, but also one of Lovell's students, later recalled his experiences and cautioned his brother to be more careful in providing for his son's education. "Do not let him proceed from anyone given point until he is master of it, for another. What have I lost by the superficial instruction of that old rascal Lovell's School...?"[41]

Perserverance and diligence were the real keys to success at the Latin School. These talents combined with John's eagerness to please enabled him to complete Lovell's entire program in only five years. After his graduation in 1750, he turned his attention to preparing for Harvard College's entrance examination held in July, usually just before the school's commencment exercises.[42] Harvard's admission requirements were clearly outlined in the Body of Laws for Harvard College, adopted in 1734. They prescribed that a prospective student must be personally examined by the College President in the presence of at least two of the

school's four Tutors. He must demonstate to their satisfaction an ability "to read, construe, and parse" common classical authors, like Tully or Virgil as well as "ordinary Greek, as in the New Testament." Furthermore, he must "be skilled in making Latin verse, or at least in the rules of Prosodia," and "decline the paradigms of Greek nouns and verbs."[44] Weighed against the rigorous demands Lovell made of him at the Latin School, Harvard's requirements were not difficult and John was easily admitted in the class of 1754.

John's official enrollment, however, required his completion of several minor formalities. First, he had to present "testimony of his past blameless behavior," and second, his uncle had to guarantee all of John's financial obligation while at school. After this, John needed only to make his own personal hand-written copy of the school's laws and have it signed by the college President, Edward Holyoke, and a majority of the Tutors. When that was all completed, John Hancock was ready to take his place among the twenty incoming freshman entering Harvard that August.[45]

The rules governing student conduct, which John was obliged to write out over the summer before his classes began, were explicit. Eight separate chapters meticulously detailed all the restrictions and traditions he was honor bound to obey or risk a possible fine or expulsion. Two pence was levied against any undergraduate appearing late for prayers. Between five to ten shillings was assessed for using profanity. Blasphemy, fornication, robbery, and "any other very atrocious crime" resulted in immediate expulsion. Drinking, gambling, buying or selling items above one shilling in value without faculty or parental

approval, even opening a locked door or cabinet, and a plethora of other petty to serious infractions all carried an equivalent punishment. In practice, this unwieldy maze of regulations were infrequently enforced in their totality. Nevertheless, each incoming class pledged themselves to behave and lead "sober, righteous, and godly lives."[46]

John's class contained many familiar faces. Benjamin Church and James Allen, two former classmates from the Latin School were there, as well as his childhood friend from Braintree, Samuel Quincy.[47] Cambridge itself was equally familiar. Many distant relatives continued to live there, all like John, tracing their lineage to John's great grandfather, Nathaniel Hancock. One of these, Belcher Hancock, was a Tutor at the college.[48] In addition, John was still near his home in Boston, only a short ferry ride across the Charles River separated him from his aunt and uncle. In winter he could almost ice skate all the way home. In nearby Lexington, his grandfather, "Bishop" Hancock, actively continued in his ministry and John frequently visited there up until the "Bishop's" death in 1752.[49] His passing broke another of those few remaining links that formerly bound John to a ministerial career and left John even more firmly under the unchallenged influence of uncle Thomas.

As John packed his clothes and belongings in preparation for his departure for Harvard, his room was readied to receive an unexpected arrival, his younger brother Ebenezer. Uncle Thomas recently decided to support Ebenezer's education and enrolled him also in the Boston Latin School, temporarily taking John's place while he was away at college.[50] This was Thomas's way of subtly exerting pressure for compliance by his

nephew John, by raising the specter of a more complaint rival in the person of his own brother. Thomas Hancock was a demanding parental figure. John Hancock was his favorite and designated heir, but this proved to be more of an infringement on John's freedom than a liberating experience. By necessity, John was compelled to be always on his guard, forced to calculate his actions in light of his uncle's expectations. Therefore, John's departure for school in August 1750 did not really mean he was free to explore and develop his own individuality. Even at college he was restrained by the knowledge that he remained under his uncle's distant control and authority.

Student life at Harvard when John attended was very different from what it had been in his father's and grandfather's time. Modeled originally upon English universities, Harvard College was initially designed to provide New England with a steady succession of learned ministers. In theory the school's principle purpose remained unchanged; only in practice there were noteable differences and important shifts in emphasis. The school's charter of 1650 unintentionally made this possible. Among the school's initial goals was a statement claiming "the advancement of good literature, arts, and sciences" part of the college's overall educational design.[51] A fear of producing an illiterate ministry motivated this insertion, for it was thought that this fear would be more likely realized if theological studies were the sole requirement for a minister's preparation. Consequently, the potential for an eventual shift in the college's educational emphasis was present from the beginning. By the time John Hancock attended Harvard, this shift was on the verge of becomint a reality.[52]

By 1750, much of the divinity school atmosphere which formerly enveloped the college was rapidly fading away. Reflective of this was the increasing number of graduates, who like John, were turning their backs upon the ministry for careers.[53] Contributing to this decline was the slackened religiosity and growing secularism that pervaded much of the English speaking world.[54] The Great Awakening of the previous decade served only as a temporary reversal of this more sustained trend. John's decision to forsake the ministry, however, was made for him by uncle Thomas, and probably reflected little more than Thomas's own desire for an heir and successor. With the "Bishop's" death, there was no one else within the Hancock family who could or would challenge this decision, including John, who began to puppet his uncle's disdain for the profession. "Clergymen," John wrote, "have not the defference paid them, nor are they supported as they deserve, which is best poor encouragement to a young fellow."[55]

Edward Holyoke was President of Harvard College while John was a student, and under his administration the college's curriculum was overhauled. In spite of the Board of Overseers' conservative pleas for an emphasis on classical studies and religious orthodoxy, Holyoke consistently resisted their pressures. Through his emphatic support of Edward Wigglesworth, Hollis Professor of Divinity, and John Winthrop, Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, a refreshing breath of theological liberalism and toleration for dissenting opinion was gradually injected into the school's program.[56] As a result, Harvard became an intellectually stimulating environment in which to study, especially after John's monotonous and restricted experiences in the Latin School.[57]

John's instructor in divinity, Edward Wigglesworth, was an unusually tolerant theologian. He possessed an unflinching faith in God that enabled him to invite and even require his students to investigate critically competing theological systems. He was one of the first in New England to question openly Calvinism's five points of orthodoxy. Although his technique of raising doubts and asking questions irritated some, most of his students genuinely respected their esteemed professor. His influence was largely responsible for training a host of pioneering liberal ministers who eventually led New England out of the "fearsome jungles of Calvinism, into the thin, clear light of Unitarianism."[58] In tone and substance, Wigglesowrth's teachings were much closer to John's uncle's religious beliefs and practices than the strict instruction he received as a child from his father. But there is nothing to suggest this caused a deep religious conflict in him. Rather, John easily adopted his uncle's more casual religious attitude and incorporated Wigglesworth's tolerance as his own. In spite of his family's long historic identification and intimate relationship with the church, religion per se did not play an important part in John's adult life. He dutifully attended the Brattle Street Church in Boston, but social obligations and convenience were the principle motivations and not religious convictions. It was also his uncle and aunt's favorite church.[59]

Wiggleswroth's influence on the student body was easily matched, perhaps even exceeded, by his illustrious colleague, John Winthrop. Hailed on both sides of the Atlantic for his observations in Natural Philosophy, particularly of sun spots and Mercury's transit of the sun, he was unquestionably the singlemost distinguished scholar and teacher

in the colonies. His presence on the faculty embodied Harvard's transition from a parochial seminary into a respected center of liberal academic thought.[60] He alone of the faculty was spared an examination of his religious principles as a requirement for employment; probably because he would have been unable to pass the Board of Overseers' orthodox demands.[61]

Boston born and educated, at twenty four he accepted an appointment as Hollis Professor and quickly introduced radically new fields of study, including experimental lectures on the laws of mechanics, heat, light, and electricity. The first American laboratory of experimental physics was established under his direction. In 1751, while John Hancock was a sophomore, Winthrop introduced the study of fluxions, better known today as calculus to the curriculum. Under his instruction, over 1500 undergraduates were introduced to the principles and doctrines of Newtonianism.[62] Between Wigglesworth and Winthrop, Harvard's students were compelled to view their world from an entirely new perspective, based on observation and reason. Old accepted truisms were no longer accepted on faith alone. Independent thought was encouraged and even more importantly, many were, and for the first time, taught to think. Ultimately this was the most important innovation of all.

Rounding out the rest of Harvard's faculty while John was a student were the college's four tutors, Joseph Mayhew, Thomas March, Henry Flynt, and Belcher Hancock.[63] Judah Monis, a converted Italian Jew, was the Hebrew language instructor. All upperclassmen were required to take Hebrew four times a week, accompanied by their Hebrew psalter, lexicon, and Monis' recently published Hebrew grammar book. But consistently,

this was the student body's least favorite course.

Freshmen like John, however, had a much more restricted program than upperclassmen. Each entering class was assigned to one of the four tutors, who was responsible to guide them through to their commencement. For their first year they were barred from Wigglesworth and Winthrop's classes and lectures. Instead, they were instructed by their tutor in Latin, Greek, Rhetoric, Logic and Ethics. In approach it was indistinguishable from his five years of study at the Boston Latin School. But in one respect John was fortunate. Henry Flynt, "Father Flynt" as he was affectionately called, was assigned his Tutor. Stout, warmhearted, and somewhat lazy, "Father" Flynt was a Harvard institution in his own right. For over half a century he guided one class after another through to graduation always dispensing a genuine interest and concern for his pupils. But after a long and productive career, and with his eyesight failing, John's class would be his last.[65]

Because of his habitually slow speech and numerous other personal foibles, Flynt was a favorite target of undergraduate pranksters or young "blades" as the more sporting students were frequently called. John's classmate, Benjamin Church, penned a particularly scathing poetic description of their Tutor's physiogonomy:

> "An ugly Monster, he in sight appears,
> Form'd so by Nature, not deformed by years....
> His face a mixture of Deformities,
> Like flamming meteors, shine his Gorgon Eyes,
> A very scare-crow in his awful nose.
> A frightful Grin his hideous Jaws disclose,
> You, when he yawns, tremendous teeth may see,
> and hence he's call'd his Dental Majesty."[66]

Less literary assaults, like placing live snakes in his bed or the crop-

ping of his favorite mare's mane often ignited Flynt's quick temper. To many, the undergraduates' excessive consumption of intoxicating beverages was responsible for their wild and disruptive behavior.[67] "Father" Flynt, however, was one of the few faculty members who continually defended the students, arguing on their behalf that "wild colts make good horses."[68] When John and several classmates led by Samuel Quincy got into trouble "for being most remarkable active in making drunk" one of the townspeople's slave, it was probably their confession and Flynt's plea for tolerance that got them off with merely a public admonition.[69] This incident aside, John's behavior at school merited no other disciplinary action.

At the end of the freshman year the class ranks were traditionally posted. John placed fifth behind Henry Dwight, Samuel Foxcraft, Jonathan Webb, and Samuel Quincy.[70] The latter's claim to a superior rank was unquestionable. The Quincy family's long and distinguished record of public service to the colony assured that. But the others, sons of ministers and justices of the peace, were of questionable superiority. This was just the sort of insult that most easily offended John's overly sensitive uncle. On this occasion Thomas somehow managed to restrain himself and he did nothing to challenge the college's decision. But it was imaginary insults like these that he was most likely never to forgive or forget, nor would he let his nephew forget either.

Student life at Harvard was supposedly carefully supervised and governed by well-kept routines and strict discipline. And in spite of frequent incidents to the contrary, it was; although it was never strict enough to satisfy the excessive requirements of the college Overseers.

Nevertheless, students like John were expected to rise early for six o'clock prayers followed by a cold breakfast in either the College Hall or their own rooms. From eight until noon there were classes, lectures, and recitations. After dinner and a brief hour for recreation in the yard, John was required to return to his room and study until six in the evening when supper was served. This was followed by evening prayers and then the students returned again to their chambers to study until bed time at nine.[71]

The college environment, because of its distinctive routines, objectives, and demands, created a unique social situation for the small number of boys able to attend.[72] In colonial society adulthood was the normal standard for all behavior to be measured against. Children after the age of six or seven were expected to assume the bearing of young adults, and adolescence as we know it today did not exist. But college students were an exception to this pattern of social development. In this unusual setting, the freedoms of childhood were denied but so too the responsibilities of adulthood were also temporarily witheld. The tensions of being physically and emotionally a child while expected to behave and think like an adult made college a period of considerable stress.[73] The anomaly of these students' situation frequently resulted in their disruptive behavior, pranks, disturbances, and excessive incidents of drunkenness. John was not immune from these conflicting pressures, but he had ample reason for repressing his urges as much as possible, namely his fear of his uncle's disapproval.

While at college John matured into a tall, nearly six foot, thin, good looking young man. His health was delicate.[74] His overall physical

appearance suggested someone relatively unfamiliar with heavy physical labor. He was meticulously well-mannered, formally polite, and graceful in his movements, but his dress was excessively ornate to the point of extravagence. In reaction to his and several of his Harvard classmates' extremes in this regard, the college Overseers, in October 1754, enacted a resolution to limit this "unnecesary expense." In the future, on no occasion shall any of the "scholars wear any gold or silver lace, or any gold or silver brocades, in the college or town of Cambridge," and that no one shall "wear silk night gowns."[75] Nevertheless, Thomas and Lydia continued to stockpile John's fashionable English styled wardrobe as they eagerly awaited his visits home during school vacations.[76]

While at college, John's relationship with his mother grew increasingly strained. Since his father's death, his attitude towards her remained correct but detached. After living with his Aunt for over six years, he regarded Lydia more as a mother than he did his natural one. Still, he was required by social convention to try to maintain a proper mother-son relationship, but it was difficult to fulfill the needs simultaneously of both his mother and aunt. It required a delicate balancing act on John's behalf, one that grew even more complicated when his mother suddenly remarried at the end of his freshman year. His stepfather was Reverend Daniel Perkins, the congregational minister for Bridgewater, Massachusetts.[77] Afterwards she and John drifted further apart and John seemingly had little regard for his stepfather. But John's sister Mary moved with her mother to Bridgewater and took up residence in her stepfather's house. From then on John's relationship with his sister also slowly deteriorated.

At first John earnestly sought to sustain a correspondence with his sister, but without much reciprocal encouragement on her behalf. "I believe time slipd away very easie with you," he wrote, followed with the plea, "I wish you would spend one Hour in writing to me."[78] By his senior year, news of his mother and sister most frequently arrived by way of rumor. One such story reached his ear that his sister was about to be married. He immediately wrote, "there was, nay now is, a report that you are going to be married very soon. I should be glad to know to whom."[79] Pathetically he asked if she intended to send him an invitation. The report, however, proved premature, but the incident underscored John's remote contact with events in his stepfather's home. In spite of his intermittent efforts to improve his relationship with them, his mother and sister increasingly became more distant. His relations with them remained only superficially correct but devoid of real human emotion and feeling. Only with his younger brother, who remained in Boston, did he manage to establish any semblance of close personal ties. Yet, even their relationship proved less brotherly as John sought to continually instruct and direct Ebenezer's every move and action. Outside of his dependence on Thomas and Lydia, which necessitated a close bond, John's relationship with his family was cool and detached.

In the Spring of 1754, John's formal academic education ended with his graduation from Harvard College.[80] As a student he successfully demonstrated a capacity for hard work and self-discipline, although he never merited any special recognition as a scholar. Still, his exposure to the best available colonial educational facilities was a definite asset and made an indelible imprint on his mind. In his later career, political opponents who

castigated his intellect and measured his understanding as "dwarf size," and considered his mind a "mere Tabula Rasa," were patently excessive in their criticism.[81] Mercy Otis Warren, a severe critic of John's politics, was much closer to the truth in her evaluation of his intellectual capabilities. "His mental faculties were not much impaired by the infirmities of his bodily constitution," nor were they "composed of those elementary sparks of genius that soon burn themselves out." But more to the point, she noted, "the energies of his mind," were not "blunted by industry and application."[82] John was capable of doing sustained, repetitious, and tedious work; but he was not a creative, imaginative, or original thinker. Nor was it the objective of his education to make him into one.

The goal of John's formal education was to produce a polished, literate, and refined gentleman. A contemplative scholar or pulpit pounding minister were the last things Thomas envisioned when he sent John off to school. Perhaps Thomas's objectives, which John gladly incorporated as his own, were the cause of the widening rift in John's relationship with his mother. Perhaps it was John's cultivated air of social superiority that offended his sister and prompted Ebenezer's subservience. It certainly gladdened Thomas and Lydia's hearts to see their "Johnny", at age seventeen, cut such a dashing figure in his lavender suits riding about Boston in his uncle's yellow carriages. His neatly powdered wig and trim laced cuffs clearly identified him as a man of wealth and breeding. John was in every way equal to his role. Writing to his uncle he explained, "I Endeavour in all my Conduct not to Exceed your Expectation...but to appear in Character I am Obliged to be pretty Expensive."[83]

And yet, John's entire childhood and subsequent education were all predicated on a need to fulfill someone else's ambitions. At first it was his father and grandfather's desire for him to follow their example and become a Congregational minister. After that he was expected to overcome his uncle's thwarted social aspirations. Regardless of whose desires John strove to satisfy, however, the cumulative effect was the same. His own insecurity and fear of disapproval prompted his compliance. And in spite of his natural desire to cast off this obedient posture and assert his own wants, there was never an opportune moment to be himself. The promise of his uncle's inheritence, and the fear of losing it through some foolish act or youthful intransigence restricted his freedom of expression. Instead of asserting himself, John did what increasingly became his habit of behavior, he complied with his uncle's wishes. After graduation he returned to Boston and his uncle's house. He then began a six year apprenticeship in Thomas' store with the intention of learning all the skills of a successful merchant. This was his real education. But with his acquiescence, John acknowledged his complete dependence upon his uncle as well as his sense of obligation. As long as Thomas lived, John was incapable of asserting any degree of real independence. But the material prospects, the attention he received, the desire on his part to be wanted, and his own ambitions to succeed his uncle made the sacrifice of his personal identity a more than worthwhile exchange.[84]

CHAPTER III

A MERCHANT APPRENTICE

Late in the summer of 1754, John Hancock seriously began his training for a career as an aspiring merchant prince. Although favored from the start by beginning as his uncle's apprentice, John's initial duties were limited in scope. Beyond serving as Thomas's scribe, store clerk, and general errand boy, neither his advice nor counsel were sought. In spite of his Harvard education, John was literally forced to start from the bottom and work his way up, or at least as near the bottom as was socially acceptable to his aunt and uncle.

There was no formally adhered to method for preparing a young man for a mercantile career. It was generally agreed, however, that experience and on the job training was preferable to a college education. The latter would not hurt but the former was considered essential. The characteristics that distinguished the most successful merchants from the larger field of shopkeepers and traders could not really be taught in the abstract, much less in the refined academic atmosphere of the college environment. Prudence, will power, an orderly well disciplined mind, natural intelligence, and a talent for commanding men were basic ingredients for success among eighteenth century Boston merchants. One either possessed these attributes and learned how to implement them through experience or one did not have them and would probably never acquire them. Yet, in the final analysis, even these qualities failed to assure success. Rather, some indefinable combination of talent, personality, and luck were the decisive qualities.[1] John was fortunate

to have more than a fair share of these essential ingredients.

As for luck, none doubted John's extremely good fortune to be designated his uncle's heir and to be brought into his business in order to learn his trade. "What a school was this," marvelled his envious friends, "four large ships continually plying between Boston and London and other business in proportion."[2] Only John Adams' overly conservative estimate of the Hancocks' wealth tends to minimize the true extent of John Hancock's advantageous situation as his uncle's successor.[3]

While John Hancock struggled to gain mastery over his uncle's far flung business activities, off on the distant frontier of western Virginia events moved England and France closer to war. As John diligently copied Thomas's letters neatly in the latter's letterbooks, twenty-one year old, Lt. Colonel George Washington and his men retreated eastward across the Appalachian Mountains. Washington's ill advised show of force and his subsequent humiliation and surrender of Fort Necessity to the French and their victorious Indian allies signalled the opening round of hostilities in the long and bloody French and Indian War.[4] France's colonial aspirations in North America were permanently crushed during this lengthy struggle for empire, but equally important, the war provided many of America's future Revolutionary War leaders their first period of testing and training.

As Colonel Washington hastily pushed the survivors of his fruitless campaign back home along the rutted and tangled roads of Virginia he was troubled by personal self-doubts and worried about his reputation and his future. In Boston, John Hancock also thought about his future and how to establish his reputation and impress his uncle with his compe-

tency. His punctilious efforts netted more recognition of his talents than did Washington's first ill fated encounter with adversity. John Adams vividly attested to John's hard work which he claimed set an example "to all the young men of the town. Wholly devoted to business, he was as regular and punctual at his store as the sun in his course."[5] Equally impressed with his nephew's serious commitment to his work, Thomas Hancock proudly described John as "A sober, modest, young gentleman," whose "industry, abilities for business and good behavior," beckoned well for his future.[6]

For the first time in over a decade since their father's death, John and his brother were reunited under one roof. When John returned to his uncle's home after graduation, Ebenezer was still living there while completing his studies at the Boston Latin School. Two years later, however, he followed John's lead and entered Harvard college. To John's obvious relief, Ebenezer ostensibly intended to prepare for the ministry. Feeling less threatened by his brother's potential rivalry, John suddenly began showing an increased interest in Ebenezer's well-being. Embarrased by his slovenly appearance, John sent him a pair of new shoes as a present, replacing a worn pair of hand me downs. "Don't wear them shoes of mine any longer," he ordered, "for they look scandalous."[7] Throughout his brother's four years at Harvard, John continually saw to it that he received a steady supply of decent clothing and other sundry effects.[8] His concern for Ebenezer reflected in part John's growing self-confidence but also suggests a degree of insecure self-consciousness. John's inflated self image required that his relatives all live up to the standards he set for them. Any deficiencies on their part were blows aimed

personally at him. After years of careful coaching by Thomas and Lydia, John was convinced of his family's special place in Boston society.

For the most part, however, John's energies were focused on his own career preparation. He conscientiously watched and tried hard to absorb everything instructive that a meticulous study of his uncle's methods and practices could profitably teach an ambitious young apprentice. The advice he generously proffered to Ebenezer, that he "give great attention to business and let your conduct be such as to merit the esteem of all about you," although unsolicited, was a lesson born of John's own experiences. "And remember," he concluded, "the diligent Hand maketh Rich."[9]

John's moralizing tone and studied approach to his work was not lost on Thomas Hancock who fully subscribed to John's pragmatic and materialistic philosophy. After all, John was only echoing his uncle's formula for success. Nevertheless, Thomas Hancock, an established and proven success in the commercial community of eighteenth century colonial America, possessed a keen analytical mind and a perceptive eye for talent. He dispassionately recognized the necessary skills and attributes for a successful merchant in his nephew John. True, Thomas harbored strong personal reasons for wanting John to triumph, but he was too headstrong and lacked the sentimentality to permit his heart to overrule his head. Thomas Hancock did not accumulate what was probably the largest mercantile fortune in Boston in order to cast it away recklessly by bestowing it to some incompetent heir. On the contrary, he was extremely cautious in selecting John as his successor and kept him waiting over six years before finally elevating him to a full partnership.

But before the, Thomas wanted to test his nephew's abilities and personally guide his commercial education before giving him even the smallest voice in the firm's decision making process. And there was much that Thomas was capable of teaching his ever present protege. But for John, there was always the haunting specter that if for some reason he failed to live up to his uncle's expectations, then there was the real possibility that Thomas would alter his stated intention and name another as his principal beneficiary.

Several viable alternative candidates in addition to John's younger brother Ebenezer attracted Thomas's attention. For example, when John's uncle, Reverend Nicholas Bowes, a chaplain in the northern army, died during an early campaign against the French in the French and Indian War, Thomas immediately came to the aid of Reverend Bowes' two fatherless sons.[10] The eldest one, William, was three years John's senior and shared his cousin's enthusiasm for business and disinterest in a ministerial career. With Uncle Thomas's assistance he opened a small hardware shop in Boston and quickly demonstrated a flair for trade by offering "to sell as cheap as can be bought in any shop and town."[11] Thomas provided continuous support through numerous instances of special preferance such as turning over some of his own retail hardware trade to him.[12] William Bowes was John's most likely rival and consequently their relationship was predictably strained.[13] John was much closer, however, to William's younger brother, Nicholas Bowes, who he correctly sensed, was much less of a potential threat. Through Thomas's assistance, Nicholas was apprenticed to Daniel Henchman and was later pressured to carry on the business after Henchman's death.[14]

A second set of cousins, Jonathan Bowman and his brother Stephen, were also specially favored by their uncle Thomas Hancock. Jonathan attended Harvard and was John's roommate there for a time. The combined presence of all these potential rivals acted as a stimulus to intensify John's attentiveness to work and motivated his continued subservience to Thomas's will.

John's earliest business and political education occurred during the heady years of economic prosperity generated by the French and Indian War. Not only were these years of unusually high profits for Thomas, but they afforded John an ideal front row seat from which to observe his uncle's dexterous commercial skills in operation. For the most part, John was a silent observer but he took in everything, especially his uncle's nimble political footwork as he adroitly slid in and out of successive political and business alliances. Thomas's independent course was solely dictated by the lure of high profits. His sole motivation was self-interest.

Throughout Thomas and John Hancock's active commercial careers, business and politics were indistinguishably blurred components of the same process. In the small compact seaport town of Boston, a complex assortment of competing individuals, factions, and interest groups fought to eke out the smallest advantage over their equally active rivals. Success was frequently secured by such relatively small accomplishments as gaining access to the governor, by exerting influence in the General Court, or preferably, by forming connections with well placed individuals in London, the very center of the Empire's political and economic web. These seemingly non-commercial achievements often led di-

rectly to special preference and this in turn frequently resulted in enormous profits. Thomas, who was one of the system's more successful operators, introduced John to this personal manipulation with its ever-changing intrigues. Under Thomas's direction, John met everyone of importance in Boston and as his uncle's personal secretary he was soon corresponding to their widely dispersed commercial agents. John literally learned his trade by becoming both his uncle's shadow and alter ego.

Throughout the 1750's, competition among Boston's merchants intensified as the town experienced an overall loss of trade. By exploiting the agricultural productivity of their fertile hinterlands and their strategic geographic position in the West Indian and southern coastal trade, both New York and Philadelphia diverted a significant portion of the European trade away from Boston. This led to a decline in the town's population as Boston's economy stagnated, especially in comparison to former periods of sustained growth.[15] But, this overall trend was partially obscured by the artificially induced prosperity created by the French and Indian War. Meanwhile, the town's social class structure was hardening. With the introduction of this rigidity, economic opportunity faded and class mobility declined.[16] Class consciousness was also more apparent, witness Thomas Hancock's continuous embarrassment about his humble social origins. Faced with these mounting difficulties, Thomas's achievements are all the more impressive, for he was one of the few to prosper in spite of the declining opportunities available.[17] His example clearly demonstrated to John how one might create one's own opportunities as well as how to profit from exist-

ing ones, regardless how slight they might appear.

For instance, Thomas eagerly welcomed the resumption of hostilities between England and France. "I wish the French Dogs may be followed to their Headquarters and dens at Canada and wholly rooted out," and for God's sake," he wrote Christopher Kilby, "let us Root the French Blood out of America."[18] Beneath this veneer of patriotic enthusiasm, however, Thomas calculatingly weighed the economic advantages he felt certain the French expulsion from Canada would produce. At the very least, he predicted, it would be the "Salvation of England." For in forty years, he calculated, "this very America will absolutely take off all the Manufactury of England, a Noble Return for their assistance... 40 percent for their Outsett at Least."[19]

Thomas Hancock's sudden passion for war was strictly motivated by business considerations. War was profitable for American merchants and he blamed his recent financial distresses on the long peace since the conclusion of King George's War. "Peace", he protested, "hath put a stop to all our tarde."[20] Again writing to Kilby, he complained that he could not "raise a 1000 to save my life."[21] But, the recent outbreak of fighting on the western frontier suddenly altered his outlook as well as his financial prospects. Cynically, Thomas regarded war as he did most everything else in life, solely in terms of pounds and shillings. Consequently, Thomas's patriotic utterances and his nationalistic commitments to the Crown and even the government of Massachusetts Bay lacked genuine conviction. Ideology was definitely of secondary importance to him. His patriotic attacks upon the French were merely conveniently assumed postures designed to further enhance his political position and

to promote his ultimate design of amassing increased profits.

Although John held a more romantic view of war than his pragmatic uncle, he was restrained from enlisting in any of the Massachusetts companies raised to fight the French. It would not be until after Thomas' death that John could act out some of his heroic fantasies and dreams of military glory by joining one of the Suffolk County militia regiments. As Thomas's apprentice, all of John's personal interests were suppressed out of a more pressing need to satisfy his uncle's expectations and desires.

Thomas's immediate goal was to secure one or more of Parliament's wartime government supply contracts to provision and outfit future military operations against the French in Canada. These highly prized economic plums, paid in pounds sterling, and drawn directly from London, were the object of fierce competition among American merchants . It was a no holds-barred contest that brought out the merchants' worst, most unscrupulous, and least admirable characteristics, including deceit, bribery, and cunning political intrigue.[22]

The correct political posture and right political contacts were important realities which Thomas hoped to convert into preferential consideration for himself when these contracts were awarded. He was, therefore, willingly drawn into the complicated and often puzzling milieu of colonial Massachusetts politics. But for Thomas it was solely politics of personal advantage and was not related to any noble concept of civic virtue or a belief in a higher social obligation or sense of responsibility. Thomas Hancock was a self-interested opportunist.[23] Through his personal example and intentional instruction he sought to ensure

that John Hancock would be one as well.

Based on his prior record of success, Thomas had every reason in 1755 to look forward to a continuous future share of these highly profitable wartime supply contracts. During the recent King George's War (1744-1748), his convenient partnership with his old friend Christopher Kilby and his timely political accommodation with Governor William Shirley proved an unbeatable and mutually agreeable combination.

Christopher Kilby of Boston was another of those valuable individuals with whom Thomas habitually formed and cultivated a relationship which later proved so extraordinarily beneficial to his business interests. Roughly the same age as Thomas, Kilby advantageously married the daughter of William Clark, a distinguished and prosperous Boston merchant. Shortly afterwards he joined his father-in-law in an extensive commercial partnership that involved the English and West Indian trade. Kilby also possessed a sure talent for politics and served Boston as one of its elected representatives to the General Court during Governor Belcher's administration. In 1741, the General Court chose him the colony's agent to represent its interest in London. This potentially powerful appointment was effectively used by Kilby to both his and his friends' good advantage.[24]

While serving in London as the colony's agent, Kilby helped engineer Governor Belcher's downfall and won needed support for William Shirley as his successor. He was repaid for his efforts by Shirley's continued support of him as the colony's agent in spite of strong local opposition at home.[25] Throughout all this, Thomas and Kilby remained fast friends. When Kilby embarked upon his career as colonial agent,

he left his children behind in Boston under Thomas's temporary care. When their grandfather, William Clark, died intestate, Thomas was appointed their guardian and secured for them their fair share of Clark's large estate. Meanwhile, Kilby was in an equally choice position to repay Thomas for his timely assistance and friendship.[26]

Thomas Hancock's reaction to William Shirley's appointment as Governor was initially guarded. This quickly turned to suspicion when the governor began experimenting with paper money emissions and courting the supporters of the abortive Land Bank. Above all, Shirley irritated the merchant community with his vigorous attempts to enforce the Imperial trade regulations and suppress smuggling. This particularly annoyed Thomas, who occasionally ventured to land an unreported cargo.[27] But, Thomas's antipathy towards the governor was easily overcome by their mutual interest in retaining Kilby as the colony's London agent; especially in face of the rising opposition to Kilby organized by Thomas Hutchinson and other supporters of former Governor Belcher. Without a moment's hesitation, Thomas broke ranks with his fellow Boston merchants and lent his support to the governor, in spite of his opposition to Shirley's imperial vision and policy of strict trade law enforcement. Ultimately, he gained much more from this political realignment than he lost.

While this delicate maneuvering took place in Massachusetts, in London, Kilby became the junior partner in the English trading firm of Sedgwick, Barnard, and Kilby. With Shirley's enthusiastic support the firm won several valuable contracts to supply Massachusetts with most of its military equipment and supplies. Meanwhile, in exchange for his

support of Shirley, Thomas Hancock became the firm's Boston representative as well as the recipient of several supply contracts of his own.[28] This proved enormously profitable for all concerned and lasted throughout King George's War and into the subsequent peacetime hiatus that Thomas found so financially unrewarding.

This episode ably demonstrated Thomas Hancock's opportunistic and self-serving political philosophy at work. Yet, none of his uncle's prior activities, such as this typical example, affected John Hancock directly. But indirectly it suggested an attitude that was representative of the instruction John consistently received as a merchant apprentice. Furthermore, Thomas's continually shifting pattern of political allegiance would assume greater meaning for John during and after the French and Indian War. For it was only then that the colony wide political alignments that eventually coalesced into two principal rival camps, the "Court" and "Country" parties, assumed their first still inchoate forms. Thomas and more importantly John's eventual identification with the "Country" party, the party of opposition, originated largely from Thomas's deteriorating relationship with Governor Shirley, beginning near the outset of the French and Indian War.

Thomas logically assumed that with the resumption of war he could count on Shirley's continued support to win supply contracts. His expectations were, however, quickly dashed. In a letter written to Kilby shortly after hostilities began in 1755, Thomas confessed, "I know nothing of this matter." In truth, the governor has, "not been in my house these sixteen months nor I scarcely in his."[29] The realization that Shirley no longer needed him politically slowly dawned on Thomas, who

nevertheless continued his offers of personal assistance, such as his recent extension of financial credit to the hard pressed governor.[30] There was nothing personal, however, in their political falling out. Rather, it was symptomatic in Massachusetts politics that the governor was constantly forced to create new political coalitions if he hoped to remain a viable executive officer.[31]

Shirley was uniquely successful in this endeavor. During his unusually long sixteen year tenure as Massachusetts' colonial governor, he established a relatively stable political framework. In large measure he was helped by the frequent periods of warfare which enabled him to dole out a generous amount of badly wanted patronage appointments. It was through this "chain of favors" that Shirley was able to form each successive coalition, as the "effective distribution of officers, commissions, and contracts was throughout his administration the first order of business."[32] In turn, this "system of political alliances" produced an "era of relative good feeling" in Massachusetts, the last such era before the Revolution.[33]

Shirley's far reaching vision of forging a grand colonial union, however, and his ambitious hopes for Imperial reform required a new basis of support. In this new arrangement, Thomas Hancock's good will was expendable. His and Kilby's attempts to monopolize the supply contract system during the last war antagonized many of the merchants to whom Shirley now looked to for assistance. In an effort to win favor from these men, especially Thomas Hutchinson, the Olivers, and wealthy merchants like the Irvings and the Bowdoins, who formerly supported Governor Belcher, Shirley now ended his support for Christopher Kilby

as the colonial agent in favor of his own son-in-law, William Bollan.[34]

In a limited sense, Shirley's gambit succeeded. He managed to form a local administration that generally supported his imperial outlook. But according to the opposition, this "Court Party" consisted of a "motley mixture of high churchmen and dissenters."[35] This was bound to produce a concerted counterattack on behalf of the opposition. As long as Shirley's ambitions, however, were confined to Massachusetts Bay, his coalition made him nearly invulnerable to political assault. Yet, as soon as he ventured into the wider field of intercolonial politics, his lack of sufficient patronage appointments, needed to build up a continental wide basis of support, led to his downfall.[36]

By the time Shirley's replacement, Thomas Pownall, arrived in 1757, Thomas Hancock's association and identification with the "Country Party" was nearly complete. When Shirley attempted to cut off Thomas's principal source of influence in London, by dropping his support for Kilby, Thomas's conversion to the ranks of the opposition was predictable. Governor Shirley's unexpected fall only a few short years later, however, suddenly reversed Thomas's temporarily sagging fortunes; especially as Governor Pownall was extremely sympathetic to the "Country Party's" wants and needs. Furthermore, logic necessitated that Pownall, a principal mover in arranging Shirley's fall, would want to include opponents of the Shirleyan faction when he organized his own governing coalition. This was very good news for Boston's merchant community who recognized in Pownall a kindred spirit.[37]

But for the most part, the "Court" and "Country" parties were not really very different and were generally made up of the same type of

people. The most significant difference up until this period was that one faction tended to be "in" power, retaining useful connections with the government in London, while the other faction was "out" of favor and "out" of power. And yet, this "in" and "out" distinction was already becoming overly simplistic by the 1760's. For within the opposition "Country Party" there was a distinct populist, libertarian, and localist orientation. The widely rumored speculation about impending Parliamentary reform of the Imperial administration evoked their strong vocal opposition. They interpreted these proposed alterations as an unwarranted infringement upon their locally conceived constitutional rights as free Englishmen. On the other hand, adherents of the so-called "Court Party", if not actively in favor of these rumored reforms, at least hoped to be in a position to benefit materially from them. Both factions were increasingly polarized as each perceived that its self-interest originated in diametrically opposed quarters. This process accelerated during Governor Pownall's administration. As one historian described it, between 1757 and 1760, "the structure of what would become Revolutionary politics in Massachusetts...first took shape."[38]

Thomas Hancock was one of the first to profit substantially from this development. The new Governor's overt sympathy for the merchants, his lax enforcement of the trade regulations, and his frequent participation in many of their speculative money making schemes endeared Pownall with the local trading community. His administration represented a high water mark among merchants in their respect and toleration for British colonial policy. With the governor's active encouragement, Thomas Hancock advanced into the very inner circle of colonial political

power and social respectability with his election in 1758 to the Governor's Council. His financial rewards similarly soared during Pownall's brief tenure in office.[39] Their friendship grew so close that upon the governor's departure from office, he left behind almost L3,200 pounds sterling entrusted to Thomas's care to invest for him. For the next eight years either Thomas or John saw to it that the former governor received his duly credited interest.[40]

As a whole the merchant community in Massachusetts, particularly in Boston, prospered under Pownall's tolerant and accommodating administration. But it was war and Parliament's increased spending, more than the governor's benign attitude that was ultimately responsible for their economic satisfaction. Nevertheless, Pownall was the recipient of all their affections. The political alignments that emerged during his term in office further crystalized and intensified under his immediate successor, Francis Bernard. But by then, Thomas Hancock's interest in colonial politics substantially waned.

When his dear friend Thomas Pownall left office in 1760, Thomas Hancock turned his back on Massachusetts politics and concentrated his attention on his extensive business affairs. Since the fall of Quebec the preceding year, his chances to win additional supply contracts diminished as the center of military action shifted to more distant theatres of operation. Furthermore, his close association with Pownall made him less likely a candidate for preferential treatment in the new administration. Consequently, Thomas began readjusting his commerce in anticipation of the war's end. His hope was that

this peace would not result in a similar postwar recession as had the one following King George's War.[41]

Uncle Thomas's involvement and experiences in Massachusetts politics during the 1750's however, constituted only a small part of John's entire mercantile education, albeit an important part. At his uncle's side, John observed Thomas's opportunistic responses to an ever changing political climate. For instance, Thomas's eventual affiliation with the "Country Party" was never the result of a shared political philosophy nor based upon a commonly held ideological commitment. Rather, it was the product of a successive combination of accidental circumstances, beginning with Shirley's decision to forego Hancock's support in favor of others who were more sympathetic to his dream of colonial union and administrative reform, which pushed Thomas into the open arms of the opposition. Ironically, Thomas's association with the "Country Party" occurred precisely at the moment when the inchoate political entities within the colony began to organize in response to external events and threats, principally Parliament's intended Imperial reforms and colonial administrative reorganization. By then, Thomas's widely recognized friendship and political relationship with Thomas Pownall further reinforced his identification with the popular party.[42]

To a significant degree, Thomas's pragmatic model and his role in the "opposition party" governed John's future course of political activity. But, these alone were not the most influential lessons he learned. Rather, it was the techniques of political management that

made the most indelible impression on him. He observed each successive governor's use of patronage and the importance of creating a broad-based coalition as well as the need for a large popular personal following as the most crucial ingredients for political survival. Furthermore, in the rapidly changing nature of Massachusetts politics, it was essential to maintain cordial relations with one's political opponents, for today's foes could easily become tomorrow's friends. Consequently, a willingness to compromise, flexibility, and a conciliatory nature were important attributes for anyone in Massachusetts Bay seriously intent upon making politics his vocation. This was not, however, John's immediate ambition. Few American merchants were successfully lured into the crown's service by the promise of salaries paid in sterling or with the expectation of additional lucrative fees. Generally, only the most conservative merchants, those who saw their crown appointment as a step upward in status were tempted.[43] But, whatever secret political ambitions John already harbored, and for someone of his social status the only acceptable political careers available were in the crown's service, John remained politically inactive throughout his six year apprenticeship.

John's immediate daily concerns were predominately related to business and commercial activities. Increased responsibility was entrusted to him as Thomas grew preoccupied with issues arising from his election to the Governor's Council and his duties as Selectman. But this only followed a far longer period in which his duties were narrowly circumscribed. From beginning to end, John's entire com-

mercial education was carefully regulated and supervised by Thomas.

Perhaps the single most difficult aspect of John's education was mastering the complex interrelationship among Thomas's widely dispersed economic activities. Just learning the full extent of his uncle's holdings was in itself no simple task. In addition to his substantial wholesale and retail import trade, Thomas actively engaged in shipping, land speculation and real estate rental, manufacturing, and banking.[44] As a prudent generalist, Thomas reinvested his profits in this diverse portfolio as a hedge against the vicissitudes threatened by the frequent fluctuation between war and peace. Parliament's threatened reform of colonial administration and increased enforcement of the trade regulations further justified his flexible investment policies.[45] This talent for juggling his interests and altering their emphasis at precisely the right moment contributed to his continually sustained profits. There was no guaranteed way, however, to ensure that his commercial skills could be transferred to John. Much of Thomas's business knack was intuitive. Nevertheless, the lessons he learned through experience were passed on to his nephew. For example, when confronted with the prospect of war, Thomas adopted a cautious policy with respect to his shipping interests. "Shipping," he reasoned, "will Destroy men of little or no means, and those of Estate if they'd Risque it in shipping as Times go." Adhering to his own advice, Thomas divested his entire holdings in shipping and cancelled all maritime ventures as the outset of the French and Indian War.[46]

Thomas's profitable army supply contracts, which provided him with a continuous source of pounds sterling, allowed him to assume various

banking functions in money short New England. He often advanced badly needed cash loans to debtors, taking their farm property as colateral. As a result of numerous defaults during the 1740's and 50's, Thomas amassed sizeable real estate holdings throughout the colony which he in turn let out for rent.[47] In Boston, he owned a major share in the Hancock Wharf located at the end of Fleet Street over which he ultimately purchased complete control. He also owned a proprietary interest in the Long Wharf as well as other scattered properties which also earned him rental income. His single most extensive real estate speculation was his involvement in the Kennebec Land Company. He held two full shares in the company's still undivided lands as well as thousands of acres previously aportioned.[48]

These sizeable acquisitions were a source of both immediate rental income and a potential long range profit. Yet, the mere extent of Thomas's holdings suggest the influence of another prevalent characteristic commonly exhibited among American and English merchants. They mutually shared a conviction that only landed estates were an acceptable form of income for a true gentleman. Social respectability and an active involvement in daily commerce were thought to be mutually exclusive realms for the well born. Consequently, many merchants like Thomas sought to purchase respectability and social status by acquiring these vast tracts of wilderness property. Thomas further believed these purchases would insure his nephew's future social credibility. For upon this property, they both envisioned the creation of great landed estates, thereby transforming the commercially

oriented Hancocks into the landed gentry, or Squire Hancocks.

Following the fall of Quebec in 1759, John Hancock assumed an even greater role in his uncle's business affairs. His youth and enthusiasm were valuable assets as too many years of rich food and wine, combined with a sedentary life style made Thomas vulnerable to recurring attacks of gout. Although increasingly incapacitated, Thomas nevertheless decided to take advantage of Governor Pownall's recall to London and sent John along under the Governor's protective wing. Pownall sailed on June 3, 1760, leaving behind a victorious and contented colony of loyal Englishmen. As his ship slowly slipped through the harbor entrance and headed for the open sea, a last backward glance to shore revealed a large crowd waving farewell. Pownall was the last English governor of Massachusetts Bay to be genuinely honored in this way.[49] Standing on deck nearby the governor, also watching this emotional outpouring of affection, was another London bound passenger, John Hancock.

Ostensibly John's mission to England reflected Thomas's growing anxiety over the Board of Trade's slow response in honoring its bills. It was thought that with John's presence, and perhaps Pownall's helpful intercession, these financial matters could be settled more quickly. But, John's errand was more than just a mere dunning expedition. Thomas's concern over the Board's sluggish settlement was only part of a larger, more complex problem confronting the Hancock's. With the anticipation of peace, Thomas recognized an urgent need to reorganize their wartime trading activities into a peacetime commerce without

losing their vital access to pounds sterling. While in England, it was hoped that John would ferret out useful first hand information regarding the right direction this trade should take.[50] It was also an ideal opportunity to see something of the world and again with Pownall's assistance gain an introduction to London's best social and commercial circles. Armed with his uncle's letter of introduction, John eagerly looked forward to meeting their overseas agents and further his education as a gentleman. He embarked on his journey full of self-confidence about his future, knowing of his uncle's stated intention, that upon "his return to New England," Thomas proposed "to take him a partner with me."[51]

Of all the urban centers in the British Empire, London came the closest to being a metropolitan center in a modern twentieth century sense. It contained a densely packed concentration of humanity, sprawling along both banks of the Thames River, which connected the city's three quarters of a million people and their output of manufactured goods and commercial products with the Empire's widely scattered overseas markets.[52] John's visit came at a time of great social and economic change as the city was in the midst of a sustained period of rapid growth and expansion spurred in part by the recent military victories over the French. Approximately two hundred vessels a year linked London with her American colonies alone, but in spite of these frequent trans-oceanic connections, few Americans risked the nearly four week crossing in order to visit the mother country. Those who did, were mostly students and seamen. John's stay thereby consti-

tuted a relatively unique experience for an American colonist.[53]

Many of the Americans who visited England took advantage of their stay to trace their family's genealogical origins and seek out either distant or long forgotten relatives. Neither activity interested John, who quickly became preoccupied with seeing the heralded sights of London which were already part of any eighteenth century visitor's itinerary.[54] Although supposedly there to conduct and learn more about trade and handle his uncle's business affairs, he was overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of the London scene. These temptations combined with the freedom he enjoyed away from Thomas and Lydia led John into his first innocent experiences of rebellious behavior. In spite of his uncle's continuous flurry of messages, admonishing John, "to be frugal of Expenses, do Honor to your Country & furnish your Mind with all wise Improvements," and a warning to "keep Pickpockets from my watch," John found it difficult to follow Thomas's instructions and keep his mind solely on business matters.[55]

Aware that he was expected to remain in Europe for only a few short months, upon his arrival in London, he set out to complete the business aspects of his visit as quickly as possible. After a hasty tour of Hamburg, Holland, Bristol, and Manchester he returned to London in order to settle his accounts with the Treasury Department. So far his negotiations with his uncle's agents and correspondents accomplished little that was substantive. He won only minor concessions from them and paid off some of his uncle's outstanding debts.[56]

Back in London, John placed great store in Thomas Pownall's ability to break down the barriers and win him an audience with the Treasury Department. As hoped, Pownall was exceptionally helpful. He introduced John to well placed contacts, but in the long run nothing came of his nor of John's efforts. John was unable to speed up the Treasury's schedule or repayment nor secure a higher rate of exchange. Overall, John demonstrated little business acumen and accomplished none of the principal objectives for which Thomas dispatched him to London. The best he could do was conduct some minor business transactions, such as arranging the repayment of L800 pounds sterling to Pownall, a portion of the funds Pownall previously entrusted to Thomas's care.[57] Yet, even this relatively simple matter, John managed to complicate.

In the process of arranging the transfer of funds, John inadvertently offended the prestigious London firm of Trecothick, Apthorp, and Thomlinson. As reported by Trecothick, the problem arose over a minor difference of opinion regarding the instructions Thomas sent the firm along with a government bill for L3,000 pounds sterling. John insisted they advance him sufficient cash in order that he might repay Pownall immediately. Trecothick refused, suggesting an alternate procedure which John indignantly declined, interpreting their refusal as an insult to his authority and a flagrant disregard for his uncle's instructions.[58] Thomas, who previously warned John to keep him informed "who Receives you with Respect," eventually sided with John's version of this seemingly pointless argument.[59] Sensitive to the most

inocuous comment or gesture, Thomas wrote to his overly sensitive nephew, "dear Johnny, I am very much vext at the Insult I & you have met with from the House." Subsequently, Thomas ordered all his funds and accounts with Trecothick and company transferred to Kilby and Barnard.[60]

This entirely avoidable and unnecessary episode arose from John's inexperience, his cultivated feeling of superiority, and a momentary lapse in his usually faultless manners. But while in London, John's normally studious attention to business was seriously impaired by his feelings of personal liberty and a host of social diversions and preoccupations. He luckily avoided incurring his uncle's ire by playing upon Thomas's susceptibility and sensitivity to imaginary insults. He was further assisted by glowing letters of recommendation from Jonathan Barnard who was all too eager to please both Hancocks in hopes of advancing his own business connections with them. Barnard gladly reported back to Thomas that John "is a very worthy well disposed young Gentleman and despises the thing that is Mean and Low, and I doubt not he will be a Comfort both to you and Mrs. Hancock."[61] Under these circumstances, it was not hard for Thomas to be convinced of John's credibility and of Trecothick's obvious insulting manner. Although only a minor incident, John's exaggerated indignation revealed a side of his personality more concerned with appearances than substance, and suggested he was less than wholly devoted to his work.

In lieu of his commitment to business matters, John's time was increasingly preoccupied in endless rounds of social engagements,

shopping sprees, and excursions into the English countryside. The King's death in the Fall of 1760 temporarily put a damper on all forms of public entertainment and halted John's whirlwind social activities. "I am very busy in getting myself mourning upon the Occasion of the Melancholy Event of the Death of his late Majesty King George the 2nd., to which," he reported to his step-father, "every person of any Note here conforms even to the deepest mourning."[62] But candidly, John was bored and impatient with this forced cessation of his plans. "Everything here now is very dull," he complained, "All plays are stopt and No Diversions are going forward, ... I am at a loss how to dispose myself."[63] By winter, the tempo of John's activities slowly regained their former hectic pace and this may have contributed to a bout of sickness. "I have lately been ill," he informed his brother, "but am upon the Recovery," and "hope soon to get abroad again."[64]

As John's social season wore on, his main objective was to prolong his London stay long enough to witness the new King's coronation, slated for April. "I can't yet determine whether I shall stay to see it, but rather think I shall, as it is the grandest thing I shall ever meet with."[65] The only serious obstacle to John's plan was his uncle's growing impatience with John's long absence and frequent lapses in communication. "You must excuse me," he pleaded in self defense to Ebenezer, "as I am always Engag'd someway or other, from giving you any account...how I spend my time." But he promised, "all this must be Degger'd to the happy moment when I shall meet you all in

Boston, and chat over the Agreeable Scenes I have pass'd through."[66] These feeble excuses might satisfy his compliant brother, but they had a less than satisfactory effect upon his uncle and aunt. When two London vessels arrived in Boston without carrying any letters from John, Thomas bluntly upbraided his nephew, claiming "your aunt begins to think hard of you for not writing."[67]

Thomas was further vexed by what he considered to be John's excessive expenses, especially for his clothing.[68] In response to his uncle's mounting irritation and criticism, John went on the defensive.

> I observe in your Letter you mention a Circumstance in Regard to my Dress. I hope it did not Arise from your hearing I was too Extravagant that way, which I think they can't Tax me with. At the same time I am not Remarkable for the Plainess of my Dress, upon proper Occasions I dress as Genteel as anyone, and can't say I am without Lace.[69]

He tactfully acknowledged that, "I find Money some way or other goes very fast," nevertheless, he assured his uncle that, "it has been spent with satisfaction and to my own honour." True, he confessed, "if you was to see my Tailor's Bill, you would think I was not a very plain Dressing person," but, "I have great Satisfaction in the Reflection of their being incurr'd in Honorable Company and to my Advantage."[70]

This explanation, well calculated to appeal to his uncle's social self-consciousness, was only part of John's campaign to assuage Thomas's anger and win his approval to let him remain in London until after the King's coronation. He immediately followed this letter up by dispatching a veritable avalanche of presents, all of which were aimed at soothing Thomas and Lydia's hurt feelings. "Mitts for my Aunt and Shoes for you, with a cane if I can meet one Suitable," were only a

fraction of the complete inventory of gifts John shipped home, each item carefully recorded in his account book.[71] He even employed his recent illness to help mollify their displeasure and melt their resistence to his delayed departure. John cleverly let it be known, through a letter to Ebenezer, that while he was ill, he was cared for by "a young woman who is Remarkably Tender and Kind," but if given the choice, John would "much rather be ill, if I must be so, where my Aunt...is."[72]

After having carefully prepared the groundwork for his request to stay longer, in mid January, 1761, John formally asked his uncle's permission to remain. "I imagine many of my letters have Reached you before this," he began, and "long to hear from you on the subject of my Tarry here. I could wish for many Reasons it may be Agreeable to you to indulge me here to the Coronation."[73] Even though by the end of March, John claimed that "at present I am quite undetermined in Regard to my Return, and shall be so, till I hear from my Uncle," he knew he already had won his objective.[74] At this late date, even if his uncle ordered him home immediately, there was no way he could possibly sail before the coronation was completed. Consequently, John's request was a mere formality, for in truth he offered his uncle little more than a fait accompli. Like Thomas, John was accustomed to getting his own way.

John's often complicated relationship with members of his family was brought into sharper relief in the course of his one year sojourn to London. Ever since he sailed from Boston, Thomas kept him informed

of his aunt's recurring moods of depression arising from John's long absence. "Your Aunt has been much concerned for you, & I have been put to it to keep up her spirits," Thomas repeatedly reminded him.[75] John's reaction was surprising in that there was none. Even in the face of his uncle's not so subtle application of pressure, John remained generally indifferent to his aunt's plight. He wrote home only infrequently, and mainly to persuade Thomas to let him stay on in London longer than originally agreed. The excuse that his letters were somehow delayed or lost at sea as a result of French privateers operating in the Atlantic shipping lanes does not hold up under scrutiny.[76] The long years of John's complete dependence upon Thomas and Lydia, combined with their incessant demands upon his attention and obedience, when contrasted to the freedoms London offered, led directly to John's sudden and out-of-character neglect for their feelings. It was a childish form of rebellion on his part, not consciously inspired, but one reflective of a deeper, hidden anger against his Uncle and Aunt as well as against other members of his family.

In an emotional outburst to his brother, the only member of his family to whom he could candidly express his feelings, John voiced his frustrations with his step-father and mother. "I have had but one letter from Mr. Perkins since I left Boston, which to me is unaccountable, I have wrote him often...I really think hard of it that Mr. Perkins should not write me."[77] Only five months earlier John wrote directly to Reverend Perkins, complaining that he had "not heard one word from you or my mother since I left Boston."[78] John was further

pained to learn from his brother that their sister's long rumored and often postponed marriage finally took place during his absence in London. As he once fearfully anticipated, he was not invited to the celebration. Ironically, his newly acquired brother-in-law turned out to be Doctor Richard Perkins, his own step-father's eldest son.[79]

It is not surprising, considering John's ambivalent attitude towards his parents, his sister, even his aunt and uncle, that when writing home, his warmest expressions of feeling were reserved mainly for his uncle's servants and slaves. To Ebenezer he wrote, "Love to all in the Family, particularly Hannah and Betsy. Is Prince as Gouty as ever, and Hannibal as peevish as formerly; tell him I think of him, as he was the last of the Family I saw on the Wharff. How is Thomas, and in short all."[80]

Even with Ebenezer, who was the only member of the family that came close to being his confidant, John retained a mixed attitude. His continuous fears of his brother's potential rivalry still lingered near the surface of their relationship. Yet in spite of their closeness, it was neither to his step-father nor Ebenezer, that John first began expressing doubts about remaining any longer in London. Even prior to the King's coronation, an element of homesickness and nostalgia slowly crept into his letters home. "I am almost satiated with London," he confessed, and "I shall with satisfaction bid adieu to this grand place with all its pleasurable enjoyments and tempting scenes." In their place he looked forward, "for the more substantial pleasure which I promise myself in the enjoyment of my friends in America."

For Londoners, he concluded, were far too "showy" and "superficial."[81]

A more accurate clue to John's sudden erratic behavior, however, had less to do with his perceptions of Londoners and more to do with events back in Boston. Only recently he learned of Ebenezer's decision to forego a career in the ministry. Like John, he too sought to pursue a career in trade, and Thomas Hancock willingly opened his store and counting house doors to receive him. His elevation as an informal apprentice was a thinly veiled threat which immediately spurred John's antipathy towards London and evoked his decision to return home as quickly as possible. He claimed, "I am glad to find that my Brother's conduct is so pleasing to my Uncle," as he hastened his preparations for returning.[82] To Ebenezer he advised, "By all means study to please your Uncle," but warned, "I am almost Tired of this place, and can't say but I want very much to be with you."[83]

Once determined to leave England, John's actual departure was repeatedly frustrated by a seemingly endless series of unexpected mishaps and delays. Jonathan Barnard was again called upon to explain some of these to Thomas, writing that John, "has been very anxious for sometime... but could not till now, meet with a favourable Opportunity, for a passage."[84] By mid July, 1761, John was finally ready to sail. He wrote one last note prior to leaving in order to better prepare his uncle for his late homecoming. "I have not Time as I am Engag'd in preparing for my Voyage to write a long letter," he explained, and "I can only Acquaint you I long since Agreed with Captain Jacobson for a passage, and Expected by this to have been half way to Boston." After

briefly explaining some of the conditions which fostered his lengthy delays, John made his final pitch for his uncle's understanding and forgiveness. "My Earnest wishes for your Health and Happiness, Concludes me in great haste, with the utmost Gratitude, Honored Sir, Your most obliged and most Dutifull Nephew."[85] With this last profuse statement of regards, John concluded his stay in London.

En route home aboard the "Boscawen," John not only believed he was leaving England behind, but his demanding six year long apprenticeship as well. In his own mind's eye he sincerely was convinced of his right to be regarded as a full-fledged, properly qualified merchant; one ultimately destined to succeed. With growing impatience, John was eager to assume an equal partnership with his uncle as he was promised upon his departure for England just over a year ago. Whatever minor difficulties he might face arising from his less than satisfactory handling of Thomas's affairs in London, he was sure they could be easily smoothed away once he was in his uncle's presence. Manipulating his uncle was never a particularly difficult task for him and only added to his feeling of self-confidence. For all external appearances, John Hancock was supremely sure of himself, his talents and abilities; regardless of how limited they might be in reality.

This over-zealous, exaggerated, and inflated perception of his own self-importance was in some way a beneficial attribute. It made him an indefatigable opponent who generally never relented in his pursuit of his ambitious goals until fulfilled. But frequently it was as much a liability as it was an asset. His enormous egotism

restrained him from making any attempt at personal introspection and denied him any honest assessment of his true skills and deficiencies. As a result, he was at times an easy target for a seductive flatterer and he took disagreement as a personal insult or rebuke rather than as a legitimate difference of opinion. These qualities combined with his preoccupation with how others thought of him tended to belie his external appearance, or posture, of self-confidence and security. Because he lacked introspection, he was handicapped in that he did not really know himself at all. Consequently, he sailed home to America, sure of his future as a merchant, but badly blinded to an important aspect of his own personality makeup. The self-confidence he felt and generated stemmed from his unerring ability to get his own way with his family, mainly by playing upon their insecurities and need for praise and flattery. All the while he was equally vulnerable to just these same kinds of overtures. And in spite of an excellent school education and a thorough mercantile preparation, his unawareness of himself was his Achilles heel.

CHAPTER IV

TRADE, WHALES, AND STAMPS

The 1760's were important years of transition for John Hancock as well as for the future of the nascent American republic. As the decade opened, John was seemingly committed to a mercantile career, patterned upon his uncle's familiar model. He was neither concerned, nor even fully aware of the growing political controversy that threatened the colony's relationship with Parliament.[1] But by the end of the decade, in fact as early as 1765-66, politics dominated his daily activities. And by the beginning of the 1770's, John's trading and business activities were all but permanently set aside or delegated to his subordinates to manage. Meanwhile, the American colonial clash with Parliament's authority seemed to many keen observers destined to intensify with unforeseeable consequences. To appreciate John Hancock's role in the unfolding revolutionary drama and to understand better his motivations and goals, a closer examination of his brief commercial career is in order.

Within a span of less than ten years, the principal part of John's entire career as an active merchant occurred, and yet for the remainder of his life he was clearly regarded and commonly referred to as a "merchant". Politically, he was continually regarded as a spokesman who was inherently sympathetic to the merchants' viewpoint. All this in spite of the fact that aside from six years as an apprentice and another six to ten years activity in commercial affairs, John spent most of his adult life very far removed from trade and the

counting room. Nevertheless, the term "merchant" stuck, and this tells us more about the term than it does about the man.

In colonial society there was no precise definition of the term merchant, rather it represented an unconsciously understood social concept which lacked easily identifiable characteristics and only sometimes referred to men who actually earned their livelihood from trade.[2] This was a notable departure from the English tradition from which the American usage evolved. In seventeenth century England the title "merchant" was narrowly defined to include only a "minority of men engaged in wholesale and foreign trade."[3] Mere shopkeepers and retailers were intentionally excluded. Furthermore, in order to be considered a true merchant, an Englishman needed both wealth and recognizable status along with his precisely defined occupational activities. These conditions served to restrict the use of the term and encouraged a class consciousness among the minority of individuals who considered themselves duly qualified merchants.[4]

In America in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries this restricted application lost considerable ground and much of its exclusiveness. Between 1698 and 1714 in Boston, over ten per cent of the male population considered themselves "merchants" and so classified themselves on the town's shipping registers.[5] Increasingly, American coastal traders, retailers, distillers, and even peddlers began calling themselves "merchants". This extended use of the term was possible for two reasons. Few men in Boston, or the other colonial port towns for that matter, cared about precise definitions.

Secondly, the absence of a rigid class structure nullified the strict application of titles. In a society where everyone felt he could climb the fluid social and economic ladder, the need for titles was rendered insignificant.

Consequently, the elitism often associated with English merchants, at first declined and then almost disappeared in the American colonies. In addition, the term soon became linked with occupational activities well beyond the limited ones performed by true English merchants. In an American sense, a merchant was frequently involved with such diverse interests as real estate rental, land speculation, mining, manufacturing, shipping, and even insurance underwriting. In essence, he was less a traditional importer and wholesaler, and more an emerging capitalist, or better yet, an entrepreneur.

By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the American use of the term began to gradually contract, regaining some of its former exclusiveness. This change paralleled the increased rigidity that developed within the colonial class structure and it was in this milieu that Thomas Hancock succeeded economically but remained socially frustrated. But as economic mobility declined, a more easily identifiable class structure emerged, one in which the merchants, because of their immense wealth, were recognized as possessing the highest social position. Symptomatic of this transformation and increased class consciousness was the organization of the Boston merchants club.[6]

Founded in 1763, and known as The Society for Encouraging Trade and Commerce within the Province of Massachusetts Bay, the club's

very existence attested to the emergence of social class distinctions.[7] But with the development of this more rigid class structure in Boston, a significant difference emerged between the earlier restricted English application of the term "merchant" and its eighteenth century colonial American usage. In Boston, unlike England, the occupational activities of "merchants" were blurred. Being an importer or wholesaler was not necessarily important. Instead, what mattered was wealth, success, and status. One's personal socio-economic station was more important than a precise adherence to a set of prescribed occupational duties. In late colonial American society, to be called a merchant was more an indication of one's position in a wealthy elite social class than a description of one's vocational activities.[8] This partially explains why John Hancock and not his uncle Thomas became a charter member of the Society for Encouraging Trade and Commerce.[9] John was ultimately far more secure in his social standing than his uncle who remained burdened by his rural social origins. Both men were regarded as distinguished merchants, but Thomas's claim was attributed more to his wealth and business activities while John's claim rested on his superior social standing and inherited status.[10]

John's active participation in the merchant's club confirmed what was already well known since the beginning of the year. From now on John, and only John, was officially responsible for the Hancock family's business and financial affaris. This was in shart contrast to the reception John met with when he first returned from England in July 1761. Thomas greeted him by reneging on his promise to promote

him, obviously as a punitive response to John's daring effrontery to his orders while abroad. But now with Thomas's health seriously impaired, reflected in his laments that he was "incapable of doing hardly any business," and that he expected "to attend to very little business agian," he again reversed himself.[11] On January 1, 1763, Thomas notified his correspondents, "I have this Day Taken my nephew, Mr. John Hancock, into Partnership with me, having had long experience of his up-rightness & great Abilities for business."[12]

Poor heatlh, however, was not Thomas's only reason for promoting John when he did; although gratned, he war more dependent than ever upon his nephew's youthful vitality to keep their business affairs prospering. Nevertheless, John's own management skills and daring entrepreneurship, especially while still under the conservative restraint of Thomas's presence, were additional factors affecting Thomas's decision. Since John was currently hard at work developing an entirely new direction for their overseas trade, a plan based upon their exporting large amounts of whale oil to England, Thomas was convinced it was the right time to make him a full partner. To further assure John of his undivided trust in his abilities, only three days before officially confirming John's appointment, Thomas acted to eliminate William Bowes, John's cousin, from any future consideration as a possible rival. Writing to his English agents, Messrs. Devonshire and Reeves, Thomas reaffirmed his financial support of Bowes' hardware trade, pledging to them that they, "are safe in Dealing with him," because, "I will see you are paid."[13] By this, Bowes was safely limi-

ted to this narrower avenue of trade, while John was given the broader responsibility for governing the larger portion of Thomas's substantial estate.

John was now free to pursue what eventually proved to be his single most remarkable enterprise as a merchant, his attempt to corner the market on American whale oil exports. It was a remarkably ambitious and risky plan. In all likelihood the plan first originated while he was in London and living with John Barnard. Hancock's intimacy with the family led him into a close personal contact with Barnard's junior partner, Mr. Harrison. Together, these two men began laying the foundation for a wild scheme that they anticipated would result in enormous profits and equally important, demonstrate their commercial brilliance to the entire English speaking world.[14]

Hancock and Harrison's plan was actually a reasonably well conceived and sound enterprise, based on contemporary business practices. Only the eventual scale of operations and the large amounts of money tied up in it, considering the numerous risky and unpredictable variables, made the plan hazardous in the event something should go wrong. On the positive side, however, there was a rapidly growing demand for American whale oil throughout England. Technological and industrial developments in Europe were responsible for generating these new demands. In England especially, there was a strong dependence upon whale oil as a lubricant for its modern machinery. Furthermore, whale oil was a vital ingredient for finishing leather products, manufacturing soap, and for scrubbing wool in the important English textile in-

dustry. The more recent adaption of whale oil as a household illuminant, as well as for street lighting, further increased the demand.[15]

Thomas Hancock's much earlier experiences and success in the oil trade, further encouraged John in his thinking. Throughout the 1730's, Thomas had purchased large quantities of whale oil, fin and bone from the Nantucket whalers and then had shipped these products to England where they were one of the few New England products in high demand. Approximately one half of all his payments for English manufactured goods during this decade has been met in this way.[16]

Thomas's success came about in spite of England's deliberate attempt to discourage American whalers in favor of developing her own domestic whaling industry. To accomplish this, in 1733 Parliament enacted a bounty of twenty shillings per ton on all English based whaling vessels displacing over 200 tons.[17] The American whalers were deliberately excluded. It was feared that if they were covered by the bounty's provisions, this would create competing industries within the Empire, in violation of a cardinal tenet of current mercantilist thinking.[18] British expectations were dashed, however, as the more efficient Dutch whalers won control over the northern whale fishery.[19] Even though Parliament eventually raised the bounty to thirty shillings and extended it to cover American whalers, for the moment, English and American whalers were insufficiently matched against the Dutch.[20] But all this changed, even before the conclusion of the French and Indian War.

The fall of Quebec was a momentous turning point in the history

of American whaling. In 1761, prior to the signing of the peace treaty, Great Britain opened the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and the Strait of Belle Isle to colonial whalers. Within two years, the number of vessels from Massachusetts operating in these waters alone increased eight fold.[21] Parallel to these events was the more significant rise in prices for whale products in England where John Hancock was a first hand eyewitness to this development.

In collaboration with Barnard and Harrison, John began preparing his uncle for what they believed was a golden opportunity. "I am sure no House gives greater attention to Business, and better consults the Interest of their Correspondents than Mr. Barnard's," John informed his uncle from England in order to lend credence to Barnard's enthusiasm for their proposed oil venture.[22] This letter was followed by one from Barnard containing an excited description of the rapidly rising prices; L23 pounds sterling a ton for "the common brown stuff," and L25 pounds for the white oil. But of all the various types of oil available for commercial sale, "nothing answers but sperm oil," Barnard instructed Thomas.[23] The plans tentatively agreed upon by John and the firm of Barnard and Harrison, however, had to wait final approval until after John returned home and gained his uncle's consent. Finally, by the summer of 1763, everything was set. With high hopes for large profits, their scheme was launched.

It was basically a very simple plan. The Nantucket Island based firm of Folger and Gardner were commissioned to purchase large quantities of oil directly from the local whalers. They were to use Hancock's

name and money and afterwards arrange for the oil's shipment to Boston. There it was reloaded on board one of the Hancocks' own vessels for reshipment to London. After that the firm of Barnard and Harrison assumed responsibility for the oil's sale. Some seventy five tons of sperm and regular oil were shipped that first season and plans laid to increase the amount shortly. As a sign of the Hancocks' commitment to the plan, they ordered a newly designed vessel, the "Boston Packet," constructed; especially designated to carry all their future oil shipments.[24]

For Thomas Hancock this was a radical departure from his previous methods and patterns of trade. This new scheme completely eliminated his regular triangular smuggling traffic with Europe and the West Indies. The stiffened enforcement of existing trade regulations following the French and Indian War of course necessitated this adjustment. And his small scale peddling operation was also replaced by a greater dependence upon large quantities of exported oil. This naturally required the development of a reliable shipping service from Boston to London, and consequently a greater capital investment in ships and storage facilities. Furthermore, the manner by which the partnership was initially arranged left the firm of Barnard and Harrison in control of a larger portion of his affairs than Thomas ordinarily permitted.[25] The obvious risks involved with the entire scheme and the Hancocks' commitment to it, clearly reflected John's growing influence and self-confidence.

Even as the price of American oil soared to L26 pounds sterling

per ton in London, the Hancocks' first year's efforts proved disappointing.[26] Their two biggest problems were the unexpected competition they received from a Nantucket whaler and merchant, William Rotch, and their own lack of experience in the oil trade. Rotch, a seasoned and experienced merchant, was long familiar with the tricky oil trade, and also noted the shortages and resulting high prices for oil in London. He raced a schooner filled with oil directly from Nantucket to London, getting there well ahead of the Hancocks' vessel, and was able to catch the highest market price.[27]

This bitter experience taught the Hancocks one of the most important secrets of the trade, timing. "As summer approaches, the consumption by lamps, compared to what it is in winter, may be called nothing," therefore, as one English merchant advised his American partner just entering the trade, it is a "necessity of having the oil at market early in the winter."[28] The first oil to reach London also garnered a premium price, after that the price usually fell off substantially. But there were additional problems that plagued their operations and required urgent remedial attention.

The Hancocks' instructions to Folger and Gardner were apparently vaguely worded regarding the specific type and grade of oil they wanted purchased. Consequently, not only did Folger purchase inferior grades but shipped it too late to Boston, allowing Rotch to get a big head start. Finally, the Hancocks' sea captain failed to rush a description of his cargo ashore as soon as he reached land, as a result, Barnard reported, "nothing could have turned out more unlucky at this

Juncture than not having your letter, as we know not what the Cargo consists of, we cant tell how to act in the disposall of it."[29] John's well thought out plan was undercut by inattention to small details. Nevertheless, the profits reported by Barnard were good enough to encourage an even more ambitious effort the following year.[30]

Although unaware of either their profits or errors, because of the time delay in their correspondence with England, John went ahead with his preparations for next year's shipments. Annoyed by Rotch's unwanted competition, John hoped to squeeze him out by attempting to monopolize all available oil. The result was a spirited bidding war which quickly drove purchasing prices skyward. John's orders to pay cash and in quantity without limit enabled him to acquire sufficient oil stocks to load the "Boston Packet" and even a second vessel, the newly build brigantine, "Lydia," and prepare tham for sea before Rotch's ship, the "Hale Galley" was fully loaded.[31]

In preparing these shipments, John was kept very busy. To ensure their access to supplies, he took a rare trip down to Nantucket Island in June, confiding to Barnard that he thought Folger, "has been of little Service to us." John held that his own personal contacts with the Nantucket whalers was as good or better than Folger's, and that he was "sorry we Depended on any others either last year or this," to make their oil purchases.[32] For his part, Folger was equally dissatisfied with John's strange conduct. He claimed that his rash overbidding for oil unnecessarily raised prices by L10 pounds per ton. Furthermore, John talked too freely about their partnership which

Folger hoped to keep a secret from his Nantucket competitors and friends.[33]

In spite of these minor irritations between the partners, the Hancocks' two vessels made a quick Atlantic crossing in the late summer. Barnard was pleased to report a successful sale of their cargoes at what he considered excellent prices. Unfortunately, because of John's impetuous bidding, the high purchase price for the oil cut deeply into their anticipated profits.[34] In the midst of this hectic activity, and as yet unaware of the disappointing results, Thomas Hancock died. "About noon," on August 1, 1764, "the hon. Thomas Hancock, a member of his Majesty's Council, was seized with an Apoplexy just as he was entering the Council Chamber. He was immediately carried home, and expired about 3 o'clock."[35]

Thomas was buried with enormous pomp and ceremony; the family sparing little expense for the occasion. When his will was read a few days later, as expected, John was his principal beneficiary. But the full extent of his inheritance was a family kept secret as Thomas prohibited an inventory of his estate from being filed in the probate office. Reasonable estimates, however, suggest that John inherited property and goods worth approximately seventy to one hundred thousand pounds. This included his uncle's entire business operations as well as the bulk of his speculative land holdings in Maine, an estimated 20,000 acres or more.[36] Another thirty thousand pounds and some seventeen thousand acres of land were lavishly distributed to Thomas's many relatives, friends, and various public and private institutions.

Among these was a gift of L1,000 pounds sterling to Harvard College in order to establish a permanent chair in Oriental languages, principally Hebrew.[37]

Thomas's widow received the next largest single inheritance after John. Ten thousand pounds sterling in cash, as well as the mansion house on Beacon Hill, all the plate, household furniture, and servants and slaves were left to Lydia. But ten days following Thomas's death, "in consideration of that Love and Affection that I have for my said Nephew the said John Hancock," Lydia transferred her entire inheritance, except the cash, over to John.[38] Between his uncle's legacy and his aunt's generosity, in just a few days, John Hancock was transformed into one of the wealthiest young men in all of New England. For someone still only in his twenties, he had come a long way from his humble, almost obscure origins as a poor son of a undistinguished country minister. Luck was certainly an integral part of his success story. But so too was his ability to capitalize on his good fortune. Throughout his childhood and long apprenticeship under his uncle's roof, John displayed an uncanny ability to satisfy his uncle and aunt's needs and wishes. In that sense, he earned his inheritance. But at the same time, he had not always felt free to act as he wished. His uncle's physical presence acted as an inhibiting influence. For example, although John was ostensibly in charge of all the Hancocks' business matters during the last year and a half while his uncle was ailing, Thomas, nevertheless, acted as a restraining force; inhibiting John from pursuing the oil venture with the degree of aggressiveness he

wished to exert. But with Thomas's passing, John was at last rid of this one remaining restraint on his freedom of action. Confidently, he notified all of the firm's distant correspondents, that with "the circumstances of my Uncle's death devolves the whole business upon me, which I propose to carry on by myself, and of course will make no alterations."[39] Naturally, there were many unforeseen complications.

Along with his wealth, John also inherited his uncle's prestigious social position and its concomitant obligations. But, unlike Thomas who scraped and crawled his way up the colony's slippery social ladder, John found himself gently placed on top, effortlessly elevated there by his uncle's generosity. And even though John thoroughly enjoyed this lofty vantage point, he still felt a inner need to justify his station among the town's elite and prove he was there because of his abilities and not just as the result of some accidental stroke of good fortune. He won some public credit with his prompt donation of five hundred pounds sterling to Harvard college for purchasing books recently destroyed by fire in the library.[40] But his primary task was to prove his competance as a merchant.

Therefore, almost without interruption, from either his uncle's death or funeral, and without fully knowing whether his oil was sold for a profit or less, John vigorously moved ahead with his plans to expand his oil duel with William Rotch. His wealth, his comfortable life style, and the relative ease in which he succeeded up until then tended to convince John of his own brilliance and infallibility. With supreme confidence, almost approaching arrogance, John revealed his

forth coming plans on August 17, 1764, to Barnard and Harrison.

In spite of an attempt by Rotch to block his access to oil supplies, John promised Barnard that, "you may depend in the fall that you will have as much or more, for the plan they have laid of Engrossing the whole oyl, will not Effect," and why not? Because John was determined, "to increase," rather than "lessen my Concerns in it." His recent trip to Nantucket was the source of much of his optimism. The trip, "was very agreeable." and convinced him that he had "formed such Connections as to prevent any disappointment. Lastly, he boasted, "I can have what Oyl I please & of the best men there, which of course, takes from the other Channell and is very chagrining to Mr. R----h, but he knows my mind."[41] John's oil plans were fast becoming as much a personal vendetta against William Rotch as it was a serious attempt to profit in trade.

The same day that John revealed his latest plans to his London agents, he wrote to his newly formed Nantucket contracts, Barker and Barnele, to confirm their previously agreed to arrangements. His dissatisfaction with Folger prompted him to commission several secret purchasing agents; disregarding the danger that they were frequently bidding against each other, artificially forcing the oil prices up even higher. But John was desperately trying to get his hands on all he could and thus deprive Rotch of any. "I fully depend upon you Gentlemen for 1500 Barrels or more of oil as early as you please in the Fall." In return, John promised "you shall be paid the cash when you please, some part of which I will send you down soon." As for the

very glad you would give some attention to recover repayment of the Bills long ago remitted you by my late Uncle," he frequently pleaded to many of his uncle's former trading associates.[43] It was pointless, however, to trust that all these debts would be collected that easily. Twenty years later, John was still trying to track down some of the more obstinate delinquent debtors.[44] In an effort to speed up the collection process, he sought Barnard and Harrison's recommendation of a number of these outstanding obligations, which included ones from former Governor Shirley, Mr. Gorham and many others. "I beg your opinion, whether it is probable they will ever be paid. I should be glad you would give me some advice as to the circumstances of Admiral Knowles, as he is indebted to my late Uncle, L300 Sterl'g."[45] Although a time consuming endeavor, as he was not under any immediate financial pressure, John showed little apparent urgency in trying to settle these matters. But within two years time, as he learned the disappointing results of his oil sales, which left him with a temporary shortage of cash, he confessed that these debts were important to him, and "it is hard I should lose them."[46]

There were other minor headaches as well. In November, his warehouse was broken into and robbed. This came on the heels of a recent incident with his London agents which provoked a flash of John's temper. He accused them of not treating him with decent consideration and was greatly vexed that they did not send him all the goods he previously ordered. He insisted that in the future, "none of my order be turned aside for any others whatever," because, he stormed, "the

disappointment to me is greater than if even I was oblig'd to pay a double freight."[47] This was only the beginning of his troubles with Barnard and Harrison. Next June he returned an entire cargo of silks, berating them for sending and charging it, "to my account without my order." Furthermore, the colors were so poor, he fumed, that they "would not sell here to the end of time."[48]

These irritations were only pin pricks compared to John's primary anxiety: the rapidly declining health of colonial Massachusetts' economy. This was a new and frighteningly unfamiliar experience for him. Up until then, almost all of his experience as a merchant occurred during an era of unprecedented prosperity, generated by a wartime economy. In the recently concluded French and Indian War, the massive influx of thousands of British troops injected huge quantities of circulating coinage into the usually specie short colonial money system. The wartime supply contracts, which paid for these soldiers upkeep, and the profitable but illegal trade with Canada, where the French willingly paid exorbitant prices for badly needed foodstuffs, combined to spur New England merchants into wild speculative projects. The result led to many overstocked warehouses and store shelves.[49] As long as the war continued, however, the profits were very high. But this artificially created demand came to an abrupt halt when the war ended.

A handful of farsighted merchants, like Thomas Hancock, who had been through all of this before, foresaw the oncoming postwar depression. Consequently, he encouraged John's oil gambit as a logical alternative scheme. It was risky, but the rapidly changing economic

situation demanded nothing less than immediate action. John's boldness seemed an appropriate response.

As Thomas correctly had forseen, even before the signing of the peace treaty with France in 1763, the economic climate in New England changed. But he was already dead before the full force of the postwar depression struck Boston in early 1765, and John was left alone to contend with this increasingly difficult and complex situation. His problems were compounded by his personal ambition to demonstrate his competence as a merchant. But the times were uncontrollably against him.

At first John refused to accept the seriousness of his dilemma and searched for a safe and convenient excuse. "The dullness of trade the year past," he falsely reasoned, was "owning to the small pox," and that explained why he was left with such a large "stock of goods for sometime."[50] But by late January he conceded that indeed there were other factors at work than a mere epidemic. A rash of business failures caught him and the other merchants by surprise. John was badly shaken. "The great uneasiness and Losses here owing to the failures of some Persons of note...has put us all into great anxiety, as trade has met with a prodigious shock." As John summed it up, "times are very bad & precarious here...we do not know who is and who is not safe."[51] In fact he thought the situation so perilous that he warned his English agents, "you must make the most of your remittances as Money is extremely scarce & trade very dull." And in a veiled warning, John predicted, "If we are not relieved at home we must live upon our own produce & manufactures. We are terribly burthen'd, our Trade

will decay, we are really worth a saving."[52]

John's depressing account of the state of the colony's trade came on top of the equally poor news he was receiving from Barnard about the low prices he was getting for his oil.[53] He could not understand why his competitors were getting better prices for their oil shipments than he was. Nevertheless, he accepted Barnard's explanation that they were trying their best to get high prices for his oil.[54] Consequently, he increased his oil exports to them. Throughout the Fall of 1764, following Thomas's death, John dispatched almost L17,000 pounds worth of oil to London. He was compelled to hire four additional vessels, beside his two regular trans-atlantic carriers, the "Boston Packet" and the "Lydia," in order to deliver his enormous stock pile of whale oil and bone. He had to pay in cash for this in spite of the depressing state of trade in all of New England.[55] John gambled that his massive cash outlay would drive his competitors to the wall and force them to relinquish the trade to his exclusive control.

In late December he prepared his plans for next year's forth coming round in this increasingly expensive and risky oil duel. He decided upon a major reorganization of his three way partnership by eliminating Captain Folger of Nantucket. He informed Barnard and Harrison, that "I am now determined not to hold any Concerns, nor carry on the whole of other peoples business, with my Money. I have long enough done that." Folger's contribution, he explained, has been so meager, that "I have paid every farthing Cash for the whole

cargo of Boston Packett...as if J.F. had no connection with her, and not one Cask of oyl from him on board her, which I think is hard fate, and what I can't submit to." From now on, he concluded, "I wish to have her wholly between you & I, and is what I shall attempt in the spring."[56] John then held his breath and waited, hoping for word of a good profit from his late 1764 oil exports and that the recent business failures in Boston were not an omen of even worsening economic times in the future.

Concurrent with John's problems in the oil trade and the postwar economic depression in Massachusetts, the British Government was also in trouble. Parliament's proposed remedy, however, would soon overshadow all these other difficulties. The successful prosecution of the war against France left the enlarged British Empire saddled with an unprecedented public debt, exceeding one hundred million pounds sterling. The annual interest charges alone were over four million pounds and offered little prospect for any immediate relief to the heavy tax load established during the war. Logic and good sense dictated that the American colonies, for whom a large part of the war was fought, and for whom much of the postwar military costs were incurred, should contribute a more equitable share to their own defense.[57] On April 5, 1764 Parliament enacted a measure to turn that concept into a reality.

The so-called "Sugar Bill" was designed to accomplish two specific goals. One, to raise a colonial revenue by modifying the provisions of the long neglected Molasses Act of 1733. This money would

be used to defray some of the costs of maintaining troops stationed in North America for the colonies' defense. The Sugar Act, therefore, lowered the duty on imported molasses from six pence to three pence per gallon, but sought to establish the administrative machinery needed to enforce the collection of this revenue. This would in turn accomplish the act's second objective, a complete revision of the colonial customs and commerce regulations, which amounted to a veritable revolution in the relationship between Parliament and her American colonies.[58]

Initial opposition to these proposed measures in Massachusetts came mainly from the colony's commercial interests. The merchants in the recently formed "Society for encouraging Trade and Commerce within the Province of Massachusetts Bay" opposed the planned three pence duty on imported foreign molasses. They adopted a report prepared by two of the Society's members, entitled "State of the Trade," which argued that the molasses and rum trade was vital to the entire region's economy. They claimed that the trade would "not bear any Duty at all."[59]

They were subsequently proved wrong at least in one of their more dire economic predictions. The Sugar Act, which went into effect on September 29, 1764, did not lead to an appreciable rise in the price of molasses. Instead, the price remained stable as the French growers in the Caribbean were forced to absorb the cost of "the Duty & not the People of the colonies who purchased them."[60] Nevertheless, the merchants in Boston continued to oppose the measure. The traumatic effect of the business failure in early 1765, in Boston, convinced many merchants that their argument was not only sound but frightfully im-

mediate. But curiously, their argument against the act remained primarily confined to economic issues, the duty's excessive expense and its negative effect upon trade. It did not take into account any of the constitutional questions which were to play such an important role in later protests against Parliament's authority in colonial affairs. This may have been a result of the merchants' lack of familiarity with all of the Sugar Act's provisions, which unlike the Stamp Act, were never published in full in the colonies.[61]

Although a founding member of the merchants' "Society," John took little or no active part in their protest against the Sugar Act, other than by becoming a member of the "Society's" standing committee. It was out of this select body that the report on the "State of the Trade" emerged. But he had very little to do with its actual drafting. His attention was still diverted by his adventurous oil trade.[62]

In spite of John Hancock's apparent lack of interest in things political, his membership in the merchants' club enabled him to increase his personal familiarity with Boston's other leading commercial and governmental figures, particularly with two of the town's elected representatives in the General Court, Thomas Cushing and James Otis. Neither of these men were actually merchants in an occupational sense, although they represented the merchants' viewpoint politically. Cushing, a former linen and wool merchant, made a professional career out of his elective office, often serving as Speaker of the House. He was financially well off, but by no means wealthy. Still, he was a powerful friend and influential leader in Massachusetts politics and a moderately

conservative voice among the colony's Whig/populist political faction.[63]

James Otis was a fiery, flamboyant, and often erratic contrast to the sedate, plodding, and consistent Thomas Cushing. The son of a prominent Barnstable family, Otis carved a brilliant niche for himself as one of Boston's leading lawyers; deeply committed to the merchants' interests and who in turn boosted his legal and political career. According to Governor Francis Bernard, he was the principal director of the colony's political opposition to Parliament, through his organizing of the popular party's presence in the Massachusetts House, the Council, the bar, and the Boston Town Meeting. However inflated this credit might be, Otis was one of Boston's more colorful figures and champion of the "essential Rights of the British Constitution of Government," which he argued was "founded in the Law of God and Nature, and are the common Rights of Mankind.[64]

Cushing and Otis' friendship and subsequent influence upon Hancock were instrumental in enhancing his stature among the normally conservative merchants. Hancock also helped himself. His regular attendance at the "Society's" meetings, his frequent appearance at the Governor's dinner parties, and his involvement with the Point Shirley proprietors convinced the merchants of his basic trustworthiness.[65] These factors, combined with the extent of his trade as well as his name led to his election as one of the town's seven selectmen in March 1765, filling the seat vacated by his late uncle.[66] Writing to James Otis, Hancock asked him to notify the town, "that I have the highest Sense of Honour, they have done me this day...and that I shall study every opportunity to promote the interest of the Town & I shall accordingly attend their

business."[67] On the following day he was chosen surveyor of highways for the town.[68]

Even with the added responsibilities he acquired by way of his appointment as a selectman, with all its time-consuming involvement in public affairs and delicate political issues, Hancock was not completely distracted from the pressing concerns regarding the state of his own trade. But as a selectman, he became an attractive political figure, especially for groups and individuals who hoped to use his apparent influence to further their own ends. In May, for example, the Kennebeck proprietors elected him to their standing committee. John, incapable of declining any appointment or honor, now had to divide his time among yet another politically oriented interest group.[69]

Not all of John's increasing activity in community affairs, politics and his inclination to socialize more frequently with the other prominent merchants was the product of some idealistic sense of social responsibility, nor was it merely an attempt to stroke his enormous ego. He realistically hoped to use these contacts for his own advantage, as a basis for strengthening his economic position and influence and that of his family. Within weeks of assuming full control over his late uncle's affairs, he offered his brother, Ebenezer, an opportunity of remaining on with him as an associate. Rather than accept a perpetually subordinate place under his moralizing older brother, Ebenezer, "declined...and chose the hardware business," instead. He formed a partnership with a Mr. Blanchard, who according to John, "has the character of an honest, industrious man, & I prevailed upon him to take my brother into partnership." To assure that everything started off on the right foot, John

pledged to underwrite their debts up to L500 pounds sterling.[70]

But John harbored more ambitious plans for his unsuspecting brother. In late 1764, he contacted former Governor Pownall, and sought his assistance in having a collectorship established in Maine, in the vicinity of John's extensive land holdings along the Kennebeck River. He also wanted Pownall to use his influence to get the appointment for Ebenezer. The former governor's response convinced John of the importance of cultivating even stronger bonds with his political and commercial neighbors. Pownall suggested that the best way to get the position established was by first, "getting the ground properly prepared for me to make by application...by a representative on your side of the water." He proposed that Hancock speak with Hallowell, "to whom I explained the whole affair & commissioned him to talk with you. It would be a good step gained if you could get the surveyor General to join in this representation."[71]

While this project was in the works, Hancock felt even less apt to raise his voice in protest over the duty on imported molasses. Even after the scheme to establish a collectorship failed to produce an appointment for Ebenezer, Hancock still shied away from any involvement in the protest against the Sugar Bill. True, the act was an added annoyance, a further complication in his daily commercial activities, and perhaps a slight unnecessary expense, but it was not a major hindrance in conducting his business. Although most merchants agreed that it established a dangerous precedent for the future, there was a positive side to Parliament's legislative record. The same year that the Sugar Act went into effect, Parliament adopted a series of measures which positively aided Hancock's oil trade. First, they abolished the bounty

paid to all British based whaling vessels. Second, they relieved American competitors of the discriminating duty which had only recently gone into effect. And third, the duty on whalebone was completely eliminated. These measures produced an immediate boost to the American whaling industry. The whaling fleets concentrated at Nantucket and scattered elsewhere at Cape Cod and at other points along the Massachusetts coast were quickly enlarged, and the promise of bigger catches soon materialized.[72]

Therefore, Hancock felt no compunction at this point to become embroiled in a complex political squabble. As much as he disliked paying taxes, the best he could hope for right now was for some relief from "home", home meaning England.[73] Even when word of an impending Parliamentary proposal to introduce a stamp tax into the colonies circulated about, Hancock was too preoccupied to comment on it. All his energies were concentrated on preparing his 1765 spring oil shipments.

From the moment the Sugar Act was first introduced into Parliament by the King's Minister, George Grenville, its proponents knew it would not raise sufficient revenue to meet the entire cost of colonial defense. It was regarded merely as a first step, to be followed shortly afterward by additional revenue raising measure, principally a stamp tax. On March 22, 1765, after a series of heated debates, Parliament overwhelmingly approved fifty-five resolutions that formed the basis of the Stamp Act. Once it went into effect, almost all private and commercial transactions requiring the use of paper were to be taxed.[74]

As expected, the Stamp Act was a far more volatile issue than the Sugar Act. American merchants and colonial legislators were prepared

to swallow the provisions of the Sugar Bill, by interpreting it as a legitimate exercise of Parliament's long respected authority to regulate the Empire's commerce. They were willing to accept this, even though the bill itself contained a clearly expressed goal of raising an American revenue. But the Stamp Act had no such convenient loophole, as its only stated objective was to produce an inland revenue, nothing more nor less. Under these circumstances, the question of Parliament's authority to enact this type of legislation was every bit as important as the burden of the tax itself. And for the members of Parliament, who were convinced of their legitimate right to enact the measure, it was equally a test of strength and principle for which they could not afford to appear to weaken. This fundamental and irreconcilable division was at the very core of the conflict between Parliament and the colonial legislatures from which all subsequent issues eventually flowed and ultimately drove Americans into armed resistance. Succinctly put, what were the constitutional and legal rights of the American colonists and their locally elected popular legislators as opposed to Parliament's legitimate authority? As of March 1765, John Hancock had no opinion on this increasingly complex and divisive issue.

"I seldom meddle with Politicks, & indeed have not Time now to Say anything on that head," Hancock asserted.[75] He was much too busy trying to fill his warehouses with sufficient stocks of oil in order to keep his trans-atlantic oil vessels running. Meanwhile, his London agents, distraught with the competitive bidding war for oil, pressured Hancock to meet with his chief rival, William Rotch, and try to work out a price ceiling. Hancock reluctantly agreed but offered little prospect of

success. "You do not so well know the disposition of some...here as I do, having had frequent conferences on the Same Subject, but to no Effect." Hancock's problem was simple, "I should be very fond of Keeping the price down, but if others will give a greater price I must not have my hands tied. I must either sell my vessels or keep them running."[76]

Nevertheless, he arranged to meet privately over dinner with Rotch to try to reach an agreement. But in the meantime he was in a quandary. "I really don't know how to act, it will not do for me to be idle and let others (and R-h) buy up, which you may depend will be the case not withstanding all your attempts and plans, and even the promise of some here, but I shall do my best." Hancock secretly resented Barnard and Harrison's interference in his business affairs and added this to his growing list of grievances with their performance as his principal London correspondent. Still, he promised to keep them informed on "the state of things after I have conferred with Mr. Rotch."[77]

"Agreeable to your desire," Hancock's lengthy conference with Rotch ended on a promising note. "He appears to be disposed to be upon amicable terms and...will abide by the instructions he has received," Hancock informed London. But for how long, he mused, "time can only discover. You are not so well acquainted with the Gent as I am; but I will for once try him, which but for your desire, I should never have even had a thought of doing."[78]

But as he wisely predicted, his verbal agreement with Rotch was never implemented, the wily Nantucket whaler quickly reneged on his own commitment. In anticipation of this, Hancock already prepared his own alternative scheme. He set out to purchase shares in his own whaling

vessels with persons from Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard in the hope this would result in a constant supply of oil well below market price. "I have now four vessels and believe another year shall increase ye number," he explained to Barnard and Harrison.[79] Bouyed by this prospect, Hancock and his partners agreed to add yet another vessel to their service and Hancock diplomatically named it after his London friend, the "Harrison".[80]

Superficially at least, Hancock's oil venture appeared to be turning the corner in his favor. He certainly showed no lack of energy or daring as he continued to expand both the size and scale of his oil shipments and all this in spite of the fact he was still operating in the dark. Because of his own carelessness, John failed to enclose proper invoices along with his shipments. Consequently, after Barnard arranged their sale, he was unable to determine a proper distribution of the earnings, if in fact there were any. Hancock complained about Barnard's negligence and then was compelled to apologize, after recognizing his own error. As a result of all this confusion, Hancock did not know the state of his account with Barnard and Harrison, yet he assumed the balance stood in his favor. But it did not.[81]

Unaware of the true state of his London account, anxious to expand his oil interests, and forced to spend cash in a competitive bidding war with Rotch and others while all of New England suffered through a severe post-war depression were only some of Hancock's more immediate problems. They were compounded in late April and early May 1765, when because of a shortage of cash he was compelled to ask for credit from his London agents. "I need not draw any Bills," he explained, "but

such is the scarcity of that article & the Poverty of this country, that I cannot place any dependence on monies here, and suppose shall be forced to draw farther bills." His only other alternative was to "take my money out of the Treasury," where it was earning interest, but that "would be hard fate."[82]

Naturally he was insulted when Barnard and Harrison refused to honor his request for credit and demanded an immediate payment instead. He was also puzzled, "I much wonder you should write me for remittance." As he saw it, "I am entitled to as long credit for my goods as any Gentleman in this place, and am at at a loss why I cannot carry on my business on as good footing as others." Considering the size and extent of his commerce with England, Hancock felt positive that there was not a market there, "but would thank me for my business and pay all my Bills, even if a little in advance."[83]

But to ensure his good name and save himself any future personal embarrassment, Hancock wisely remitted a Bill of Exchange valued to L2,000 pounds sterling, to be credited to his account. To avoid a repitition of this occurance again, he asked that a more regular statement of his account be forwarded every six or nine months, for "I do not want to put anyone to the Inconvenience of advancing money for me." Nevertheless, he was deeply wounded by this experience which hurt his oversensitive pride, especially "when I find I am wrote to in a manner I think I do not deserve, and in Terms that I judge you do not write your other correspondents, I can't help being uneasy."[84]

In all fairness, Hancock had a legitimate right to be worked up by Barnard and Harrison's refusal to extend him more credit. He was un-

doubtedly one of their largest customers and had a good record in settling old accounts. Nevertheless, from their London vantage point, some of Hancock's recent actions may have given Barnard and Harrison good reason for concern and caution. First, Hancock failed to establish a price ceiling agreement with Rotch. Second, he was careless about little matters like enclosing the proper invoices, a small matter by itself, but reflective of his general laxness as to details, which were important if one hoped to keep a close control over one's business. And third, Hancock's debt to them, which Hancock was only dimly aware of, was reaching alarming proportions. His oil sales were fetching below cost prices. Nevertheless, Hancock continued importing large quantities of English manufactured goods from them. By October 1765, his debt to Barnard and Harrison exceeded L9,000 pounds. And all of this was in the midst of a recognized period of slackened trade in America. To further complicate matters, the impending Stamp Act was intensifying political tensions on both sides of the Atlantic, as American and English merchants alike searched about for an adequate form of redress. At last, even Hancock, long preoccupied with his own pressing business affairs, felt compelled to comment on the impending tax. Like many other merchants, he blamed the Stamp Act for creating problems that were clearly unrelated. Still, it was a convenient excuse.

Hancock's initial outburst against the Stamp Act came at a time of mounting business pressure. "I hear the Stamp Act is like to take place," he wrote, almost a month after the measure had already passed through three readings in Parliament. "It is very cruel, we were before much burthened, we shall not be able much longer to support trade," and he

predicted, "in the end Great Britain must feel the ill effects of it." He hoped that perhaps the merchants in England and the true friends of America might, "make some stir for us."[86] But his opposition to the measure did not cloud his basic sense of loyalty to Great Britain. He was sorry for the "Great Burthern laid upon us," as these taxes "will greatly effect us, our trade will be ruined, and as it is, its very dull," but he also recognized that he "must submit to higher powers."[87]

His mounting economic difficulties made Hancock more receptive to the Boston merchants and colonial legislators' calls for unity of action against this oppressive tax; especially as he already considered himself over burdened with an excessively heavy tax load. Hancock calculated that in the last six years before his death, his uncle Thomas paid over L2,600 pounds sterling in accumulated taxes. Furthermore, "I believe I may venture to say that not a man in England in proportion to estate pays the tax that I do...I pay yearly to this Province and county near L300 Sterling, besides all duties, imposts, ministers and many other which are additional taxes."[88] Hancock was no doubt pleased, therefore, when in early June, the Massachusetts House of Representatives issued an important circular letter to the other colonial assemblies in North America. It invited tham all to send representatives to a proposed congress to be held in New York the next October where a united response to Parliament's Stamp Act might be adopted.[89] Until then, there were many other things Hancock could and would do to resist the measure.

For many reasons, throughout the spring and summer of 1765, Hancock's political consciousness awakened. Although on one hand he still felt pressured to get his vessels loaded and ready to sail before his com-

petitors, he nevertheless found time to engage in a variety of quasi-political activities. The least distracting of these was his letter writing campaign to friends in England who might use their influence to help the American cause. To former Governor Pownall he wrote, "I know the goodness of your disposition towards us & I wish we could be helped out of our present burden." After briefly reciting the basic difficulties he faced as an American merchant, Hancock concluded with the hope that "we shall in some measure be relieved & doubt not your good influences to forward it."[90] Even after his oil laden ships failed for the second consecutive year to sail before his chief rivals, Hancock continued his unprecedented participation in local politics.[91]

From this juncture on, Hancock's interest in politics steady accelerated at the expense of his commercial interests. Not all at once, but gradually, he entrusted greater day to day responsibility for handling his complicated affairs to his clerk, William Palfrey.[92] Hancock did not completely abandon the profession he formerly trained so carefully to assume, but the trend was decidedly in that direction. Still, it was not an overnight decision. On several occasions he even showed a renewed interest in either managing or reorganizing his affairs, and would pursue it with some of his former enthusiasm and vigor. Yet these temporary lapses became increasingly infrequent and his efforts grew more and more half-hearted. Sometimes these sudden spurts of commercial activity were nothing more than a clever attempt to use his great wealth to enhance his political position. For it was apparent to him that politics and not trade represented a more useful and personally rewarding pursuit. But why this seemingly abrupt face? The answer requires

an assessment of Hancock's personality. Especially as he responded to the mounting difficulties that confronted him during that hectic and suspenseful spring and summer crisis which grew in response to the imposition of the Stamp Act. In this brief time period, his career underwent a significant transformation.

For the previous two years or more, Hancock had had almost sole responsibility for the direction and management of his family's fortune. Now almost a year after Thomas's death, he was still bemoaning that, "the melancholy Event of the Death of my late Uncle happen'd very sudden" and "has devolv'd upon me a multiplicity of Affairs, which has taken my whole attention."[93] In other words, Hancock felt as if he were literally drowning under the enormous pressures, many of them self-inflicted, that he inherited along with his uncle's estate. The initial optimism with which he launched his mercantile career, in a self-confident attempt to prove himself his uncle's equal and worthy successor, appeared nowhere nearer towards fulfillment than when he began. This depressing realization sapped some of his enthusiasm for business. Meanwhile, an endless stream of small but important demands requiring his constant attention, added to his miseries. He felt crushed under this mountain of work and looked for any excuse to get away from it for a time. But not only was there no prospective relief in sight; he also rebelled at the idea of working ceaselessly without recognition, and possibly even looking foolish for his lack of success. This was the real clue, for above all, Hancock feared public humiliation. He was concerned that he might be shown up as an incompetent.

Consequently, he built up the importance of his oil export scheme.

It was to be his masterstroke, through which he hoped to disprove any doubt existing in anyone's mind about his ability. The anticipated financial profits from his plan were only a small portion of the rewards he expected to reap from his success. So confident of his eventual success, Hancock grew careless in his attention to vital details. As a result, several problems that arose were largely of his own making. For example, he spent cash too carelessly and thus helped fuel a self-destructive price war; he expanded his shipping interests too rapidly, and then in order to keep these vessels running he spent even more money for oil as well as purchasing large quantities of British manufacturers goods for their return voyages home; he failed to establish a price ceiling with his competitors; he occasionally bought inferior grades of oil; and finally, he squabbled with every one of his partners. His sensitivity to all criticism strained his relationship with Barnard and Harrison. And as his indebtedness grew, so too did his temper approach the flash point.

Finally, after almost two full years of effort since he first inaugurated his oil export venture, Hancock's much vaunted masterstroke looked far less brilliant then it did at first. Worse yet, Barnard and Harrison's refusal to extend more credit humiliated him as much as his embarrassing shortage of cash did. On top of this, he was embroiled in a legal suit regarding some of his property in Maine, and he had to fulfill the last of his uncle's supply contracts for British troops stationed in Nova Scotia.[94] Overall, by the spring of 1765, Hancock was financially over-extended and emotionally over-burdened. Protesting alongside the other merchants of Boston against the Stamp Act was a much

welcomed diversion and escape from the ugly realities of his business affairs.

Furthermore, the only really exhilarating experience he enjoyed since his uncle's death was his recent election as a Selectman for Boston. It was also all the flattering attention he received from the townsmen, the members of the merchants club, the Kennebeck Proprietors, and the various political clubs, both public and secret, that helped turn Hancock's head around. This longed for sense of appreciation, appearing in this unexpected quarter, made it easier, even tempting, to forget the rigors, disappointments, frustrations, and embarrassments associated with this trade. It was even cloaked in a patriotic mantle, a noble public service and humanitarian act, to oppose the stamp tax. For it was not only an infringement on a loyal Englishman's constitutional rights, as he eventually came to understand it, but it was a source of his own commercial difficulites. Parliament and its unwarranted interference in American affairs, its trading policies, and its brazen attempts to raise a revenue, were responsible for the distressing state of American trade with the resulting adverse effect upon his own commerce. It was, therefore, not his fault that he was in such an embarrassed and strained position. The only remedy was to protest and resist these Parliamentary efforts which unnecessarily complicated his life.

Throughout the year, Sam Adams, a radical member of the Boston caucus, intentionally cultivated Hancock's friendship by bringing him around and introducing him to the members of the patriots club and allowing him to be privy to their secret meetings.[95] Hancock was always warmly received by them and as already noted, was particularly ripe for

their seductive overtures. This was the beginning of a mutually beneficial arrangement. Whereas they needed Hancock's wealth, social prestige, and contacts with the merchant class, he needed their approval, respect, and political support. For it was assured that if Hancock planned to substitute a political career in lieu of a mercantile one, he would pursue it with the same enthusiasm he initially brought to his business affairs. His ambition to succeed in the highly competitive political arena would be no less than his efforts to demonstrate his commercial supremacy. But his first steps in that direction were naturally tentative and cautious. In the eighteenth century world of colonial politics it would not look well for one to appear too eager for public office.

C H A P T E R V

"I AM ONE OF NO SMALL INFLUENCE HERE"

In 1765, John Hancock, who, during his uncle's lifetime, had been disinterested in an active public career, changed his point of view. Now, under the tutelage of Samuel Adams he became a serious student of Massachusetts politics. But before public resistence to the Stamp Act erupted, Adams's career had seemed destined to end where it began, as just another unsatisfied aspirant to higher office. It was the Stamp Act crisis which had such a dramatic yet unexpected effect on the careers of these remarkably dissimilar individuals.

Historians are continually fascinated by Sam Adams and repeatedly rediscover with delight what appears to be one of the more impenetrable and enigmatic personalities of the Revolutionary Era. Boston born and Harvard educated, he labored with great difficulty under the burden of his father's political ruin and financial embarrassment resulting from the failure of the 1740 Land Bank.[1] In spite of his father's difficulties, Adams inherited his passion for politics as well as his seat in the Boston Caucus.

This informal political club, made up mainly of working class laborers, artisans, and small shopkeepers, met frequently to discuss current issues and select candidates for the town's public offices. At least one biographer claims that Sam Adams's hold over the caucus was so pervasive that he was able to turn it into "a revolutionary machine," and with its aid, "made himself 'Dictator' of Boston."[2]

Although an exaggerated viewpoint of Adams's influence, it is nevertheless a persistant one. For many, Adams remains the quintessential

American revolutionary; a master puppeteer who transformed colonial discontent into organized revolutionary fervor; the man who "pulled the wires that set the Boston town meeting in motion against the royal government."[3] Common sense requires, however, that this highly romantic and mythical view of Adams's political omniscience be balanced against his obscurity prior to the Stamp Act crisis. As another student of Adams's life observed, he "did not begin his work until 1764 when he was forty two years old," and before then, "he was certainly an unimportant figure in Boston."[4]

But like many of his contemporaries, Adams had a burning, barely constrained desire for recognition and power. This was intensified by his zealous puritanical convictions that American liberties could only be preserved by turning the clock back to a purer and more virtuous era. "He was a strict Calvinist, and probably, no individual of his day," noted William Tudor, "had so much of the feelings of the ancient puritans," as he. "And if given his way," Tudor continued, "Samuel Adams would have the state of Massachusetts govern the union, the Town of Boston govern Massachusetts, and that he should govern the Town of Boston, and then the whole should not be intentionally ill governed."[5] His didacticism and unquestioning self-assurance, qualities ascribed to him later in his career, were strongly evident at the beginning of it.

Considering their backgrounds, attitudes, and personalities, Hancock and Adams made an incongruous pair of political associates. In almost every imaginable way they were the antithesis of each other. Contrasted to Hancock's trim aristocratic physical presence, Adams appeared dumpy and disheveled. Where Hancock's tastes reflected a preference for

sensual pleasures, be it good foods, rich wines, elegant clothes, and conspicuous luxuries, Adams's austere puritanic demeanor denounced such frivolity. Adams was always serious, dogmatic, and guarded, while Hancock tended to be casual, almost blase, and erratic. Adams was a born political animal, and Hancock was bred for the counting house and drawing room. The latter spoke genteelly about trivialities, while the former, possessing a unique persuasive gift for gab, hammered home his message about British conspiracies to deprive Americans of their constitutional freedoms and liberties. What then did these two men of such apparent opposite inclinations have in common and what brought them together in such a seemingly unnatural marriage of contrasts? The answer is that they needed each other.

Politics in Massachusetts Bay was a notoriously partisan affair, mainly between participants already in office and those seeking to replace them. As one intimately involved in these struggles, James Otis observed that his world was divided "between those who are discontented that they have no power, and those who never think they can have enough."[6] But British colonial policy planners, sitting too far removed from the scene in London, misunderstood the nature and intensity of these political rivalries. Nor did they comprehend the issues over which these bitter controversies raged. Consequently, Parliament inadvertently, but repeatedly fueled these partisan feuds by enacting new and highly controversial policies and programs. The immediate crisis atmosphere, first ignited by the Sugar Act, and then intensified by the stamp tax, provided an ideal opportunity for the leaders of the popular party in Massachusetts. They hoped to exploit the growing public opposition to

these measures in order to recoup some of their political losses, suffered at the hands of their bitterest opponents, the Hutchinson-Oliver oligarchy.[7]

Under former governor Thomas Pownall the popular party, along with their merchant friends, enjoyed a brief moment of power and prominence. But under his successor, Francis Bernard, who ineptly used his powers of patronage, the Hutchinson faction appeared to wax supreme. One disgruntled opponent grumbled that Hutchinson had "grabbed four of the most important offices in the Province into his own hand," including the Lt. Governorhsip, Command of the fort which guarded the entrance to Boston harbor, Judge of Probate for Suffolk County, and Chief Justice of the colony's Superior Court.[8] If that was not enough, John Adams noted with obvious distain that Hutchinson's brother-in-law, Andrew Oliver, was Secretary of the Province, Judge of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, and a member of the Governor's Council. And that his brother, Peter Oliver, was also a justice of the Superior Court and had a seat on the Council. Furthermore, their sons, sons-in-law, and near relatives all held lesser but important appointive positions throughout the province. "Is not this amazing ascendency of one family," Adams mused, "foundation sufficient on which to erect a tyranny? Is it not enough to excite jealousies among the people?"[9]

Hutchinson's appointment as Chief Justice was particularly vexing to James Otis, Jr., who held that the position had been promised to his father, Otis, Sr., of Barnstable. When his father did not get it, Otis "swore revenge" against Hutchinson and the "court party" he ostensibly directed.[10] The introduction of this personal vendetta into an already

intensely partisan political situation only complicated the issues and magnified the existing tensions. But because of Otis's frequent erratic, inconsistent behavior, and contradictory statements, his control over the popular party was vulnerable, and Sam Adams knew it.[11]

In spite of their many differences in personality, Hancock and Adams agreed in their attachment to the popular party, though initially representing divergent wings within the party's broad political spectrum. Hancock represented the conservative merchant class, which viewed the revenue acts as an obstruction to trade, while in contrast, Adams took a more radical position, consistent with his ideological affinity for classical Whig political theory. He saw these measures as the opening move in an attempt to deprive the colonists of their constitutionally guaranteed liberties. He would protest these acts as part of a broader defense of liberty rather than on the narrower, self-interested plane of economic discomfort. Hancock and Adams also shared one overriding similarity, a mutually held ambition to play a larger and more influential role in the colony's political affairs. It was this more than anything else which brought them together during that hectic and fateful spring and summer.[12]

Adams, eager to exploit the developing political crises in Boston, actively cultivated Hancock's friendship by introducing him to his political cronies, supported his election as selectman, and shared his accumulated years of knowledge regarding men and politics. Hancock, flattered by the attention and eager for any escape from the burdens of his business headaches, welcomed the diversion and soon found it rather exciting. He encouraged Adams's advances, regarding him as a useful tutor much in the same way he accepted his uncle's advice. The fruits of

their growing political friendship were quickly apparent.

Hancock, established in his social connections, provided Adams with a direck link to the town's merchant community, who so far represented the vanguard of the opposition to the Stamp Act. In a calculated attempt to earn their future support, Adams probably helped engineer a series of well timed "spontaneous" public demonstrations. These reached a climax on August 14, 1765, when Andrew Oliver, the reported stamp distributor for Massachusetts, was terrorized into resigning the position he never formally knew he held; and two weeks later Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson's home was completely gutted by a savagely destructive mob.[13]

Some Bostonians were shocked by the mob's wantonly brutal destruction of private property, yet others were impressed by its well disciplined conduct. Hancock officially proclaimed his distaste for all violence, it "is what I abhor & Detest as much as any man breathing." But as an emerging political force, sensitive to the feelings of his constituents, he rationalized that "The Injury that has been done the Lieut. Gov'r was quite a different affair," and by stretching reason to its limits, he argued that the violence committed "was not done by this Town."[14] Who was responsible for the mob action was never officially determined because Hancock and the other members of the popular party prevented a serious investigation. As Hancock honestly expressed it, "opposition to the Stamp Act is highly commendable." Yet, as an increasingly astute politician, Hancock carefully sought to avoid sounding too extreme or socially irresponsible. He therefore, modified his original statement. "I don't mean that every step that has been taken is so, but as a people & a wide extended Country the general Dislike & opposition to the act

is commendable."[15]

How much prior knowledge Hancock had about the stamp act riots can probably never be fully ascertained, any more than determining Sam Adams's exact role in the affair. The planning and organization of Boston's mobs as well as their responsiveness to the popular party's directives were almost impenetrably concealed.[16] Circumstantial evidence suggests, however, that Hancock had more than just a casual knowledge of the planned riots, for the attack on Hutchinson's house on August 29th did not really fit the pattern of anti-stamp tax protests. Its real objective seems to have been the destruction of papers believed to be in the Lt. Governor's possession.[17]

According to William Gordon, Hutchinson had papers which "proved that the grant to the New Plymouth Co.," which the Kennebeck Company used to substantiate their claims, "was different from what was contended by some claimants."[18] Hancock, as the most recent addition to the company's standing committee, was the only member with close ties to the Boston radicals. Coincidentally, the same summer that a Boston mob razed the Hutchinson property and destroyed his private papers, a mob disguised as Indians raided the property of Silvester Gardiner in Pownalborough, Maine, the same Gardiner who was engaged in a legal dispute with Hancock over rival land claims.[19] Neither of these two ill defined connections between mob violence and Hancock's personal gain necessarily proves he possessed prior knowledge nor participated in the planning of these events. His subsequent statements and actions, however, demonstrated that he was

inching towards a complete acceptance of the radicals' position. He refused to condemn the rioters and even appeared to sympathize with their violent actions. In late August he voiced his whole hearted approval of the stamp officer's resignation, conveniently omitting as to how it was procured. He even expressed the hope that "the same spirit will prevail throughout the whole continent."[20] By December, Hancock's tone became far more menacing. His rage over the continued presence of about a dozen "Seekers of Appointments from the Crown" in Boston, prompted a threatening comment that they "ought...to be beheaded."[21]

Hancock, however, was not really that bloodthirsty. His bold language merely reflected the popular party's success in winning widespread public support for its efforts to discredit the Hutchinson faction by linking them to Britain's unpopular imperial policies. He also could not help observing how successfully Sam Adams exploited the same theme for his own political benefit. Since Adams's recent debut in colony wide politics the previous May, he rapidly rose within the popular party's rank to the point where he rivaled James Otis and Oxenbridge Thacher's leadership.[22] On September 27th, Adams further solidified his standing with the help of Boston's merchant community. With their support, in a specially held election he was selected on the second ballot to represent the town in the next session of the General Court, in the seat vacated by Thacher's recent death.[23] In the voting, Hancock came in a distant fourth with only forty votes. Immediately afterwards, Hancock's own rhetoric noticeably escalated as did his activity on behalf of the radicals.

In the weeks prior to Adams's election as representative, first

the August riots, then the endless series of town meetings, and finally the daily discussions about the approaching Stamp Act Congress, completely distracted Hancock from his normal business affairs. In early September, on the very day the popular party chose to unveil its symbollic "Liberty Tree," Hancock notified his London agents that, "I cannot write now, we are terribly confus'd here. if the Stamp Act takes place we are a gone people. do help us all you can."[24]

In spite of the popular party's success in stressing constitutional arguments against the stamp tax, claiming that "no Taxes be imposed on them, but with their own Consent," Hancock remained ambivalent.[25] Only in mid-October, while the Stamp Act Congress met in New York, did he at last come around to the radical's viewpoint by claiming that it was his own "invariable opinion that this Act is unconstitutional." But even then he could not fully break with his mercantile background and training, and he again qualified his posture by explaining it was also a "cruel" act, "the Expense of which we are not able to support."[26]

As a merchant first and a politician second, Hancock's hesitation in whole-heartedly adopting the radicals' position is understandable. Like his fellow merchants he intensely opposed the imposition of taxes and Parliament's other restraints upon his trade. He therefore easily accepted the radicals' protests, even their use of violence against the Stamp Distributor and the Lt. Governor, in the hope that it would contribute to the repeal of the measure. In no way did he want to see the situation get out of control. All the merchants still regarded themselves as loyal and conservative Englishmen, with the additional burden of a particular grievance for which they now sought a specific redress.

Even Hancock, with his intense interest in politics, still kept an eye on his business interests.[27]

His increasingly conflicting loyalties to politics and trade, however, appeared to be put to the test when the radicals implemented their next round of attacks upon the Stamp Act. At the September 18th town meeting, they pushed through a resolution calling upon the town's representatives not to "join in any publick Measures for countenancing and assisting in the Execution" of the Act.[28] Regardless of his own personal doubts as to the merits of the Constitutional argument, Hancock, nevertheless, came out strongly in support of this program of non-compliance. He soon wrote to his London correspondents about his intention "not to send one ship more to sea nor to have any kind of Connection in Business under a stamp."[29]

The non-compliance plan designed by the radicals would in effect have the Province continue on in its daily business as if the Stamp Act had never existed. Its success, however, largely depended upon the merchants support, for without it, disunity and failure would be certain. Hancock's early decision to go along with the scheme tended to enhance his reputation with the radicals who were generally suspicious of the entire merchant class and their motives. It also undoubtedly influenced many of his mercantile associates who subsequently followed his lead.

For Hancock this was the first in a series of politically popular steps. He exploited his support for non-compliance to his full advantage. Publicly he announced, "I would sooner subject myself to the hardest Labour for a maintenance, then carry on the Business I now do under so great a Burthern." He furthermore warned that as soon as he

knew what Parliament planned to do regarding the stamps, he intended "to sell my stock in Trade & shut up my warehouse doors." He even dramatically informed the Governor in person of his decision."[30]

But this was pure political sham, intentionally designed to improve his standing among the radicals and to promote his own whetted ambitions. For at the same exact moment that he was writing into his Letterbook that it was "a standing monument to posterity & my children in particular, that I by no means consented to a submission to this cruel Act," he was also readying additional cargoes of oil for shipment to England. He was in a rush to get them cleared before the November first deadline when the Act was supposed to go into effect.[31]

In an apparent effort to add further proof of his public resolve, however, he ordered his London correspondents not to send his usual order of Spring goods. "I will never carry on Business under such great disadvantages...I will not be a slave. I have a Right to the Libertys & Privileges of the English Constitution, & I as an Englishman will enjoy them."[32]

The strident tone as well as the substance of Hancock's language which so pleased the radicals in Boston, also served other useful purposes. For instance, Hancock's decision to curtail imports, using the unconstitutional Stamp Act as an excuse, offered a timely reprieve from his oil trade embarrassments, since he was already heavily indebted to Barnard and Harrison. By curtailing future imports of British manufactured goods and by sending off a late flurry of oil shipments, Hancock hoped to bring his account into better balance. Without the added burden of new spring imports, he might also be able to clear his already

overstocked shelves.[33] A second objective was perhaps even more important.

Both Hancock, as an aspiring politician, and the popular party had to do more than merely oppose the Stamp Act. In order to remain a viable political force they desperately needed a major victory, and nothing less than the repeal of the Stamp Act would suffice. The Stamp Act Congress' latest petition to the King offered no more chance for success in this regard than the recent riots. But a more promising method was economic coercion. Hancock's personal decision to restrict future imports and his threats to discontinue his commerce were all the more appreciated by the radical leaders of the popular party because it offered them their single best opportunity of putting on economic pressure for the Act's repeal.

Hancock clearly understood this and by late October began warning his English agents of the "fatal consequences," if they did not stir themselves more actively on the American's behalf. "You can never expect to Receive your Remittances from hence," he threatened, "and you may depend we shall be obliged to Live without your Manufactures which strictly speaking we can do without. You must exert yourselves for us."[34] Hancock kept up his letter writing campaign throughout the end of the year, warning one correspondent after another that, "I will never import a single manufacture of Great Britain nor carry on my Business under a Stamp to enrich I know not who. I beg you with the other merchants would you use your influence to extricate us."[35] Nevertheless, Hancock continued shipping his whale oil and without the use of stamps. He informed his agents Barnard and Harrison, that if any trouble should arise as a result, they were to explain that no stamps could be obtained in

Boston. Because of mob intimidation, it was a truthful statement.[36]

Throughout December, the popular party's campaign for non-compliance assumed two complementary lines of attack. Hancock played an important role in each. His early lead, and the more recent example of merchants in Philadelphia and New York who voluntarily cancelled their orders for British goods, gave the popular party sufficient leverage to compel local Boston merchants to do likewise. On December 9th, 250 Boston merchants complied and drew up a formal agreement not to import any English goods, with some minor exceptions, until May of next year. At that time they might renew their boycott, depending on Parliament's subsequent action. Hancock enthusiastically supported the plan.[37]

Once the merchants were brought into step, the popular party directed its attention towards the Province's system of justice. It was their aim to force the reopening of the colony's courts which had closed on November 1st, because of the unavailability of stamps. But their ultimate goal went far beyond forcing the courts to operate in defiance of the Stamp Act. Rather, it was their secret hope of discrediting the Hutchinson family. Thomas Hutchinson and his relatives had dominated the Governor's Council far too long and had repeatedly used that bastion of power to block all legislative efforts to compel the courts to reopen.[38] Hancock's principal contribution to this campaign originated in his selectmen's role in the town meetings where the popular party continually tightened their domination. Furthermore, he continued to serve as a valuable link between the radical elements in the party and the conservative merchant community. If the wealthiest merchant in town could trust the leadership of Sam Adams, then there was good reason for the others to follow suit.

On December 18th, Hancock along with Sam Adams, Thomas Cushing, John Rowe among others, presented a memorial on behalf of the town of Boston to the Governor in Council. In it the town argued that there was no "just or legal" reason for the courts to remain closed and that the Governor should use his executive powers to force the courts to resume their normal duties.[39] After this his role in the assault upon the Hutchinson factions as well as in the party's attempt to force open the courts was more indirect; nevertheless, his importance to the popular party continued to grow.

Obviously, Hancock understood a great deal more about local politics than just what Sam Adams's instructive example taught him. Since his first tentative entry into Boston's public affairs the previous winter, Hancock's role as well as his commitment had grown with his elevation within the party's upper echelons. His most persistant critics, however, castigated his part. They consistently denied him any credit for engineering his own rapid ascent within the colony's political hierarchy. Instead, they portrayed him as Sam Adams's unwitting tool. Peter Oliver, the humiliated stamp distributor's brother, claimed Hancock "was as closely attached to the hindermost Part of Mr. Adams as the Rattles are affixed to the Tail of the Rattle Snake." He commented further that, "Mr. Adams...seized upon him as his Prey, & stamped such Lessons upon his Mind, as have not as yet been erased."[40] Even a supposed friend and ally, who later turned into one of Hancock's arch political foes, William Gordon, disparaged Hancock's early contributions by claiming in a letter to John Adams that he remembered how "we use to say that you found the money and Sam Adams the brains."[41]

Needless to say, both of these negative, but representative views intentionally omitted Hancock's substantive attributes and abilities. He had an almost uncanny insight and intuitive understanding of the public's attitude on most of the controversial issues of his day. As a result he was consistently able to choose the popular side upon which to throw his support. Naturally, this enhanced his popularity and helped to establish him as a trusted representative of the public's need. Nor do these critics properly credit him with a rare talent for harmoniously cooperating with all the discordant factions existing within the popular party. This too helped account for his continued success and enormous popularity. Because of his part throughout the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 and early 1766, Hancock emerged as one of the most trusted public figures in Massachusetts, except perhaps within the shrinking faction supporting Hutchinson and friends. He accomplished this, not only because he was rich and socially respectable but also because his own views seemed to parallel and reflect the views of people who were decidedly his economic and social inferiors.

One might, therefore, reasonably ask if Hancock was sincere in his political leanings or merely an opportunist who fed the public what it wanted most to hear as a demagogue would do? Hancock was too complex a personality to answer such a question with a simple yes or no. In all likelihood, the complexities of the constitutional argument against the Stamp Act probably escaped him. But in a practical sense that was unimportant because he sincerely opposed the act; principally on the grounds that he thought it harmful to trade. Of course, there was no real proof of this other than the fact that his own business affairs were currently

in a state of confusion. Furthermore, the almost universal opposition to the Stamp Act, which even included the Hutchinson faction, enabled Hancock to tolerate the use of mob violence. He also drew comfort in the knowledge that these mobs were tightly controlled by men of substance. Hancock was not a leveler, but as a practical man he recognized the existence of the mobs and knew it was better to try and control them rather than become its victim.

Consequently, for a number of reasons, including his own personal ambition, an appreciation of comtemporary political realities, and in an effort to influence events, Hancock decided to curry favor with the mobs. According to some he generously contributed to the expensive festivities, labeled the "Union Feast," which in November 1765 cemented the unity between the town's North End and South End mobs. In effect, this provided the popular party with a highly disciplined and militant military arm.[42] At the same time he sought to enhance his influence among the radicals, he also moved to demonstrate his continued alliance to his own social class. He, therefore, ordered from the London bookdealer, Thomas Longman, several hundred pounds sterling worth of books, in "the best Editions & well Bound...to be had at any price...as the whole of these books are a present from me to our College Library in Cambridge."[43]

Hancock used philanthropy of this sort as an integral part of his efforts to advance his political fortunes. He did not exactly go out and purchase elected office, but his highly publicized role as a financial contributor to private charities, churches, and public institutions kept him firmly fixed in the political limelight and enhanced his image. His contribution of sufficient funds to endow a professorship of Oriental

Language at Harvard received wide spread notoriety through a poem printed in the Boston Gazette praising his generosity.[44] As a result of his continuous efforts in a similar vein, the Reverend Samuel Cooper, of the Brattle Street Church in Boston, thought that Hancock most clearly exemplified his ideal of a "Man of Christian Benevolence". And John Adams recalled, after the Revolution, that "not less than a thousand families were, every day in the year, dependent on Mr. Hancock for their daily bread."[45]

Although Adams's claim was surely excessive, nevertheless, Hancock's image as a charitable, benevolent, and liberal contributor to needy causes, as well as his apparent self-sacrificing services on behalf of the community, were all deeply held beliefs among the general public. Furthermore, there was as much truth to these claims as there were self-serving motivations inspiring them. Hancock was impulsively generous and forgiving. He was also keenly ambitious and a perceptive politican, independent of Sam Adams's influences. He genuinely wanted to be well liked, and perhaps even craved the public's affections more out of a personal need than for just mere political necessity. The unqualified success he achieved in retaining the public's affections and confidence were responsible for keeping him an important political force for the rest of his life. But the foundation for his later triumphs all originated in his opposition to the Stamp Act and his desire to escape the mounting pressures related to his trade and commercial affairs.

In March 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act largely because of the enormous influence exerted by the English merchants who traded with the North American colonies.[46] Actual confirmation did not reach Boston

until May 16th, however, when Hancock's vessel, the "Harrison", arrived with official notification.[47] But anticipation of the colonists' ultimate victory over Parliament was apparent months earlier. In February, Hancock indirectly claimed some of the credit for contributing to the Act's eventual repeal as a result of his efforts to persuade his correspondents to work actively on the colonies' behalf. "I am very glad," he informed Barnard and Harrison, that "you have interested yourselves for us & wish your application may produce the Desired Effect." As a reward for their efforts, Hancock promised that in the future, "no man can better consult your interest in all Respects than myself."[48]

Riding a wave of colony wide relief mixed with joy over the Stamp Act's repeal, the popular party exploited their resistance to the act as a devastating political weapon against their opponents. By branding the Hutchinson faction as "friends of the Stamp Act," and "enemies to their country," the popular party swept the elections in 1766 and gained absolute control over the House of Representatives. After that they easily removed the Hutchinson oligarchy from the Governor's Council and established themselves as the Province's majority party, backed by genuine colony wide popularity and support.[49] Hancock was amply rewarded for his part in their victory. In March, he easily won reelection as Selectman in Boston and in May won his first seat in the Provincial Assembly as Boston's newest representative, joining James Otis, Thomas Cushing, and Sam Adams in that body.[50]

Responsibility for Hancock's election to the Massachusetts House, however, has traditionally been credited to Samuel Adams's hold over the Boston town meeting. In a frequently cited story, first appearing in

William Gordon's 1788 history of the American Revolution, Gordon claimed that "Mr. Rowe, a merchant...was thought by some influential persons," a better choice than Hancock as a representative of the town. Gordon, who by the time he published his history, personally despised Hancock, asserted that "Mr. Samuel Adams artfully nominated a different one, by asking with his eyes looking to Mr. Hancock's house, 'Is there not another John that may do better?'" The hint took according to Gordon, who further claimed that Adams believed Hancock's "fortune would give credit and support to the cause of Liberty, that popularity would please the possessor, and that he might be easily secured by prudent management."[51]

Gordon's apocryphal tale was artfully designed to demean Hancock's previous role, contributions, and importance in the colony's resistence to the Stamp Act. He even went so far as to assert that he was merely a dominated, manipulated, and totally controlled dupe of Sam Adams. But to prove his point, Gordon first had to demonstrate Adams's even more unlikely dominance over the entire Boston town meeting. And this indeed would have been an unheard of accomplishment for a man who only the previous year never held a more influential public office than as the town's tax collector. Gordon's purpose in including this story in his history was to discredit Hancock. But a more insightful account of what really led to Hancock's first election exists.

In the afternoon of the same day Boston elected its representatives to the General Assembly, John Adams recalled he accidentally met his cousin Samuel Adams while walking through the Common. After "taking a few turns together we came in full view of Mr. Hancock's house," where while "pointing to the stone building," Sam Adams said, "This town has

done a wise thing today. 'What,'" inquired John. "They have made that young man's fortune their own," came the reply.[52]

As John Adams expanded upon his cousin's somewhat cryptic statement, it was apparent he interpreted Hancock's election more to merit than to Samuel Adams's cunning manipulations. For Adams noted that, "no man's property was ever more entirely devoted to the public. Furthermore, the quivering anxiety of the public...compelled him to constant attendance in the House. His mind was soon engrossed by public cares, alarms, and terrors; his business was left to subalterns; his private affairs neglected and continued to be so to the end of his life." Adams concluded that Hancock's commitment was so great and sincere, that "if his fortune had not been large he must have died as poor as Mr. S. Adams or Mr. Gerry."[53]

Even with his enlarged public responsibilities, Hancock welcomed the end of the Stamp Act cirsis. But for a man who only a year earlier confessed he seldom meddled in politics, Hancock found his new activities extremely exciting and time consuming. "Many days and nights has been my attendance at the House of Commons," been taken up, he observed," on that important and very interesting subject the Affairs of Great Britain and her colonys; an affair to me," he stressed, "of the most Singular Consequences."[54] In spite of his affection for the drama generated by the conflict and his new and important role in its settlement, Hancock responsibly conceded that he now hoped "peace and harmony will prevail," and pledged his "best influence and endeavours to that purpose."[55]

Before allowing a complete return to pre-stamp Act normality, however, Boston first indulged itself in one more festive day and night of celebration. Primarily arranged by the popular party, these activities

were largely financed out of Hancock's pocketbook. The more genteel part of the town were lavishly entertained at his Beacon Hill home, while for the general populace gathered below on the Common, Hancock provided a full pipe of Madeira wine.[56]

Throughout the town all the private homes were especially illuminated for the occasion. Hancock's own house shone conspicuously bright that night as fireworks, on a scale rarely seen before in New England, were set off from a stage erected in front of his house at his own expense, and answered those ignited from the Common by the Sons of Liberty.[57] Also on the Common, there stood a beautifully decorated obelisk, erected to commemorate the celebration. Hancock was in particularly good humor and even his former rival for a seat in the Assembly, John Rowe, commented on how well behaved he was, as he "treated every Person with Cheerfulness."[58] Hancock's own thoughts about the evening's festivities, centered on how "our rejoicing has been conducted in a very decent, reputable manner."[59] This corresponded with John Adams's subsequent observation, that "the repeal of the Stamp Act has hushed into silence almost every popular clamor, and composed every wave of popular disorder into a smooth and peaceful calm."[60]

As the crisis over stamps receded in early 1766, Hancock's attention was again drawn back to his private concerns, specifically his discouraging oil trade. His recent political successes and his town wide popularity were fortunate and led to a greatly improved mental outlook on his part. He regained much of his original self-confidence as a merchant; which he soon exhibited in his enthusiastic preparations for next year's operations. Yet even with his time heavily committed to town meetings,

his duties in the Assembly, and various other public responsibilities, ranging from fire warden to numerous town appointed committees, Hancock entered a period of broad-based expansion of his commercial involvements.

But first, some fence mending was in order. In a lenghty note to Barnard and Harrison in mid-January, Hancock sought to atone for all the difficulties and disappointments he may have unintentionally caused his English partners. As he explained it, "my scituation, ever since my Uncle's death, has been a scene of Hurry & our Confused State here has really prevented my closing matters as I could have wished to have done, but Beg Your Excuse." Nevertheless, a note of self-defense crept into his explanation as he also explained that, "I am invariably Determined to support my Liberty and Property at ye expense of every thing else & will be free in a free Country & under a free Government."[61]

That done, Hancock outlined his new commercial program. The cornerstone of his plans rested upon his determination in "the Coming Year (please God I live) to be more largely concern'd in Oyl, Bone & Potash than ever." And that this traffic be concentrated in his own hands, on his own vessels, and without as many competitors and partners as in former times. Consistent with this, he informed London that he would ship no more "in Company with Folger, except what goes in the Boston Packett." Based on a lesson learned from his previous experiences, Hancock also warned Barnard and Harrison not to open up their "concerns with any others...or it will hurt the whole," by refueling the competitive bidding wars that formerly plagued the oil trade.[62]

As he elaborated his plans, it was apparent that Hancock decided to make this the decisive year in whale oil, and that he would now go all

out, once and for all, and try to control as much of the exported oil supplies as he could lay his hands on. This led to his doubling of the number of whaling vessels he either owned or shared an interest in; and by February, he anticipated that "in about three weeks shall fit them out," for sea. With any kind of luck, he predicted to Barnard, "I shall have a large quantity of oyl & Bone," in the coming year.[63]

Hancock's optimism rested on the premise that oil prices in London would continue to run high and that he would control the major portion of the oil supplies destined for that market. He based the latter expectation upon his share in whaling vessels and his purchasing power. "No man here," he claimed, "can command more oyl or as much as myself...as I pay my Cash on the Delivery & that will always command the Markett."[64] Good to his word, Hancock spent money freely, purchasing one incoming cargo of oil after another. "As I must keep some money by me ready for Bone & Oyl as it comes in," he was compelled to draw an increasing number of bills upon his London partners.[65] By year's end his accumulated costs approached nearly L25,000 pounds as he managed to dispatch about a dozen large consignments of oil and related products to London.[66]

All this was not done without encouragement from his foreign agents. Word arrived from Barnard and Harrison advising him to "purchase any bone" he could and "ship it immediately even if you give L250 Stg. p ton for it." They reported that his earlier shipments sold well, earning almost L300 pounds sterling per ton. Their only ominous warning was that it "ought to arrive here before the Greenland ships do."[67]

In order to comply with their advice, Hancock and his Nantucket partners, Barker and Burnell, devised a clever innovation, "by which we

shall make a considerable saving," in time and money. Together, they purchased a "brig, to be employed this season in the straights," near Labrador. And, "if she meets with success is to proceed with her oyle & Bone direct from the Straights to London."[68] This was a wise precaution for by June, Hancock grew alarmed as "oyl is not yet at Market," and he feared this delay would adversely effect the price. "But what I purchase," he promised, "shall be on the best Terms & shall endeavour that the price be as low as possible."[69]

Contrary to his worst fears, as the oil began arriving, Hancock purchased all he could hope for with a minimum of competition. By November his confidence and expectations soared. "I have now so well established in those concerns in the whale fisher," he informed Barnard, that "I think Mr. R---h has had small success in purchasing & by far the greatest quantity of oyl will be in your hands which is my aim."[70]

Hancock could barely restrain himself as he appeared to be on the verge of his long sought after double triumph, one, over both his principal rival, William Rotch, and two, his plan to control the English oil market. His anticipated victory was especially sweet, as only a few months earlier, he had for the second time rejected Barnard and Harrison's advice to reach an accord with his chief competitor. "As to my coming into any kind of conversation connection, or concern with Mr. R---h, I must beg leave," Hancock insisted, as he subsequently refused to consider "even the thought of such a thing." Instead, he asserted, "I generally chuse to carry on my own business in my own way."[71] For the moment he was proud of his decision. He confidently believed his London agents now had it within their power to set their own selling price for oil,

and he knew of no other oil available on the market, "but what I have got," and have since shipped to them.[72]

Hancock's emotional and physical well-being almost invariably paralleled his perceived prospects for success or failure. In late November, believing he had a stranglehold grip over the supply of oil to London, he was euphoric. Although claiming he was so "excessively hurried," that he found little time to sleep, what with his "attending Court in the House of Assembly, my own store, & ships in & out," as well as his "whalemen fitting out for the West Indies," he nevertheless professed a great love for this hectic life. "I love hurry," and it will continue to be "my lot while I live."[73]

These sudden spurts of enthusiasm were typical of Hancock. This one in particular corresponded to a similar outpouring the previous January when he first launched his most recent attempt to control the Atlantic oil traffic. His political successes related to the Stamp Act protest and the anticipation of huge profits from whaling made him literally giddy with excitement. This resulted in a rapid expansion of his other commercial activities, all undertaken simultaneously. When the repeal of the Stamp Act was certain and the calcellation of the merchants' planned boycott of British manufactured goods was mutually agreed upon, Hancock rushed to increase his orders for foreign goods. Through the rest of the year and the next, his purchases from Barnard & Harrison alone, neared L 18,000 pounds sterling.[74]

While actively engaged in purchasing oil and expanding his retail trade, Hancock also assumed the role of patron to several younger prospective merchants. One of these, his cousin William Bowes, sailed as

a passenger to London in January 1766, aboard one of Hancock's vessels for a brief business trip. He carried with him a complimentary letter of introduction to Hancock's English friends with the added authority to draw up to L 1,500 pounds sterling, all credited to Hancock's personal account.[75] In the Spring, Hancock also helped establish his clerk, William Palfrey in business on a profit sharing basis. Some L 1,800 pounds worth of stock and credit were extended as well as the usual letters of recommendation.[76] The following year another disciple, William Bant, was also established in a small shop with Hancock's financial assistance.[77]

On May 28, 1766, John Hancock formally took his first seat as an elected representative from Boston in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Within two days, as the House settled in to conduct its business, he received the first of many committee assignments, this one for encouraging the manufacture of pot ash. This was an ideal choice. The Hancocks were long known to be interested in the development of this industry as a badly needed source of foreign exchange. As far back as 1753, Thomas Hancock had financially supported efforts to establish a potash works in Halifax, Nova Scotia.[78] His first attempts were generally disappointing, but in 1761, taking advantage of a simplified process developed by a native of Massachusetts, Caleb Wilder, Hancock finally established a profit making operation.[79] Until the eve of the Revolutionary War, John Hancock faithfully maintained his late uncle's experimental potash works, where his seat in the Provincial legislature and his committee work helped generate active governmental support for this commercial endeavor.[80]

Many of Hancock's subsequent committee appointments also reflected his background and familiarity with commerce and finance. He was repeatedly placed on committees to consider the Province's current trade difficulties, or those examining the Treasurer's accounts, or supervising the destruction of redeemed securities, or investigating outstanding debts due the Province, as well as overseeing the general state of the Treasury.[81] Several of his assignments were politically inspired, made with consideration of his role in the popular party's leadership as well as for his activity against the Stamp Act. He and James Otis, for example, helped draft a letter of thanks on behalf of the Assembly, to the colony's agent, Dennis De Berdt, for his efforts in "endeavouring to obtain a Repeal of the Stamp Act."[82] And not without a calculated degree of thinly veiled humor, Hancock served on a committee to inquire of the Governor, if he had any "light" on who was responsible for the Boston riots the previous August.[83]

One last committee appointment was a particularly interesting one, as he joined Sam Adams and James Otis in drafting a bill to prohibit the future importation of slaves into Massachusetts.[84] Hancock's personal view towards slavery was as so many of his other political beliefs, shrouded in ambiguity. This specific bill reflected as much their concern over depriving many of the working class supporters of the popular party of employment as it was an indication of their distaste for human chattel. But Hancock was a slave owner, although he typically referred to them as servants and not as slaves. Only a year before, he wrote to Barnard and Harrison to thank them for sending him a "Man Servant," who "appears to be a Sober Man."[85] There is, however, not a shred of evi-

dence that Hancock ever participated in this vile traffic.[86] From all accounts, he treated his own "servants" with unusual dignity and respect. On one occasion after the Revolution, while seeking to rent rooms in New York on a brief stay, Hancock wrote, requesting "decent rooms" for his servants, claiming they "Lodge and Eat at home as well as I do myself."[87] Still, Hancock could be accurately portrayed as tolerating the existence of slavery as well as acting paternalistically towards the half dozen or so he owned. Yet, overall his views were generally regarded as liberal for their time; favoring the eventual abolishment of the practice. He was also respectful of blacks as human beings, and did not regard them as property, although he ranked them on the lowest end of the social scale.

Through the end of June, when the Assembly recessed, Hancock's attention was engrossed by public affairs, much to his own personal enjoyment. When once again freed to concentrate more fully on his own private concerns, however, he quickly sank into a brief state of mental and physical depression. "You must Excuse my adding," he apologetically informed his agents, but his "being very unwell" brought on another temporary lapse in his attention to trade.[88] Several factors contributed to his condition. First, he was never a robust athletic individual, and his committee and Assembly responsibilities physically exhausted him. Second, he was anxious about the lateness of his season's oil catch to come to market and he feared he would be unable to get his vessels away in time. Finally, he was embarrassed by his shortages of cash which forced him to draw more heavily upon his London creditors.[89] Even as late as October, Hancock's depression led him to complain that "our trade is very dull,

money very scarce, and but an indifferent prospect of carrying on Business to any advantage," and out of all my connections and debts I can't raise enough for a load of Oyle without drawing my own Bills."[90]

Only by November, once he was sure he had cornered the oil market did his spirits and health revive and even then this state of euphoria was very short lived. Hancock's fluctuations in mood, spirit, and health gyrated wildly up and down throughout 1766, indicating an inner sense of uncertainty over the risks involved with his rapid economic expansion. Even when his expectations were at their peak, Hancock still found cause for complaint. This time it was the greediness of the whalemen, all of them possessing "open mouths gaping for money."[91] After a year filled with constant tension, he finally vented his spleen against his London friends, whose behavior towards him he suddenly found unjustifiable and intolerable.

Problems between Hancock and the firm of Harrison and Barnard were mounting for some time.[92] The immediate conflict arose over Harrison's insistence that Hancock owed L 216.6.1 pounds sterling as interest on his long unsettled accounts. Hancock resentfully agreed to pay only after first insisting that they settle and close out all current accounts. This was to be accomplished by converting all of Hancock's recent consignments of oil and potash into cash and crediting that to his account along with remitting him a receipt in full. Furthermore, he cancelled all future orders with them until this was satisfactorily carried out. "I am invariably determined," he explicitly wrote to them, that he "would never again subject myself to the demand of interest."[93]

No sooner was this problem resolved then another immediately developed. This time, according to Hancock's interpretation of events,

Harrison and Barnard exceeded their authority and extended L 300 pounds sterling to Mr. Arthur Savage, of Casco Bay, Maine, and credited it to Hancock's account. As a result, he was livid with rage. In a scalding letter of rebuke, on December 3rd, Hancock pushed the likelihood of their future commercial relationship to the breaking point. "Really Gent'n. it is making a mere fool of me. I am not as void of common sense, as to give way in this." After expressing his expectation that they will make the necessary and satisfactory adjustments in his favor, he insisted, "I can't but think myself very severely dealt with, better Treatment Gent'n. I think without vanity I merritt...In short Gent'n. you seem of late to try to put me out of Temper & express so very little satisfaction in my conduct, that I am almost tired." In conclusion, Hancock warned he could not continue on in the present manner with all of the "constant Disputes." In the future, he would either "live as agreeable & easy" as he could be carrying "on Business without being Involved in so many perplexities as of late," or he would "leave it off or carry it on in another manner."[94]

This was no idly made threat, raised merely to force concessions from his London agents. Hancock was genuinely disgusted with all the complications and distractions caused by his private business affairs. That February, a severe fire in town which destroyed as many as twenty buildings, including several of Hancock's only increased his irritation.[95] This attitude intensified by April, as increasingly dismal reports arrived concerning his oil sales. It appears that unforeseeably large amounts of European caught oil reached the market before his. Consequently, one after another of his consignments eventually sold below

cost.[96] Many of his cargoes contained spoiled and inferior grades of oil. This was not only financially distressing, but a deeply felt personal humiliation as well. It left him temporarily crushed and in no mood to tolerate the next round of squabbles with Harrison and Barnard. Following a familiar pattern, Hancock was again reduced to "a bad state of health."[97]

Hancock's disenchantment with trade now rapidly accelerated, peaking in early September. When so much of the oil he shipped to England turned out to be bad, Harrison offered to dispatch an assistant to help Hancock inspect next year's purchases. This was too much. "When I am in want of a Guardian, our laws will appoint one," he angrily retorted. "Really I know not what you think...for I will never submit to have a man sent over to inspect my business, to make me the ridicule of the merchants."[98]

This was the real rub: Hancock had an intense fear of public exposure which might reveal his short comings and incompetence as a merchant. In self-defense, he launched a counterattack. Immediately his health improved. First, he reduced his oil exports to half of last year's volume, which was in effect an admission of failure, but the blame was placed on Harrison and Barnard who suggested he employ another firm of agents in London to handle his shipments.[99] Second, he contemplated a major reorganization of his business, blaming the local "scituation of trade & the scarcity of money" as the principal sources of all his current difficulties. Hancock was again searching about for scapegoats as he was incapable of assuming any responsibility for his situation. This led him to a tentative "Resolution to suspend the Importa-

tion of Goods for a year or two, till matters take a Better turn." During this breathing space, he would settle his accounts and avoid any further risks, acknowledging that the "times are very precarious."[100] It was also a calculated slap on the wrists of Harrison and Barnard who as his major suppliers of English goods would suffer from the loss of trade.

From then on it was only a question of time before a final rupture would occur; it was not long in coming. In mid-October, 1767, Hancock, in a fit of self-righteous fury, ended his family's twenty year business history with the London firm of Barnard and Harrison. In his scathing reply to their letter of the previous July, he severely scolded them for addressing such an incomprehensible letter to him. "What can be your intentions," he sarcastically mocked them, for "if your aim is to injure my reputation you will fail in your attempt, neither is it in your or any man's power to hurt my Credit in this part of the world." After informing them that they were only hurting themselves by their behavior, he continued, "I am one of no small influence here, & am greatly offended at the liberties you take with me in your Letters & is what I should have distained to have wrote a man of much less Consequence than myself."[101]

Apparently the immediate cause of Hancock's fury was Harrison's refusal to ship more goods and extend additional credit to William Palfrey, Hancock's former clerk, friend, and current business associate. Harrison begged off, claiming he wished to reduce his foreign credit sales. "How Repugnant," Hancock scoffed, "you say you want to retrench your Trade. Why Gent'n. am I the first object of your Trial?" Furthermore, he strongly objected to their refusal to send "Goods to Mess. Cazneaus who I strongly recommended to you with this additional agravation that They sent you my bill of L 200, in part pay for the goods." Hancock interpreted their

actions as a personal affront to his "Reputation & Credit," and saw no way they could "reconcile it."[102]

Not only did Hancock see no way to "reconcile" their insulting conduct, but he was glad of it. For it was Hancock who sought the termination of their business relations and he merely used these minor complaints as the needed provocation to act. It is inconceivable that Hancock did not understand Harrison's need to retrench since he had recently proposed doing the exact same thing. As an added paradox, Hancock enclosed with his letter, bills amounting to L 3,000 pounds sterling which he had the audacity to ask Harrison to honor. In the end, Hancock ordered an exact account of his obligations, which if after examination they appeared to be correct, he promised immediately to pay them in full, claiming, "I stand ready at an hours warning to pay every debt I owe in the world." To rub a little salt into the opened wounds, he informed them of his future plans. "I always chuse Gent'n. to be open and explicit. I have wrote to Mr. Haley," the head of a rival London firm, "on the subject of connection in Business, & propose opening a Correspondence with him."[103]

For all practical purposes this concluded Hancock's connections with Harrison and Barnard. But for someone who publicly proclaimed his "openness" and "explicitness" in all matters, Hancock possessed neither of these imagined qualities. His termination of relations with his former agents was done with little justification, and certainly not on the grounds he claimed. Instead, it resulted form a flaw in his own character, an inability to accept or share responsibility for failure, in this case the collapse of his much-touted whaling venture. In his own mind, he convicted Harrison and Barnard of cuplability and subsequently punished them

for their misconduct. As for the poor trading conditions in Massachusetts, since he could not realistically hold them accountable for that, he heaped responsibility on Parliament's shoulders. This was especially true when Parliament revealed plans to introduce a new series of revenue raising measures and reforms in the Customs House operations, namely the Townshend Acts.

Consequently, political considerations began to intrude again on his commercial interests, in almost a replay of his role in the Stamp Act crisis. His decision to open a commercial correspondence with George Hayley, in direct contradiction of his stated intention to curtail imports for a year or two, was as much politically motivated as it was an economic consideration. Hayley was a brother-in-law to John Wilkes, the flamboyant and controversial Whig politician of London, whose defense of liberty made him a respected hero and symbol of defiance among members of the popular party in Massachusetts Bay.[104] Hancock's proposed commercial ties with Hayley could only strengthen his political claim as a true believer and defender of American liberties and thus enhance his leadership role within the party.

In his initial communication, Hancock assumed Hayley was "no stranger" to him or his commerce. He reminded him that, "if you recollect you may remember seeing me in England in the year 1760, when I had the pleasure of being at your home." Following a brief recapitulation of his history and dissatisfaction with Harrison and Barnard, Hancock detailed his immediate business plans and hoped Hayley would find them agreeable.

> "I expect to be on a footing even with the very best of your correspondents, & as I am largely concerned in navigation you will have Spring & Fall from me, many consignments. I have now large parcels of Oyle, whale fins & Potashes to ship...

> I have not time to be as explicit as I could wish, but will by next. My character & situation in Life, you may be acquainted with from any person from this part of the world... but really I address you Sir, as a man on whom you may depend, & a man of capital & in whom I have the vanity to say, you may confide."

Hancock concluded by promising to write again soon with an invoice for a supply of spring goods, which he apologetically explained, "will be smaller than usual," because of the general decline of trade. He also hoped Hayley could provide freight for his vessels return voyages home.[105]

Hayley eagerly accepted Hancock's overtures and a substantial commercial relationship quickly developed. But this was the end of Hancock's innovative and enthusiastic attempt to surpass his late uncle Thomas's reputation as an enterprising merchant prince. In tandem with Hayley, Hancock's pattern of trade fell into a dull, relatively risk free routine, easily managed by subalterns.[106] For the most part, his daily direction all but disappeared as William Palfrey resumed his former station as Hancock's chief clerk. His presence freed Hancock from all but the most important decision making responsibilities, allowing him instead to concentrate his energies on public affairs and political intrigues.

In retrospect, Hancock's mercantile interests easily gave ground before his growing passionate commitment to a public career. His political rise came about so swiftly and seemingly without effort, around the time of the Stamp Act crisis, that it is natural to assume he possessed an inherent gift for politics. Conversely, in spite of all the years of education and training for being a merchant, this extensive preparation failed to instill a comparable ability in his chosen endeavor. But this would be a harsh and inaccurate judgement. First, being a merchant was not a voluntary decision but one pushed on him by his uncle. Second,

Hancock was capable and even competent in that activity. He was, however, also driven by a family inspired ambition and an even deeper more personal need to succeed in this calling, far beyond the range of his natural abilities. In other words, he attempted to achieve more than what was realistically attainable, both because of his own limitations as well as a result of the current economic conditions. This was responsible for his continued frustration with trade; he could not recognize or admit his own limitations and instead sought to blame others for his disappointments.

In spite of his personal shortcomings and his subseqeunt failure to corner the oil market, however, his attempt reflected an imaginative and daring personality. It also suggests he possessed a far broader vision of the commercial world with all its realities than generally credited. If his plan had succeeded, which it almost did, he undoubtedly would have secured a reputation for commercial brilliance closer to his desires. But almost was not good enough.

Nevertheless, he was undaunted in the wake of this setback. He reorganized his business along fairly conservative lines and turned his attention to public affairs, seeking the identical goals which proved so elusive for him as a merchant. It no longer mattered whether he matched or exceeded his uncle's commercial fame. Instead, he sought to carve out a new reputation for himself in a field heretofore neglected by his uncle and family.[107] His affiliation with the popular party not only boosted his political chances, but gave him the opportunity to vent his anger at those he held responsible for damaging his commercial activities.

FINKELSTEIN

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CHAPTER VI

"HANCOCK AND LIBERTY BEING THE CRY HERE"

In the two years immediately following the Stamp Act's repeal, Hancock's conversion from active merchant to full time public official was completed. But, this transformation was not accomplished without its share of physical and emotional strains. Even following this metamorphosis, he continued suffering a temporary series of disabling illnesses. For example, only a few weeks after notifying Harrison and Barnard of his intention to drop them in favor of George Hayley, Hancock complained of his "misfortune" in being "confined to my room by Indisposition." But optimistically, he hoped "soon to recover."[1]

In spite of the accumulated pressures and recurring disappointments arising from his oil ventures, these stresses were occasionally relieved by more amusing diversions. In May 1767, for instance, his brother Ebenezer's wedding to Elizabeth Lowell offered at least one moment of enjoyable escape.[2] He derived more sustained relief, however, from his reelection to the General Assembly. This was a particularly sweet personal triumph as he thoroughly enjoyed the activity, excitement, and prestige of that office. His triumph was intensified even more as his vote total exceeded that of his three fellow representatives from Boston, James Otis, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Cushing.[3] He was equally pleased by his reelection to another term as Selectman. Hancock undoubtedly considered himself one of the town's most popular and important public figures, and was probably correct in his assumption.

His success stemmed from an almost unerring sensitivity to the public's oscillating moods and temperaments. He consistently shaped his

actions and statements to conform to the public's expectations as he accurately perceived them. For example, the previous autumn Captain Daniel Malcolm stood accused by the customs house officers of resisting an attempt to search his property for smuggled goods. But only after a large crowd of several hundred Bostonians assembled in the streets to support Malcolm's resistence did Hancock himself enlist in Malcolm's defense. He quickly allowed his name to be added to a hastily formed series of committees, including James Otis, Sam Adams, John Rowe, and a select group of other merchants, which was designed to obstruct the Governor and customs officials from exploiting Malcolm's defiance for their own political advantage. Hancock was perfectly attuned to the public's deeply felt antagonism against the customs house and its despised employees. He carefully and consciously established himself as an outspoken critic and opponent of all attempts to strengthen the authority and power of these officers. Politically this was a sensible and popular position as literally no one liked a revenue collector.[4]

Hancock deliberately courted popularity in other less obvious ways. Through a constant series of elaborate and festive parties and social gatherings at his home, he earned a well deserved reputation as one of Boston's most celebrated and extravagant hosts. This was a role particularly close to his heart, although requiring a substantial cash outlay for food and drink, which he cheerfully expended, especially for the wine. "I don't stand for price, if it be good, I like Rich wine...a pale wine." He placed a standing order with the English firm of Hill, Lamar and Bisset "for an annual pipe of the very best Madeira wine until counter manded."[5] This was in addition to other more frequent orders of additional quantities of wine, amounting to as much as four pipes every few months. If

Hancock's favorite public role was that of gracious host, this was merely an embellishment of the role first established by his late uncle, which Hancock now perpetuated but on a far more lavish scale. Furthermore, this was done with his Aunt Lydia's loving consent and approval as she too enjoyed enhancing her own reputation as Boston's leading hostess.

These ostentatious social gatherings, however, served Hancock's purposes in two distinct ways. Solely as a form of entertainment and amusement they played an important part in his life, emotionally fortifying him in the face of disappointment, criticism, and conflict. But they were also politically significant. As only friends and political associates were invited to these affairs, Hancock provided them a convivial atmosphere in which to discuss issues and to plan strategies. As host it was inconceivable that he could be omitted from such planning sessions or be excluded from commanding a key part in the unfolding of their conspiracies and machinations. It was at Hancock's frequent dinner parties and afternoon teas that much of the popular party's plans were put in final order.

Perhaps equally important, however, Hancock's indulged life style dispelled all doubts that his political activity threatened the existing social structure. Even though he was in close association with Sam Adams and his working class supporters, there was no reason to believe that this relationship endangered the merchants' traditional and conservative social order. Hancock was viewed as a safe, practical, and responsible man of property and not as a wild-eyed leveler with revolutionary inclinations. This was important to the merchants, and assured Hancock of their continued support. If his life style was not sufficient proof of

his ultimate conservatism, then there were numerous other opportunities for Hancock to demonstrate the validity of this image.

As recently as December 1766, while attending one of the merchants' periodic meetings, Hancock enthusiastically joined his fellow members in drinking toast after toast to the King, Queen, Parliament and ministry's health.[6] His loyalty to the Crown and Empire was unquestioned, even as a result of his activity against the Stamp Act, his involvement with Sam Adams, and his own private business reversals. In his own mind and to the rest of the merchant community, Hancock remained a loyal and patriotic Englishman.

Added proof of his persistant commitment to the preservation of Massachusetts Bay's social order was evidenced by his extensive philanthropy, an important tool in his growing political arsenal. In May 1767, the Boston town meeting pubicly acknowledged Hancock's repeated attempts "to pay the Legacy left to the town by his late worthy Uncle." This gift was to be used to erect a house for the mentally deranged, but after years of discussion nothing ever came of it.[7] Far better use was made of Hancock's donation of books worth L 500 pounds sterling to the Harvard College library. Over 1000 volumes were added to the collection and on Commencement Day, July 15, 1767, Hancock's generosity was honored officially. Similarly, a bell weighing 300 pounds was presented to a local church, further contributing to Hancock's reputation as a generous and responsible citizen.[8]

While strengthening his bonds with the wealthier classes, Hancock also sought to improve his ties to Sam Adams and his middle and working class associates. The public revelation of Adams's indiscretion as the town's

tax collector provided Hancock a perfect opportunity to help his ally and mentor out of an embarrassing and potentially disastrous situation and put him in Hancock's financial and political debt. Either out of incompetance, or calculation that later backfired, Adams, as tax collector, failed to make his proper returns to the town. In 1767, a local Massachusetts court ruled him delinquent and ordered him to pay L 1,463 pounds in back taxes. Repayment was set to begin in March 1768, only nine months hence. There was no way he could possibly raise that much money on such short notice out of his own personal resources.[9]

Naturally, Adams's political opponents, believing him to be vulnerable, eagerly sought to exploit his dilemma. They might have succeeded but for the fact that Adams, through his friends, particularly Hancock, still retained tremendous influence at the Boston town meetings. When March came, Adams presented a memorial requesting a delay for an additional six months rather then submit the money he owed. With Hancock's help it was easily approved and the Treasurer was "directed to stay Execution untill that time."[10] Within a week, however, his opponents sought to counter this delay by asking the town to reconsider their vote on his memorial. But again, "after considerable debate...the question was accordingly put," and in this final vote Adams was overwhelmingly sustained. He still, however, faced the problem of meeting his financial obligation.[11]

Hancock and a group of subscribers now came to Adams's rescue. Over L 1000 pounds were raised by private donations and Hancock alone contributed a fourth.[12] A year later, the town completely relieved Adams of all the remaining outstanding taxes due and appointed Robert Pierpoint, one

of Hancock's tenants, to try and collect whatever back taxes could still be raised.[13] That ended Adams's immediate difficulties as a delinquent tax collector. His position and reputation were preserved intact, largely through Hancock's timely assistance. Among the opposition, however, Hancock's actions appeared to be extremely foolish.

Peter Olvier, for one, held that after Adams "embezzled the public monies of Boston," he had cleverly "duped" Hancock into extricating him. How? By persuading Hancock "to build Houses and Wharfes," which would earn him little economic profit, but would provide much needed work for "a variety of artificers, who Adams could prefer." By this he would secure these "men in his interest & such Men chiefly composed the votes of a Boston Town Meeting." After getting these men to reduce the size of the debt, Adams convinced Hancock and others with his "baleful poison" to pay off the balance.[14]

Another unknown critic was even more scathing in his examination of Hancock and Adams's relationship. He depicted Hancock as an "ignorant" and "awkward" novice, "unsuspicious" of Adams's real intent. With the use of flattery, which was a "novelty" that pleased him, Hancock easily "fell into the hands of Adams." Consequently, "he began to suppose himself of consequence," as he was "introduced to private committees - Corkus Clubs - and all the variety of meetings where mischievous men hatch & nurse sedition." With Adams as his ever present and hovering "political guardian," Hancock made his speeches, while Adams "furnished him with matter & they were in seperable companions," until this unlucky event nearly "put an end to their connection." According to this anonymous account, even Hancock "detested" Adams's conduct, but was trapped into

supporting him because, "all his secrets were deposited in the breast of his friend." And he feared "he might be betrayed - and he could not yet go alone in politics." Therefore, Hancock reluctantly, "concluded to pay the deficincy & save as far as possible the credit of the tax gatherer." His concluding observation was that "by scattering his money among a crowd of lazy politicans," Hancock "acquired a temporary influence & obtained seats for himself and Adams in the general assembly," but that Adams was little more than a low bred poor cheat, and "Hancock was his dupe."[15]

Although these two negative portraits of Hancock's relationship with Sam Adams have found a permanent place in the literature of the period, these interpretations are substantially wrong.[16] Hancock was definitely not blackmailed by Adams as suggested by the latter account, nor was his economic expansion inspired by Adams's insistence as Oliver claimed. On the contrary, Hancock had his own excellent and independent reasons for wishing to assist Adams during this embarassing episode as well as for reorganizing his business affairs in the wake of his oil scheme fiasco.

This obvious attempt to humiliate Adams pubicly and wreck his political career roughly parallelled Hancock's tangled personal struggles with the Customs House Commissioners. Furthermore, as leaders of the popular party, both Hancock and Adams were keenly aware that their recent successes were directly related to their staunch opposition to the Stamp Act. Now almost two years later, they were attempting to bolster their position by resisting the enforcement of the recently enacted Townshend Acts. Therefore, from the middle of 1767 and throughout all of 1768 each was in constant need of the other's continuing political cooperation and support.

Hancock's timely assistance, therefore, was in no way a product of Adams's manipulation or subterfuge, but rather it was the logical result of political necessity and pragmatism. Hancock needed Adams's support and was more than willing to bail Adams out of an embarrassing situation in exchange for it. But typically, Hancock's generosity and financial assistance for Adams was perfectly consistent with his own self-interest.

In the spring of 1767, Charles Townshend, the King's Chancellor of the Exchequer, believed he had finally resolved Parliament's long standing problem over the collection of an American revenue. His solution consisted of a number of measures adopted by Parliament between June and September, and were collectively known as the Townshend Acts. They were to go into effect on November 20th, only a few months later.

Townshend specifically designed his program to pacify colonial objections to "internal" taxes. Instead, new duties were levied on colonial imports of glass, lead, paint, paper and tea; but they were to be collected before the goods actually touched American shores. Therefore, they were technically considered an "external" tax.[17] A fine distinction that ultimately satisfied no one. The anticipated revenue, however, was earmarked for "defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and the support of civil government, as well as "the expences of defending, protecting, and securing the said dominions."[18] To guarantee the enforcement of these and all the other trade and revenue laws, Parliament also established a new American Board of Customs for North America, and selected Boston as its headquarters. Five appointed Customs Commissioners were permanently assigned there.[19] Their unpopular presence combined with Hancock's political ambitions made for a potentially explosive situ-

ation with the Commissioners and Hancock engaged in a serious test of wills. Upon the resolution of this clash would rest much of the America's future relationship with the British Empire.

From the start the popular party found Townshend's entire program objectionable and unconstitutional. But they particularly feared its effects. They were sure that the revenue raised would be used to pay the salaries of government officers and judges, and thus render those officials independent of the legislature and out of the popular party's control. This would completely undo all the party's recent successes. Thomas Cushing, the party's Speaker of the House, clearly expressed these sentiments in a privately written message to the colony's agent, Dennys De Berdt, while Parliament was still debating Townshend's program. Cushing stressed that the colonies did not object to the regulation of their trade, "but when duties are laid with a view of raising a revenue... to be applied to establish a civil list in America, and by this means... the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, Secretary, Judges, &c., are to have their salaries fixed...this is looked upon to be unconstitutional."[20]

Throughout the summer and well into the fall, Hancock and the leaders of the popular party scrambled about looking for just the right posture to assume in reaction to the Townshend Acts. It was apparent that they and the party faced a crucial challenge, and their collective future depended upon their ability to formulate a proper response. Rumors and hints of a renewed boycott of British goods and threats of mob violence were intentionally circulated around town to test the public's mood. But for the moment little concrete action was taken as the party's leadership was temporarily divided and hesitant to act.

Sam Adams was particularly quiet, no doubt as a result of the cloud of suspicion enveloping him as a result of his delinquency as a tax collector. James Otis, who previously advocated "violent Measures, now recommended Moderation & Caution."[21] Hancock, however, took a much harder line than either of his fellow representatives. Writing to a correspondent in England, he expressed his surprise "that so many attempts are made on yr. side to cramp our Trade. New duties every day, increasing, in short we are in a fair way of being ruined." He concluded that in self defense, we have nothing to do but, "unite & come under a solemn agreement to stop importing any goods from England, at least for a year. This, I am determined to promote...I am resolved."[22]

As a merchant by training, Hancock was far more impressed with the potential effect of the Townshend Acts upon trade than the constitutional and ideological arguments raised by other leaders of the popular party. His own current trade difficulties and his recent decision to transfer his London accounts to another firm may also help to explain his desire for a renewed boycott, allowing him more time to put his own house in order without worrying about competition. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm for the implementation of a non-importation agreement was generally not shared by the other local merchants. As Governor Bernard observed, "the merchants in general appear to be satisfied with what is designed for Trade & are allmost entirely detached from the Faction."[23] In fact, he noted, the popular party is currently so weakened, that it was "impossible for them to engage half the Merchants in this Town to discontinue their Trade with Great Britain but by some force & a great deal of intimidation."[24]

The Governor's only real concern was that the "Faction", his derogatory term for the popular party, would succeed in provoking another mob action, and although he felt "Otis and his gang" had declined in prestige and power, he feared they might "think there is nothing now left but to raise another Disturbance."[25]

In an effort to try to stem the party's sagging fortunes, some of its more literary leaders launched an October newspaper campaign designed to clarify the issues and explain the party's opposition to the Townshend Acts. It was, however, basically a rehash of their old familiar arguments against judges and officials being paid independently of the legislature, and the adverse effects these acts would have on the colony's trade and employment. Their program of resistance continued to make little headway. Hancock's call for a non-consumption and non-importation agreement also went unheeded.[26]

While these tactics foundered, Hancock, with his fellow representatives from Boston, tried to develop another approach. On October 7, 1767, they presented a memorial to Governor Bernard, requesting him to call a special session of the General Assembly. From that forum they hoped to launch a more successful resistance movement to the Townshend Acts. But the Governor saw through their request and ignored it.[27] Having failed on the provincial level, they turned their attention back to the Boston town meeting, but here too they were handed a stinging rebuff.

Since early July the popular party, principally through Hancock, had been urging the adoption of non-importation of British manufactured goods as the main line of resistance to Parliament's new revenue scheme. Yet, after three solid months of agitation and a concerted newspaper attack, all

they could manage to get the town to accept was a call for a voluntary non-consumption subscription.[28] But as Governor Bernard explained it, the subscription "was consented to under so many Protestations that the Subscribing hereto should be perfectly free & voluntary that it will come to Nothing."[29]

These meager results finally discouraged Hancock, who back in September confidently predicted that the merchants would imminently agree upon a non-importation plan. Now confronted by almost universal lack of interest Hancock abandoned his project and even reneged on his own stated pledge not to import any British goods. On November 2, 1767, in a letter to his new London agent, George Hayley, Hancock placed his usual order for spring goods.[30] For the moment this signalled the end of any immediate attempt to reimpliment a non-importation agreement. But it also left the popular party without any organized plan of opposition or resistance.

When the newly appointed Customs Commissioners arrived in Boston on November 4th, the popular party was in a state of political disarray. Internally divided over what to do, the party had so far failed to rally public opinion to its side. Even the town meeting, which they heretofore tightly controlled, now showed a measure of independence by watering down their call for non-importation. In its place they adopted the weak face saving voluntary non-consumption subscription, which even Hancock rejected. Consequently, the Governor's prediction that it would "have no Effect," seemed reasonable.[31] Nevertheless, Hancock and his fellow selectmen tried to maintain a brave front. They issued a circular letter to every town in the province recommending the adoption of a similar non-consumption plan. But even with this brief show of unity, Hancock and the popular party faced

a serious multifaceted problem.

Perhaps the least damaging aspect of the party's dilemma was the growing defection of the merchant community. Of greater concern was the internal divisions among the party's leaders. James Otis seemed to suggest as much when he reportedly "asserted the Kings Right to appoint Officers of the Customs," and thought it very "imprudent" if the town made "an Opoosition" to the duties "when every other Town in the Province... seemed to acquiesce."[32] But the curx of the problem lay in the party's failure to arouse the public. Because of their own internal divisions and the confusing nature of their public arguments against the Townshend Acts, the popular party was temporarily out of touch with their normal constituency.

Under these circumstances the only organized resistance they could muster for the remainder of the year was to raise occasionally the specter of mob action. This was particularly aimed at intimidating the newly arrived Commissioners and those merchants who might defect. Yet, even this was only a half hearted attempt and was generally unproductive.[33] But during this brief year-end lull, the party's leadership set about rethinking their tactics and strategies. While they quietly planned for next year, the Townshend Acts went into effect without any serious opposition.

It was eventually Hancock, with his acute sensitivity to the public's mood, who first devised the proper initiative for stimulating popular resistance to the Townshen Acts in Massachusetts. He did it by intentionally provoking a direct war of nerves between himself and the Customs Commissioners. From the moment they stepped ashore, Hancock went out of his way to insult, snub, and taunt them into a response; hoping to create a con-

frontation which he felt sure would rally public opinion to his and the popular party's side. Hancock's verbal assaults were assisted by the Sons of Liberty's orchestrated campaign of harassment and intimidation which produced a general intensification of tension throughout Boston.

Meanwhile, as part of their general attack upon the Townshend Acts, the popular party craftily managed to get the House of Representatives to adopt the issuance of a "Circular Letter." In it they appealed to all the other colonial assemblies on the continent to form a united policy.[34] The climate for receiving this appeal was well prepared by the timely appearance of John Dickinson's "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania." These serialized letters, which appeared in Boston's newspapers throughout the winter, clearly focused the issues and cut through the confusion which formerly plagued the popular party's efforts to arouse public support. Dickinson argued that Parliament had no constitutional right to impose any taxes upon the colonists without their consent. Here then was an issue well suited to the party's purposes, and one far easier to grasp than their own complex argument against judges and government officials becoming independent of the legislature's control.

As these events gradually unfolded, Hancock delighted in his unofficial capacity as chief tormentor of the Customs Commissioners. For reasons of his immense wealth, prestigious social station, and his political position, he was the natural choice for this part as he seemed invulnerable to retribution. As commander of the Cadet Company, a ceremonial militia unit responsible for providing the Governor with a guard of honor, Hancock launched his campaign of social intimidation by refusing Bernard's request that he participate in the welcoming ceremonies for the Commissioners. A

few months later Hancock escalated the tenor of his insults by leading a revolt among the entire company of Cadets. Hancock again snubbed Bernard by declining his invitation to attend a public dinner to which the Customs Commissioners were invited. When the Governor finally ordered Hancock to appear along with his entire Company, Hancock indignantly tore up the seal to his commission with the full support of all but nine members of the Corps of Cadets. The town officials signalled their approval of Hancock's latest symbolic act of defiance by refusing Bernard access to Fanueil Hall for the banquet if he insisted on the Customs Commissioners presence.[36]

Although by themselves, Hancock's taunts and social insults seemed quite innocuous and almost irrelevent, the Governor and the Commissioners chose to take them very seriously. When in March 1768, the Sons of Liberty began assembling large crowds at night "about the Houses of some Members of the Board, blowing Horns, beating Drums, and making hideous Noises, so that the Familys quitted their Houses expecting they would proceed to Violence," the Commissioners were convinced this was all part of an intentional plan to harm them and make a mockery of Royal authority.[37]

Bernard was obviously embarrassed by Hancock's manner as well as his own inability to enforce discipline and order in the streets of Boston. As for the Commissioners, besides fearing for their personal safety, they swallowed the bait Hancock dangled before them and accepted his brazen challenge at face value. From then on, their reports to the Lords of the Treasury in London contain frequent graphic accounts of Hancock's latest bit of affrontery.

Sensing the shift in the public's attitude, by early March, Hancock

again began pushing for a resumption of a non-importation agreement among the merchants. After a series of private meetings, a majority eventually agreed, "that every Legal Measure for freeing the Country from the present Embarassments should be adopted." Among these measures, a call for "stopping the Importation of Goods from Great Britain under certain limitation," was considered. As a leading advocate of this plan, Hancock was appointed to a merchant's committee of nine to help determine the best way to implement this agreement.[38] In the course of these extensive deliberations and meetings, Hancock won an easy reelection to his seat on the Board of Selectmen. He correctly interpreted this as a sign of approval for his recent inflammatory behavior.[39]

With the tide of public opinion moving decidedly in the popular party's direction, Hancock intensified his attacks upon the Board of Commissioners. In their report on May 12th, the Board related how from the floor of the Provincial Assembly, Hancock threatened that "if we Commissioners are not recalled, he will get rid of us before Christman." Having now singled Hancock out as "one of the Leaders of the disaffected," the Board also cited his most recent boast, "that he would not suffer our officers to go on board of any of his London Ships, and now carries his opposition to Government to an even higher pitch."[40]

The Commissioners of course were referring to Hancock's latest brush with Royal authority over their attempt to search one of his vessels. When his ship, the "Lydia", returned from London laden with his spring orders on April 8th, she docked at Hancock wharf and two tidesmen employed by the Customs House came aboard. Both Owen Richard and Robert Jackson claimed they were there by order of the Collector and Comptroller, not to

search the vessel, but merely to see that no goods were improperly landed. The Customs House either suspected Hancock of smuggling or wanted to match his harassments with one of their own. But more than anything they hoped to catch him in any illegal act, however minor, in order to make an example of him in front of the rest of the community.

Because the two tidesmen planned no actual search of his property, however, Hancock was only legally bound to allow them unrestricted access to the ship's top deck, which he did. He was well within his rights to bar them from below deck and so ordered his captain that under no circumstance was he to permit either tidesmen into the steerage compartments below. This should have been the end of the incident but it was not.[41]

On the very next evening, Hancock's dockside employees discovered tidesman Richards on board the "Lydia", and below deck among the steerage. Hancock was immediately summoned and arrived around eleven o'clock accompanied by a gang of henchmen, including Captain Malcolm. This was the same Malcolm who twice within the last several months had openly defied the Customs House by illegally landing undeclared cargoes with impunity. Hancock confronted Richards and ordered him off his property, but the tidesman momentarily refused. Hancock then inquired if he possessed a writ of assistance, Richards confessed he did not. With that, Hancock ordered his men to seize Richards and bodily force him up onto the top deck. Once there, Hancock continued to interrogate him. "Do you want to search this vessel," he inquired. Richards, who by now was thoroughly intimidated, especially as Captain Malcolm repeatedly suggested that, "if it was my vessel, I would knock him down," finally claimed he had no intention of searching the ship. "You may search the vessel,"

Hancock repeated, "but shall not tarry below."[42]

Hancock's heavy handed response to Richards' illegal presence below deck confidently rested upon his personal familiarity with the law. Without a writ of assistance, Hancock knew that a tidesman's jurisdiction was restricted to a vessel's top deck and the shoreline. He also knew his actions would command enormous public support, especially from the merchant community which was growing increasingly disenchanted with the Board of Commissioners' continued presence. The Commissioners' all too apparent greediness, and their unreasonable strict enforcement of all aspects of the trade and revenue laws was a sharp deviation from traditional local custom. Whatever good will they initially enjoyed from some of the town's fair traders was now rapidly being lost.

Unconcerned about their own failing popularity and more determined than ever to make Hancock pay for his arrogance, the Commissioners asked the Attorney General of the Province, Jonathan Sewall, to initiate legal proceedings against him.[43] Sewall knew they had an extremely flimsy case and denied their request, claiming, "I cannot see sufficient grounds... that Mr. Hancock, or any of the others could be convicted of a Breach of any of the Laws or Statutes." Although he admitted, "Mr. Hancock may not have conducted so prudently or courteously as might be wished, yet from what appears it is probable his Intention was to keep within the boundaries of the Law."[44] Or as one historian recently observed, "it was one thing to detect a ship owner in the act of landing undeclared cargo; it was quite another to rummage through a vessel's contents to discover such goods. Ths law recognized the distinction, and so did Hancock."[45]

As technically legal as Hancock's conduct was, his personal behavior

was deliberately provocative. Furthermore, his clearly defiant manner necessitated a quick response on the Commissioners part or all of their remaining authority stood in imminent danger of collapse. Immediately after Sewall's unsatisfactory judgment in Hancock's favor appeared, the Board wrote home to England seeking a reversal of the Attorney General's opinion along with requests for military protection. Hancock's overwhelming reelection victory to the General Assembly in May must have convinced the Board of Commissioners' of the urgency in taming Hancock's unbriddled spirit as quickly as possible.[46]

The arrival of his Majesty's fifty gun man-of-war, Romney, on May 17th, strengthened the Commissioners' resolve as the vessel's captain was specifically instructed to lend the Board all reasonable assistance in the collection of the King's revenue.[47] The stage was now set for a dramatic clash of wills between Hancock and the Board of Commissioners that had been steadily brewing since the preceding November.[48]

May was a busier month than usual for Hancock. In addition to the frequent Selectmen's meetings and normal rounds of political discussions, the end of the month was slated for the opening of the new session of the General Court. In preparation, Hancock sought to settle as much of his own private business affairs as possible in order to free himself for what promised to be a lengthy and fatiguing session. Of immediate concern was the unloading of his incoming vessels carrying his spring orders from London. On May 9th, his sloop Liberty arrived with a cargo of wines from Madiera. She cleared through customs without noticeable difficulty and was unloaded by the following evening.[49] Following what was otherwise a routine procedure, was the sudden death of John Marshall, Hancock's

captain of the London Packet. Marshall, it was said, "had been very busy in unloading," one of Hancock's vessles, "the night before, by which he overheated himself," and died.[50] As Captains rarely participated in the physical work of unloading a cargo, Marshall's activity in this respect may have raised a few eyebrows among those in the know, but for the most part few people paid much attention to it. Meanwhile, Hancock readied himself for the opening of the General Court.

Even as the General Court prepared to organize itself for the forthcoming session, tensions in Boston were perceptibly on the rise. The immediate cause was the Romney which was impressing seamen off ships coming into Boston harbor. Lt. Governor Hutchinson sadly observed, "it is unfortunate that in the midst of these difficulties the Romney...adds more fewel to the great stock among us."[51] Hancock, who only a few days earlier had been barred by the Governor from taking a seat on the Council, joined a special committee of his colleagues to protest the Romney's actions.[52] Before this issue could be satisfactorily resolved, however, the Board of Commissioners inaugurated their plot against Hancock. On June 10th, 1768, they seized his sloop Liberty and precipitated the colony's worst crisis with royal authority in decades.

The "Liberty Affair" is a frequently told tale, representing perhaps the colonists' first serious physical resistence to the King's law. The complicated legal implications of the various court cases pressed against Hancock as a result of the seizure have been repeatedly examined as has the Commissioners' attempted conspiracy to rob him of much of his fortune. These were all important facets of the controversial incident; but for Hancock personally, the political consequences were of overriding concern.

For in large measure, Hancock was as much responsible for the incident as were the Customs Commissioners. He had systematically defied their authority and then taunted their powerlessness to punish him. By pushing as hard as he did, Hancock not only forced the Board into a tight corner but also politicized the conflict, using his stand against the Commissioners to enhance his own political reputation. By portraying himself as a bold defender of the merchants' rights and liberties, Hancock lured the Board into making a counter move, resulting in their confiscation of his sloop.

The Commissioners, however, badly misread the situation, perhaps as Hancock knew or hoped they would. By selecting Hancock as the target of their vendetta, no doubt spurred on by hopes of sharing in the huge financial penalties they thought the courts would assess him, the Commissioners foolishly picked the wrong victim. For Hancock, with his enormous popular following and personal contacts with all strata of Massachusetts' social, business, and political communities, was the one man in Boston who could instantaneously rally public opinion to his side.

This was evident from the outset of the "Liberty Affair" when a large angry mob spontaneously appeared on Hancock's wharf and tried to prevent the seizure. The Collector and Comptroller of the Customs House specifically chose the evening hours as the safest time to make the confiscation. They believed few people would still be on the docks and would not dare to intervene. They too were wrong. Without the assistance of the Romney's crew, who managed to tow the Liberty away from the dock and moor her safely under the Man-of War's guns, the seizure would probably have failed. Collector Harrison and Comptroller Hallowell only then barely escaped

from the dockside as they were "pursued by the Mob which by this time was increased to a great multitude."[53]

Following their narrow escape, the mob, variously estimated at between 500 and 3,000 strong, went on a wild rampage of destruction.[54] Yet the only victims of its controlled fury were members of the Customs House. The climax of the evening's mayhem came with the burning of Joseph Harrison's pleasure boat. It was dragged from the docks through the streets of Boston onto the town Common where it was set afire below John Hancock's Beacon Hill mansion house. There the crowd was reportedly exhorted by some of its leaders, Sam Adams was later identified as one, to "behave like men," and "take up arms immediately and be free."[55] But calmer heads and reason prevailed. Hancock, Doctor Joseph Warren, and other leaders of the ppoular party walked among the crowd suggesting that that was enough for one evening and encouraging everyone to return to their homes. By one o'clock in the morning when the watch word, "each man to his tent," was given, the citizens of Boston obediently obeyed. For Hancock and the other leaders of the party, this was a very encouraging sign of their strength, organization, and control. For the Governor and the Commissioners, "the terror of the Night" was over, but "it is said to be only a Prelude to greater Mischiefs."[56]

By next morning the town was still reeling under the effects of the previous night's tumultuous events. The Commissioners, afraid for their lives, fled town, taking up eventual refuge in Castle Williams, an island fort guarding the entrance to Boston's harbor. They would not reemerge again on a permanent basis until the arrival of British soldiers that fall. Meanwhile they went ahead with their plans against Hancock.

With the threat of renewed violence hanging heavily in the air, the Commissioners sought to defuse the situation by taking a conciliatory approach towards Hancock. Through Joseph Warren, acting as an intermediary, they offered to return Hancock's sloop on his oath to surrender it again later upon the Court's eventual verdict.[57] Collector Harrison claimed Hancock "was very earnest and desirous that this Proposal should take place, but was over-awed by some of those Firebrands who have the chief Direction of the Mob." And so the negotiations were broken off. Yet, Harrison did not blame Hancock, whom he described as a young gentleman with a generous and benevolent disposition but unluckily connected with Otis and the other ringleaders of the Faction who have drawn him "little by little into all their Measures and have now placed him at the Head of their Party." Harrison personally believed that Hancock "disapproves of their Proceedings, but being naturally of a timid pliable Temper is frequently bullied into a Compliance with them contrary to his own inclination."[58]

Harrison's portrait of a weak, intimidated, and easily bullied Hancock is in flat contradiction with the Commissioners' reports which portray him as an arrogant, defiant "leader of the disaffected." Perhaps Harrison's impressions were only a product of wishful thinking. For the Tories, Loyalists and conservatives of Massachusetts were always confused by Hancock's political sympathies for the popular party. After all, a man of wealth and social position was naturally expected to defend and uphold the law, state, and contemporary social structure. Men like Hutchinson, Oliver, and Bernard had no reference point by which to measure Hancock and therefore were incapable of understanding him. The only way

they could make his actions comprehendable was to assign him some character flaw, or weakness in his personality, like an unnatural fondness for flattery and adulation or a weak susceptibility to the voice of Samuel Adams. To the supporters of Government, only this could explain his otherwise unaccountable behavior.[59]

Harrison probably had one other reason for depicting Hancock in this light. By explaining Hancock's actions this way, the Controller avoided mentioning any specific details about the negotiations between Hancock and the Commissioners. Otherwise he might have found it more difficult explaining how the Board tried to trick Hancock into signing an agreement which would have made him personally responsible for any future mob violence.[60] This was the real cause for the breakdown in negotiations. Hancock, with the advice of his legal counsel, refused the Commissioners' deceptive overtures and reportedly stated his intention to "let the Business take its Course."[61]

For nearly the next twelve months, as Hancock insisted it should, the "business" ran its course. During that time, he was completely preoccupied with all the legal and political complications, now compounded by the Liberty's seizure. Yet through it all he displayed remarkable poise while successfully accomplishing each of his intended goals. For as a politician, Hancock had more than a little of the actor in him. After having played a leading role in baiting the Customs Commissioners into making a foolish step, Hancock now changed roles. He stepped back slightly, off center stage, and transformed himself into a completely innocent victim of a monstrous conspiracy. It was a convincing performance which riveted the public's eye on the Commissioners and turned opinion against both the

Board and the Townshend Acts. Hancock's timing and sense of his audience's appreciation were as perfect as his highly publicized, but always dignified, public behavior which earned him an undisputed reputation as a staunch defender of American liberties, a reputation that spread far beyond Massachusetts' borders. Continentally, Hancock's name became as widely known and respected as John Dickinson's.

The popular party's first move to exploit this new political situation, arising from the Commissioners' imprudent actions, came at a specially called Boston town meeting. On June 14th, the town adopted a petition requesting "his Majesty's Ship Romney to depart this Harbour," because of its illegal part in helping to seize Hancock's property. A respected committee of twenty one citizens was quickly formed to deliver the petition to Governor Bernard at his private residence. Immediately upon adjournment, this committee met at Hancock's house, "from whence they proceeded regularly through the Town to Roxbury, Mr. Hancock in his Phaeton with the Moderator led the van," making a "splendid appearance."[62] The Governor politely listened to their request but later denied he had the authority to order the Romney away.

A week later the Commissioners counterattacked through Attorney General Sewall, who filed the Government's suit against Hancock. The basis of the case, as well as for the Board's original seizure, was the recent sworn evidence of Tidesman Thomas Kirk, who had first inspected the Liberty when she initially docked in May.[63] At the time he reported nothing amiss, but had since altered his testimony. He now claimed that on the night of May 9th, Hancock's Captain, John Marshall, tried to bribe him. When Kirk refused, he claimed Marshall had him locked below deck while over-

head he could hear men working hard to unload the vessel. When released three hours later, he was warned to keep quiet or else, which he did until now, even though Captain Marshall died the following morning.

With this "suspicious" evidence of a self-admitted perjurer as the backbone of his case, Sewall filed suit on the grounds Hancock landed goods illegally before making a proper entry at the Customs House. The penalty for such misdoings was the forfeiture of his vessel. On August 17th, after several months of legal wrangling by Hancock's counsel, probably James Otis, Judge Auchmuty ruled against the accused.[64] He declared the Liberty condemned for unloading without entry but cleared Hancock for a lesser charge of illegally loading goods aboard ship without posting a bond. A month later the sloop was put up for sale and was purchased by Collector Harrison on behalf of the Commissioners.[65] Round one of their legal sparring went to the Board, but Hancock's political conduct indicated that he was in no way intimidated by the outcome.

In fact, Hancock's running confrontation with the Commissioners and then the colony's Admiralty Courts helped raise the level of his radicalism to a pre-Revolutionary War high water mark. He enthusiastically joined a majority of ninety-two members of the House of Representatives who on June 30th refused to rescind the Assembly's "Circular Letter" of the previous February, in spite of the orders of Lord Hillsborough, the King's Secretary of State for the Colonies.[66] When the Governor threatened to dissolve the Assembly if they refused Hillsborough's demands, Hancock calmly joined a select committee petitioning the King for Bernard's immediate recall as Governor.[67]

By now the offensive momentum against the Townshend Acts decidedly

shifted in Hancock's and the popular party's favor. Pressing their advantage, enormous pressure was brought to bear on the Boston merchant community, who with Hancock's encouragement and support ratified a non-importation agreement at the end of July to become effective next January for an entire year.[68]

On August 1st, Hancock and his friends momentarily paused to celebrate their hard won victory, almost a year since Hancock first predicted the plan's imminent adoption. After a brief signing ceremony in Faneuil Hall, where sixty local merchants formally pledged themselves in writing to the agreed upon stipulations, a handful of the hard core leaders of the non-importation movement retired to Nathaniel Barber's insurance office. There Hancock and the leaders of the Sons of Liberty toasted their success by unveiling for the first time a silver bowl, inscribed No. 45, and weighing exactly forty five ounces.[69] This was an obvious allusion to John Wilkes, the English radical with whom Hancock and the Liberty Boys readily identified and with whom they recently opened a correspondence.[70] As Collector Harrison of the Customs House accurately informed his superiors, Hancock was the idol of the mob, "just as Mr. Wilkes is in England. Hancock and Liberty being the Cry here, as Wilkes and Liberty is in London."[71]

But the "Idol of the Mob" and his political cohorts had little time to rest on their laurals for the weaknesses of their non-importation plan were apparent. In addition to the merchants' residual resistance, it was also feared that the arrival of British soldiers would strengthen the Governor and Commissioners' hands, leading to a dissolution of the opposition. Following a very brief excursion "to view Rainsford Island on

the Province Acct.," Hancock and the town's other Representatives, Selectmen, and several other dignitaries returned to Boston to confront the deepening crisis.[72]

Governor Bernard finally admitted pubicly, on September 19th, that two regiments of British troops were expected momentarily.[73] His official statement, however, only confirmed what the leaders of the popular party long believed true. In anticipation of this, they had already set in motion the machinery for calling together a Provincial Convention for later in the month. Its stated purpose was to formulate policy in the advent troops actually arrived so that "the peace and safety" of his Majesty's citizens might still be preserved.[74] Although elected one of Boston's delegates to this proposed Convention, Hancock was less than enthusiastic about it. Clearly the whole idea was the brainchild of the party's extreme radical wing which seemed bent on using it as a basis for organizing armed opposition to the soldiers' presence.

The more moderate segment of the party, represented by Hancock, Thomas Cushing, John Rowe and the like, opposed the use of force. Instead they marshalled all their strength into pushing forward the non-importation plan, trusting it alone would eventually compel the repeal of the Townshend Acts. Hancock informed his London agent Hayley of this new agreement and ordered him to comply by not accepting any freight "except Coals, Hemp, Duch & Grindstones being put on board any of my vessels." And if no freights of this kind were available, then just "send the ship back as soon as possible, as she will lay a much easier expence here in London."[75] Hancock's commitmemt to non-importation ruled out any calculated use of arms to resist British authority. But, he was powerless to prevent the Boston town meeting from adopting the radicals' call for this

convention. Although he privately shared Cushing's claim that he had "always been for moderate Measures," for obvious political reasons he chose to remain quiet rather than risk an open break with the other leaders of the party.[76]

Once the Convention actually met on September 22nd, however, Hancock and Cushing's more temperate views prevailed. As Hancock undoubtedly anticipated, the representatives from Massachusetts' more conservative inland communities, where sympathy for the radicals' views was less advanced, overwhelmingly rejected all calls for militancy. Instead, the convention merely petitioned the Governor to recall the prorogued Assembly and the King for a redress of grievances.[77] Cushing, who acted as Hancock's principal spokesman, was afterwards attacked by Otis for being "as great an Enemy to his own party as Frank Bernard, Thom Hutchinson or the Commissioners."[78] Hancock escaped any significant censure because of his greater popularity and more tactful silence. But he was obviously relieved with the convention's results. He gladly reported to Hayley, "that everything here has been conducted with the greatest order, on the part of the people, and I can't but hope that when things are really Known in England, we shall be relieved."[79]

Hancock's hoped for relief, however, was not immediately forthcoming. For just as the radicals' plan for confrontation was temporarily defused, the arrival of troops supported by artillery created a new and equally dangerous situation. Hancock was convinced that the soldiers were a "Consequence of advice recd. in England from hence, that there was a necessity for them" But such advice, he insisted, must have been made "by those who are inimical to us & wish to see us in confusion." Great

Britain, he reasoned, could only have agreed to the request because, "we have been grossly mis-represented" by those who want the soldiers and those who did not approve of the Provincial Convention.[80]

The presence of British troops and his own opposition to violent confrontation put Hancock in a difficult position. To both sides of the conflict Hancock was an important figure. His carefully groomed reputation for resisting the Board of Commissioners' authority made him a popular hero of the Boston mobs. To retain their support, it was essential he maintain a defiant posture, but if he was to avoid provoking a bloody clash, which was his immediate aim, greater caution was advisable. The moderates' victory at the Massachusetts Convention reflected Hancock's concern for caution and helped calm the public's temper. But at the same time it weakened his relationship with many of his closest political allies, particularly those of a more radical persuasion, like Sam Adams and James Otis. Meanwhile, the Commissioners escalated their attacks on him, fortified by the appearance of British troops.[81]

Throughout October, Hancock was subjected to a series of minor harassments. On the 4th, one of his vessels, although properly cleared by Customs, was detained by Commodore Smith, who ordered "that he should not leave this harbour without his permission."[82] Later in the month a newspaper article, by Veritas, accused Hancock of seeking personal profit by gaining authorization to sell provisions to the regiments occupying Boston. This attempt to discredit him was vehemently denied in a personally written response to the same paper. In his letter, Hancock swore he "never made any application to any for the supply of said troops nor did I ever desire any person to do it for me." He characterized this slur as

an obvious effort "to injure my reputation."[83]

Finally, on November 3rd, Hancock was arrested and charged with smuggling.[84] He and five other defendants were officially accused of violating the American Act of 1764, by assisting isn the landing of one hundred pipes of Madeira wine valued at L 3,000 pounds sterling without payment of duties. The penalty for conviction was triple charges, or in this case approximately L 55,000 pounds sterling. Bail was set at the unusually high rate of L 3,000 pounds sterling per individual.[85]

In spite of the enormous financial sums involved, the case against Hancock was politically motivated. As long as he remained unchallenged, his example would continually inspire other shippers to defy the Customs House officers. But, if he could be convicted on a smuggling charge, and compelled to pay a steep penalty, then the Commissioners believed all opposition to their authority would collapse.[86] Whether Hancock was or was not actually guilty was of minor consideration. He had boasted loudly enough to convince almost everyone that he intended to defy the law. Therefore, he was reasonably fair game for their legal prosecution. The Commissioners' critics naturally ascribed greed as their basic motivation, claiming that they only wanted their share in the division of the spoils, which in this case would have been substantial. But whatever their true motives were, it was apparent that their latest attempt to cripple Hancock's political effectiveness had backfired again.

His trial for smuggling was carefully reported by the entire colonial press. The Boston Evening Post published a special feature entitled "Journal of the Times" which was widely distributed throughout the continent. It provided a picturesque, but onesided account of the horrors in-

flicted on Boston as a result of the British army's occupation. Coverage of Hancock's trial was also one of the "Journal's" regular features. Through this medium, Hancock's image as a greatly wronged and persecuted American patriot was widely disseminated. The weaknesses of the prosecution's case combined with numerous other irregularities gave real substance of the "Journal's" interpretation.

Hancock's trial dragged on from November 1768 through the following March. To conduct his defense he engaged John Adams as his counsel in place of James Otis.[87] Adams later recalled the "painfull Drudgery" he endured as a result of accepting this complicated and highly irregular case. "There were few days through the whole winter," he recalled, "when I was not summoned to attend the Court of Admiralty." And it appeared to him that "the officers of the Crown were determined to examine the whole Town as witnesses," including the interrogation of many of Hancock's "near Relations and most intimate Friends," and even "threatened to summons his amiable and most venerable Aunt."[88]

This dragnet attempt by the Commissioners to unearth evidence against Hancock, their resort to secrecy, bribery and threats were only some of the irregular aspects of this unusual trial. In addition, Hancock's office was illegally entered and his desk and personal papers rifled. Furthermore, a criminal conspiracy, as this case was represented to be, should have been tried in a regular court before a jury of Hancock's peers, and his defense counsel allowed the right of cross examination of the prosecution's witnesses. None of this occurred. Hancock was tried in Vice Admiralty court with Judge Auchmuty presiding. All witnesses were examined by interrogatories and no cross questioning permitted. In January

1769, Judge Auchmuty ordered the trial into closed sessions as the Commissioner's case ran into increasing difficulty.[89] The "Journal of the Times" reported John Adams' reaction to this extraordinary event. In open court he observed that the proceedings "were more alarming than any that had appeared to the world, since the abolition of the Court of Star Chamber."[90] The implication was apparent to all, Hancock was depicted as an innocent victim of a flagrant conspiracy to strip him of his traditional and constitutionally guaranteed rights and liberties. Adams' subsequent defense made much of this interpretation.

Hancock's choice of John Adams as his defense counsel was a wise decision. Adams brought both a studious knowledge of the law and a spirited combative attitude to bear in Hancock's behalf. In spite of his own self-admitted weariness with the case, Adams successfully defended his client until the prosecution finally moved on March 5th, 1769 to withdraw the charges against all the accused.

The basis of Adams' defense and the eventual dismissal of charges was less important politically than the impressions these events made upon the public's consciousness.[91] Hancock emerged from the ordeal even more of a popular hero than before. John Wilkes, writing from England, acknowledged as much in offering his "compliments to Mr. Hancock." His late persecution, Wilkes observed, was "a consequence of his known zeal to the cause of his country, which our common enemy desires to punish, when they cannot suppress it."[92] In contrast to Hancock's increased popularity, the Customs Commissioners were further isolated and subjected to intensive public disapproval, ostracism, and ridicule. This crippled their effectiveness until the very outbreak of the Revolutionary War.

The long term results of the "Liberty Crisis" confirmed Hancock's political skill and the propriety of his moderate policies. Not only was his own political position enhanced, but the results of the non-importation agreement cut deeply into the colonies normal trade pattern with Great Britain. Trade was dramatically reduced as was the amount of revenue brought in by the Customs House. This contributed to Parliament's decision in May 1769 to propose a partial repeal of the Townshend Revenue duties during next year's session. But by then it was already too late to save many American merchants and traders who suffered irreversible financial harm as a result of the boycott of British manufactured goods. Wealthier merchants, like Hancock, wisely anticipated the adverse effects and adverted any serious difficulties by stockpiling imported items prior to the non-importation agreement's implementation.[93] Meanwhile, less established men, like Hancock's brother Ebenezer, watched helplessly as their businesses collapsed into bankruptcy from the loss of trade.[94]

Nevertheless, Hancock was pleased with the results of the non-importation policy and the outcome of the "Liberty Affair". The more odious features of the Townshend revenue laws were eventually repealed, except for a slight duty on imported tea. But even this partial victory was enough to sustain the popular party's credibility. Meanwhile, Hancock's personal reputation and political position were also strengthened, although differences and tensions among the party's leaders remained unresolved. Furthermore, Hancock's support for moderate policies helped keep the colony at peace despite the continued presence of British troops occupying Boston.

Inspite of this string of recent successes, however, the "Liberty

Affair" had a sobering effect upon Hancock. The nearness to which he came to losing control over the situation during the "Liberty" riot, his own near martyrdom in the Admiralty Courts, and the colony tottering on the brink of open rebellion alerted him to the seriousness of the political conflict in which he was emerging as one of the more prominent participants. Influenced by these concerns and possessing a new and increased sense of his own responsibility, Hancock was determiend to act with even greater caution in all subsequent conflicts with Parliamentary and Royal authority. Unlike Sam Adams, whose inclination towards complete American independence from Great Britain crystallized in 1768 with the arrival of British troops, Hancock was not yet converted to that extreme course of action.[95]

CHAPTER VII

"OPPRESSION WILL MAKE A WISE MAN MAD"

Whereas the Stamp Act crisis inaugurated Hancock's involvement with the popular party, particularly its radical wing, the "Liberty" incident and its related complications produced just the opposite effect. For almost five full years after the June 10th, 1768 "Liberty" riot, Hancock's relationship with the radicals noticeably and deliberately cooled off. Ever since the Massachusetts Convention, where he was first alerted to their potentially rebellious designs, he warily sought to keep them at arms length, lest he be ensnared and used by them in some future conspiratorial plot. Following his narrow escape from the Custom Commissioners' clutches in the Vice Admiralty court, he grew even more circumspect in his public and private activities. Finally the numerous unanswered questions regarding the "Boston Massacre," in March 1770, confirmed his worst suspicions as to the radicals' motivations. As a result of these events, Hancock intentionally disassociated himself from the radicals, who were increasingly dominated by Sam Adams. Instead, he inched closer to a moderate, middle of the road position, where he would await future political developments.

Hancock's seemingly erratic behavior obviously disgusted his former political confidants and cohorts. Their undying suspicions were fully aroused as rumors spread of Hancock's possible reconciliation with Thomas Hutchinson, who only recently was named to succeed Bernard as Governor. A more immediate effect, however, of Hancock and the radicals' estrangement was the partial collapse of the popular party's program of organized resistance to the Townshend Acts. This in turn led to a temporary lull

in the colony's heretofore uninterrupted factional warfare, raging since the Stamp Act was first introduced. But for some, peace was not enough, they wanted victory. Hancock's clerk, William Palfrey, sadly noted the radicals' frustration, observing that "everything here seems to be tending fast towards that stupid senseless state of slavery which commonly follows a long but unsuccessful struggle for Liberty." Although Palfrey remained faithful to his employer, his radical sympathies were deeply offended by Hancock's defection. In a tactfully worded letter to John Wilkes, he explained how "even the most animating examples," like Hancock, "have lost their usual effect," and consequently, "the people seem to be borne down by powerful opposition of their enemies."[1] From the radicals' perspective, Hancock's behavior was inexplicable.

The same problem that continually puzzled the Tories in Massachusetts now confronted the radicals, only in a slightly altered context. Whereas the former were forever baffled by Hanccock's unnatural relationship and political accommodation with the radicals and their middle and working class supporters, the latter grew equally perplexed by his apparent renunciation of their alliance. As a result, Hancock came under attack by both political extremes. Yet neither side wanted to denounce him publicly, for each secretely hoped and believed they could still woo him back to their camp. Considering that they interpreted his conduct as only errant behavior and devoid of any substantive political motivation, there was good reason for maintaining restraint. Nevertheless, Hancock was subjected to a vituperative whispering campaign where he was unmercilessly portrayed as erratic, contradictory, capricious and opportunistic.[2] Objectively none of these epithets accurately applied. Instead, they reflected

the growing political polarization taking place throughout the colony which blinded either opposing camp from appreciating, or even recognizing Hancock's overall consistency.

Hancock's political persepctive was for the most part shaped by the moderates within Boston's merchant community. As a group they were opposed to Great Britain's trade policies, revenue and taxation schemes, and the recently instituted program of colonial administrative reform. They were fiercely independent men, who staunchly defended the colony's claim for local autonomy and were accustomed to exercizing their collective authority within the province. For more than any other signle group, they were responsible for providing the town of Boston and the colony with leadership.[3] This was their traditional role, one which they would surrender only with the greatest reluctance. Furthermore, as a social unit, the merchants were instinctively conservative and were therefore frightened by recent events; particularly the strident and even violent response to Parliament's authority increasingly advocated by the radicals, a group the merchants initially encouraged during the Stamp Act crisis. But now they felt the radicals were going too far and behaving too independently. Considering Hancock's background training, and experiences, it is hardly surprising that he too reverted to type, and like his fellow merchants sought to stem or control the radicals' excesses.

But it was more than just Hancock's brush with extremism, as in the Massachusetts Convention, or his class indentification with the naturally cautious merchant community which prompted his sudden political conservatism. For it was not an unthinking reflex action on his part but rather a deliberate and calculated response, one which dramatically indicated

the depth of his perceptions, maturity, and sophistication as a popular leader. Hancock was not and never pretended to be an ideologist. If any label need be applied, he was a realist, or better yet, a pragmatist.

Hancock's ambitions were in no way diminished as a result of the colony's political turmoil. But the likelihood of continued unrest compelled him to adopt a more cautious and self-restrained attitude. Here as throughout his long career, Hancock relied on his perceptions and instinctual understanding of the public's temper to guide his conduct. In spite of the recent outrages perpetrated against the colony, Hancock remained convinced of the public's desire for moderation and a peaceful resolution of the colony's political difficulties. Therefore, if the citizenry of Massachusetts craved peace, Hancock, who increasingly looked to the public at large as the wellspring of his political strength, would comfortably oblige his constituency and assume a peaceful pose. If and when they demanded more militant activity, he could just as easily turn bellicose. For unlike any other contemporary political personality within the province of Massachusetts Bay, Hancock assiduously cultivated his popularity with the public and used his rapport with them as the principal basis of his authority and power. His success in this effort made it all the more difficult for the Tories and radicals to attack him openly and helped make him a semi-independent political force in his own right.

The accelerating pace of polarization among the political factions in Massachusetts was at least an expedient reason for Hancock's adoption of this independent middle course. His family's conservative background along with his personal abhorrence of extremism further influenced his

pronounced affirmation of a more moderate political solution. But his insatiable desire for popularity, so central to his personality, was also a critical factor. This probably more than anything else prompted his responsiveness to the public's will; for there were absolutely no ideological or theoretical or even philosophical foundations for his actions. Instead, he was guided by pragmatic logic and an internal need to be liked. Since he already enjoyed enormous popularity and trust because of his widely publicized part in the "Liberty Affair," he was now more careful than ever not to do something which might injure his fame for fear of undermining the basis of his success. On the contrary, he continually sought ways to translate his popularity into even greater political strength in order to advance his own ambitions further. To achieve this end, he embarked upon a deliberate policy of moderation and reconciliation with his former Tory adversaries. Still, he was very careful to combine this effort with a series of symbolic acts and gestures intentionally designed to enhance his reputation as an independent patriot, one thoroughly committed to the colony's well-being. Yet he was troubled about his image, and not because of what the Tories and radicals said and thought about him behind his back but because of their potential for harming the public's perceptions of him. This fear instilled in him a reason for constant vigilance, lest he be caught off guard.

Hancock's sense of cautious restraint was clearly reflected in his long-held advocacy of the non-importation agreement. Throughout 1769 and 1770, he scrupulously defended it as the wisest, safest, and most effective weapon in the merchants' hands for compelling Parliament to repeal all of the Townshend Acts. "I can strictly and solemnly declare

that in the whole of my conduct during the late struggle here I was actuated solely by a principle of effecting the good of my country." Furthermore, he insisted that "a strenuous perserverance in the non-importation would have that effect, and indeed it is still my opinion, had there been a general attention to that object, it would have worked out at least some good for us."[4]

Hancock did everything within his power to make the agreement work. He genuinely believed in this temperate approach, hoping that if successful, it would undercut the radicals and prevent their gaining complete control over the popular party faction. But the most glaring weakness of the plan was the lack of unity among the merchants. Many clearly opposed the idea while others only half heartedly supported it under the threat of coercion. To try to compel universal conformity, Hancock regularly attended a lengthy series of merchant meetings where the entire question was endlessly debated without results. Finally, in July 1769, only a few days after Hancock informally met with a small but important group of fellow merchants, including Thomas Cushing, John Rowe, William Phillips, and Edward Payne, the Boston merchants adopted a comprehensive enforcement policy. In it they agreed to raise a subscription among the inhabitants "not to purchase any goods of such persons," who violated the non-importation agreement. All violaters, it was agreed, would be exposed by having their names "inserted in the public prints."[5] A committee was hastily formed to enforce these measures. Among those named to it were Hancock's cousin, William Bowes, and one of his employees, William Bant.[6]

The need for such stringent coercive measures stemmed from the

revelation that numerous local merchants, including signers and non-signers of the original non-importation agreement alike, intentionally violated the boycott by importing their spring orders from England. This threatened the entire plan. Under pressure from the radicals, those merchants like Hancock, who were counting on the plan's ultimate success, were forced to apply even greater pressure on the delinquent merchants for stricter compliance. The implementation of this new enforcement procedure temporarily silenced the radicals' criticism but also sowed the seeds for later unrest among the reluctant merchants.[7]

While all this was transpiring, Hancock's intimacy with the radicals appeared unaltered. Their mutual efforts to maintain this appearance succeeded as he and all three of his fellow representatives from Boston were reelected by a near unanimous majority to the General Assembly.[8] But once convened in the Assembly, Hancock's activities and responsibilities were severely restricted. This was due to a combination of radical opposition to his appointment to important committees and his own reluctance to be closely identified with their policies. For the most part, Hancock's committee work in the Assembly during 1769 was limited to insignificant matters like examining the Treasurer's accounts, overseeing the destruction of the Province's redeemed securities, and procuring copies of the House's journals for use in the Harvard College library. His only overt political activity was on the committee seeking the Governor's removal of the British fleet and army from the Province, which was unsuccessful.[9] None of this, however, was particularly controversial and yet because of Hancock's high visibility and daily attendance in the Assembly, he projected an image of one deeply committed and involved in

settling the colony's difficulties with Great Britain. Those intimately involved with these problems knew better, and easily recognized how little he was in fact contributing to the radicals' continuous assault upon the Governor and his supporters. Nevertheless, in spite of Hancock's moderation, the Governor again vetoed his election to the Council, thus sustaining Hancock's reputation as a patriot.[10]

Governor Bernard's indifferent rejection of Hancock's efforts at reconciliation may have been another of those lost opportunities on the part of the Tories, but his veto did not end Hancock's friendly overtures. Beginning in the spring of 1769 and continuing with persistant regularity through the next few years, Hancock worked on improving his personal relationship with many of the colony's most intractable conservative supporters of government. Using his extensive business contacts as an opening wedge, he met frequently with Andrew Oliver, Robert Auchmuty, Joshua Winslow, James Boutineau, Thomas Amory, Francis and Peter Johonnot and others to discuss their mutual commercial interests such as their proprietorship in the Long Wharf, and other more pressing political concerns.[11]

In someone else's less capable hands, Hancock's attempt to cozy up with the Tories might have led to the end of his political connection with the popular party, and especially its radical wing. This, however, was not the case. Instead, Hancock continued to balance adroitly his overtures in one direction with conciliatory gestures in the other. For example, on August 14th, he joined the popular party's leaders and supporters along with the Sons of Liberty in a day long celebration commemorating the fourth anniversary of the Boston Stamp Act riots. Following a brief ceremony at the Liberty Tree, they proceeded to Robinson's tavern in Dorchester where

they dined and drank innumerable toasts to "liberty". Afterwards they paraded back to town and yet symbolic of their continuing internal differences, "Mr. Hancock proceeded the company & Mr. Otis Brought up the Rear."[12]

Hancock obliquely suggested the underlying cause of his difference with the radicals in his letters overseas to his English business correspondents. He regarded a merchant won victory over Parliament, with respect to the Townshend Acts as absolutely essential for the maintenance of the current political equilibrium in Massachusetts. To effect that end, he wrote to all of his English correspondents, requesting their immediate intercession with Parliament on the American merchants' behalf. He even chose this moment to settle his long outstanding account with former Governor Thomas Pownall in the hope of securing his support for the cause.[13] To Mr. Harrison, his partner in the whale oil venture, he pleaded, "do convince your noble gentlemen at Helm, of the ill consequences of a perserverance in their present measures." Referring to the merchant community in America as a whole, Hancock implored, "we are a people worth saving and deserving their notice and indulgence, as all we can possibly obtain centers on your side."[14]

Hancock's fears were plain enough. Unless Parliament helped them out with a timely about-face, the moderate merchants like himself faced a potentially devastating political reversal in the colony's internal balance of power. If the merchants' self-imposed non-importation agreement failed to secure a redress of grievances, a far more distasteful policy would be pushed forward by the radicals, who were growing increasingly impatient with what they considered the merchants sluggishness and lack of conviction. The situation was such, Hancock explained, that "we can't always

afford to submit." He concluded his appeal by sadly observing the truth in the statement that "oppression will make a wise man mad."[15]

As Hancock pleaded for his English friends to "stir for Us," it was apparent that he identified with that "wise man," who under a mounting sense of failure, dimly perceived a disturbing vision of the future. Against his will, Hancock was forced to face the truth and recognize that his much vaunted non-importation agreement was not going to achieve its desired objective. This was a source of enormous personal frustration and disappointment. Throughout the remainder of the year and well into 1770 he increasingly grew more sensitive to criticism and would react by irrationally flaring up against both friends and relatives alike. If this self-proclaimed "wise man" was not yet completely "mad", he was certainly very irate.

Hancock's temper began wearing thin by August 1769 as a result of John Mein's disclosures in the Boston Chronicle. Beginning on the 17th and running throughout the fall on a weekly basis, Mein brazenly reprinted Custom House manifests which clearly demonstrated that Hancock and many other Boston merchants were importing British goods in violation of their sworn oaths.[16] This was an uncomfortable source of embarrassment and Hancock's immediate response was to leave town on the pretext of business. When he returned some two weeks later, Mein's attacks and accusations continued unabated.[17]

John Mein was a cantankerous Scotsman who first came to New England in October 1764 and opened a small bookstore in Boston above the British Coffee House. Several years later he enlarged his activities to include publishing and founded the Boston Chronicle, one of the best printed and

written newspapers in the colonies. Editorially he became the chief spokesmen of Tory political opinion and was a constant critic of the popular party's policies and leadership. During both the Stamp Act crisis and the controversy over the Townshend Acts he resolutely refused to take part in the non-importation movements. Naturally he aroused the radicals' ire, but he was courageous enough to fight back and usually gave as much as he took from them.[18]

One of Mein's favorite preoccupations was to taunt the popular party's leaders by publishing his scathing caricatures of them. Thomas Cushing was ridiculously depicted as "Tommy Triffle," Sam Adams as a tavern frequenter known as "Samuel the publican," and James Otis was "Muddlehead".[19] The latter was an unsympathetic reference to Otis's recurring mental instability and frequent lapses into insanity, hastened by the severe caning he received over the head by John Robinson, one of the Commissioners of the Customs. This in effect ended Otis's political usefulness to the popular party as his career continued in an erratic direction.

Hancock was not spared a similar treatment. Mein's unrestrained pen sarcastically portrayed him as "Johnny Dupe Esq., alias the Milch Cow of the well Disposed." But like most of the Tories, Mein really did not know what to make of him nor was he aware of Hancock's widening breach with the radicals. He could only comprehend Hancock's behavior by falling back on the Tories' traditional interpretation, that Hancock was a weak-willed tool caught in the grip of more cunning and manipulating schemers and opportunists. His caricature printed in the Boston Chronicle described Hancock as a "good natured young man with long ears-a silly conceited grin on his countenance-a fool's cap on his head-a bandage tied over his eyes-

richly dressed and surrounded with a crowd of people." The crowd consisted of men who were either stroking Hancock's ears or tickling his nose with straws while the rest were busily rifling his pockets. Out of all their mouths were labels bearing the words, "Our Common Friend".[20]

Public attacks of this kind, although new to Hancock, were not by themself likely to hurt him and may have actually given his reputation a boost, considering the source. At the same time it must have dawned on him that he had been poorly used by the radicals and even by some of his trusted fellow merchants. The plausibility of this increased, especially when Mein published his widely dispersed pamphlet entitled, State of the Importations from Great Britain into Boston, from January 1769 to August 1769.[21] This was based on his weekly series of articles from the Boston Chronicle which demonstrated the widespread violation of the non-importation agreement by its own avowed supporters, including Hancock.

The effect of Mein's new line of attack was much more devastating than his caricatures. Suspicion was immediately cast upon Hancock as the Newport Mercury quickly suggested. "The Boston newswriters make John Hancock, Esq., one of the foremost of the patriots of Boston, and the strictest observer of the agreements for Non Importation," reported the Mercury, but "he should perhaps shine more conspicuously, and be less suspected in his character, if he did not keep a number of vessels running to London, and back, full freighted,"[22] Greater damage was done, however, than just to Hancock's reputation. Suspicion was firmly planted among the merchants who now viewed one another with mutual distrust while the radicals were more than ever convinced of the merchants' potential for treachery. Their alliance was fatally wounded, and Hancock felt betrayed on all sides.

Hancock's outrage with Mein's personal attacks and disclosures was technically justified. In his own mind he was convinced that he had faithfully observed all the pledged requirements of the non-importation agreement. He prodigiously cut his imports to a meager L 2000 pounds sterling; perhaps a large figure for many of his competitors, but a mere fraction of his normal yearly volume. And all of these items were carefully restricted to those products exempted from the agreement, such as coal, shot, hemp and the like.[23]

It was also true that throughout 1769-1770 Hancock maintained a prosperous export trade with England, shipping off whale oil at the rate of approximately L 8000 pounds a year. It enabled him to settle his outstanding debts to his English creditors while establishing a favorable credit balance with his principal correspondent, George Hayley.[24] But there was nothing irregular or unethical in that. The non-importation agreement only prohibited the importation of selected British manufactured goods and said absolutely nothing about the export trade. Hancock was completely justified in using this temporary lull in normal commercial activity to his own economic advantage and he was therefore far less concerned by Mein's revelations than he was over his own brother's recurring financial difficulties.

Ebenezer Hancock, like his older brother, supported the non-importation agreement, although economically he fared far less well. As noted earlier, by the middle of 1769, Ebenezer was out of business and bankrupt, partially as a result of the disruption in trade. Hancock was at first unsympathetic to his younger brother's embarrassing plight. He held Ebenezer solely accountable for his own misfortune, blaming him for not possessing sufficient caution and prudence. As for his part in his brother's

affairs, "I have done everything for him that a brother ought to do." Only out of a sense of family honor and obligation did Hancock finally agree to "put him forward in life again," at some future time. In the meanwhile, he would personally see to it that Ebenezer's debts to George Hayley were settled in full.[25]

Ebenezer's problems were only a temporary distraction and easily resolved. Hancock was then free to face the furor instigated by Mein's most serious alligations. As to the lesser charge that he was exporting American commodities to Great Britain, Hancock offered no excuses nor were any required. But on the issue of violating the non-importation agreement by importing English goods, that was a much stickier problem because it was true.[26]

The origin of Hancock's present difficulty was created unintentionally the year before in an innocuous letter to George Hayley in which he outlined some of the difficulties confronting American merchants. "Our trade is so burthened & our difficulties increasing so fast, that upon a meeting of our merchts it was thought prudent to stop the Importation of Goods," he explained. He also noted that "there will, of course, be no freights in the Spring." To offset the likelihood of large financial losses due to the unprofitable expense of sailing empty ships back from London, Hancock sought Hayley's assistance. "If you could help me with a little freight directly back to Boston, I should be glad."[27] Hayley proved only too helpful as each of Hancock's London bound vessels returned home to Boston well-laded with consignments of freight. True, these cargoes were not Hancock's, but were actually destined instead for many of his competitors, almost all of whom were fellow subscribers to the non-importation

agreement. Technically, therefore, Hancock was well within the bounds of the agreement, although through his compliance to help others circumvent it he at least violated the spirit and intent of the merchants' plan.

Mein's exposure of Hancock's culpability evoked his full fury against the Tory publisher. For not only was Hancock's personal reputation smeared, but the effectiveness of the entire agreement was permanently jeopardized. Hancock, however, was convinced of his own innocence and insisted that the responsibility rested solely with the actual importers and George Hayley. Writing to the latter in early November 1769, Hancock declared, "it gives me great uneasiness on your acct. that almost the whole of the goods that have arrived have been shipped by you." Although still refusing to accept any fault in the matter, Hancock tried to save his reputation by offering to provide one of his ships to return all the goods which violated the non-importation agreement back to England, "freight free". By this action, he explained to Hayley, "I...was influential in abating the resentment...& in this I really judged I was most essentially promoting your interests." As for the costs involved in this generous act, "would not (it) be reasonable that the expense be borne between us."[28]

Overnight, this timely ploy erased many of the last vestiges of local resentment directed against Hancock which Mein's disclosures initially inspired. The entire incident, however, should never have occurred. The fact that it did merely confirmed the impression that Hancock lacked a moral consistency and sense of commitment to the causes he frequently espoused. Consequently, the nature of his true motives were regularly viewed with suspicion and the suggestion that he was principally animated by opportunism and vainity gained substantial credence in many quarters.

But in this particular instance, Hancock's failure was more than likely the result of pure carelessness, and perhaps a tinge of stupidity. For there was no doubt that he was genuinely bothered by the ill effects caused by his foolish actions. To try and rectify the situation he left Boston two months earlier, in September, for a brief tour of Philadelphia in the hope of shoring up the faltering non-importation agreement. The damage done by Mein's pamphlet proceeded him as the merchants in the other colonial seaport towns were only too eager to cite Boston's laxity in abiding by the agreement as an excuse for their own dissolution of the plan.

Accompanied by his friend Thomas Brattle, Hancock's tour of the middle colonies, as far south as Philadelphia, was designed to serve two related purposes. One, to undo some of the damage created by Mein's exposure of the Boston merchants; and two, to correct the harmful impressions done to Hancock's reputation. This was his first venture into the political world beyond Massachusetts Bay, but his fame as an outstanding merchant and patriot was already well-known, even if a bit tarnished by recent events. Still, Hancock was not adverse to remind everyone of his previous sacrifices on behalf of traditional American rights. On the eve of his departure from Boston, he purchased a new sailing vessel and named her The Rising Liberty, lest anyone forget his part in the recently concluded ordeal of the "Liberty Affair".[29]

In the long run, only the second objective of his brief tour was achieved. He wrote home to his clerk Palfrey of his warm reception by the "Farmer," John Dickinson, who "receiv'd him with the greatest politeness." In return, Hancock declared himself "pleas'd with the company and conversation of that famous patriot."[30] Upon his and Brattle's return to Boston

the colonial newspapers widely reported how "their engrossing Behavior added to their Firmness in the cause of Liberty, rendered their visit here very agreeable to all who had the pleasure of their acqaintance."[31] Favorable publicity of this kind was an immediate restorative of Hancock's patriotic reputation and popularity. It did nothing, however, to revive the non-importation agreement's sagging fortunes.

By April 1770, when news of Parliament's decision to repeal all of the Townshend duties, except for a small tax on tea, reached America, that was the last straw. The non-importation agreement was swept away by the rising tide of public indifference. One after another, the merchant communities in each of the colonial seaport towns revoked their pledges and resumed their normal trading activities with Great Britain.

In Boston, however, Hancock helped organize one last desperate effort to try to reverse what otherwise appeared to be a resounding setback for the town's moderate merchants. Joining with several other like-minded men, they established a special committee which they hoped would strengthen the agreement in the face of weakening local support. Their proposed solution was to promote a voluntary subscription to end all tea consumption as well as the use of imported luxury items. They also suggested that local manufacturing be encouraged as a way of employing many of the colony's poor whose economic plight was worsened as a result of the disruption in trade.[32] Hancock again offered the free use of one of his London-bound vessels to return imports entered into the colony in violation of the agreement.[33] Even though goods worth almost L 15,000 pounds sterling were returned in this manner, this was not enough; reluctantly Hancock conceeded defeat.

By the end of June 1770, Hancock's only remaining hope was that some unexpected change in British policy would save the merchants from a political ruin brought on by their own short-sightedness. For Sam Adams clearly articulated the radicals' complete disgust with these self-serving merchants, who he privately delcared were "unworthy of any future confidence."[34] From then on it was Adams's intention to abandon any effort at cooperating with the merchants and instead determined that "our first great object" should be the strengthening of colonial unity as the only logical remedy to the damage already done by the merchants as a consequence of their weakness and greed.[35] This attitude was also bound to further strain Hancock's already tenuous relationship with the radicals.

The merchants' inability to make their collective agreement work left a bitter after taste in Hancock's mouth. He insisted that "in the matter of non-importation I individually have been most fully, freely, and cruelly used."[36] What upset him the most was the merchants' disunity and lack of political cohesiveness. But he was also annoyed about the expenses he incurred shipping other people's goods back to London for them, the manner in which he was treated by John Mein, and lastly by the radical's intention to go it alone, unchecked by the moderate merchant community from where Hancock drew much of his own support. As a result of this, Hancock undoubtedly felt that his political position had been weakened.

Yet, Hancock possessed a fertile political imagination and was not immobilized by this setback. He even enjoyed a small personal triumph in the very midst of all this turmoil and confusion. As luck would have it, at the precise moment that John Mein was mercilessly lambasting Hancock in the pages of the Boston Chronicle, the means of destroying Mein's ef-

fectiveness and in fact his entire career, fell into Hancock's hands. A timely letter from the London bookseller, Thomas Longman, provided Hancock with just the weapon he needed to silence Mein once and for all. Longman informed Hancock that, "Mr. John Mein of Boston is Indebted to me a very considerable sum of money,: and that Longman needed someone locally "to act for me in the most adviseable manner."[37] Hancock immediately volunteered his assistance and was quickly given power of attorney to collect Mein's outstanding debt on Longman's behalf.

Before he could act, however, Mein fled Boston out of fear for his life. In effect he was driven out by a wildly hostile mob organized by the radicals, who like Hancock were determined to silence his all too effective press. Hancock successfully provided the coup de grace a few months later just in case Mein decided to return. He notified Longman that "I immediately attached everything I could find of his Effects...& the matter is now in the law." As soon as the effects were converted into money, Hancock promised that "the neat proceeds shall be remitted."[38]

Mein's departure was a blow to the Tories, depriving them of their only effective organ of mass communication in the colony. Hancock was overjoyed. Even when Mein and some of his friends tried to strike back at Hancock through the courts, Hancock replied, "I despise them," and confidently predicted that they "can do me no Injury."[39] By the year's end, Hancock's reputation as an illustrious patriot, which Mein's castigations temporarily deflated, was again intact if not wholly restored. Credit for this restoration was entirely Hancock's. His publicized tour of Philadelphia, his generous offers to reship imported goods to England and the ruin of Mein's career all contributed to the rehabilitation of his good

name. This in turn helped him offset the prevailing sense of gloom and disappointment brought on by the non-importation agreement's failure. He quickly assumed a more healthier and positive attitude. "All will be for the best," he optimistically proclaimed. With that he began circulating stories around, how he was now "disposed to acquiesce," and how he heartily wished that "a perfect Harmony and reconciliation may take place."[40]

Hancock's reported sentiments were not lost on Governor Hutchinson. Since assuming the Governorship, in August 1769 upon Bernard's departure for England, Thomas Hutchinson anxiously sought a way to break up the "faction," composed of radicals and merchants, aligned against him. He hoped that this would lead to a restoration of peace and order in the troubled province. In his haste, however, he was too easily deluded into thinking that by securing Hancock's attachment to the government he could effect that end. Winning Hancock's allegiance, therefore, became an administrative goal he vigorously and patiently pursued. Out of a complex interplay of political and personal considerations, Hancock appeared susceptible to Hutchinson's overtures.

As the year 1770 drew to an end, Hancock cautiously inched closer to a complete dissolution of his connections with the popular party and with Sam Adams in particular. The strains created by the collapse of the non-importation agreement and the radicals disaffection with the merchants were only some of the factors influencing his decision. In truth, he was just plain weary and worn down by the constant stresses and turmoils of the previous hectic year. His nerves were literally stretched to the breaking point and his tolerance of criticism was much less than usual.

At one point he even considered resigning from the General Assembly because he claimed he was "spoken ill of" by one of James Otis's supporters. Only Sam Adams's timely and soothing note finally dissuaded him from this hastily conceived course of action. Adams convinced him that it would be extremely foolish if he resigned "merely because one contemptible person, who was perhaps hired for the purpose, had blessed you with reviling -- Need I add more than to intreat it as a favor that you would alter your Design."[41]

This was in early May, shortly after Adams and Hancock led the successful fight to pursuade the Governor to remove the British troops from town in the wake of the "Boston Massacre".[42] But by the year's end, following the failure of the non-importation agreement and Hancock's mounting disillusionment with the radicals' approach to the colony's problems, his relationship with Sam Adams reached a new low point. Their former intimacy would never again be fully restored.

Personal affairs also weighed heavily on Hancock's mind and increased his desire for a quick settlement to the unending rounds of internal conflict. Just over a year before he broke off his lengthy ten year courtship of Sally Jackson with a sudden "Letter of Dismission."[43] Now he was busy courting his Aunt's protege, Dorothy Quincy, the "granddaughter of the great patron and most revered friend of his father," Edmund Quincy of Braintree.[44] That Hancock's courtship of Dorothy was time-consuming cannot be doubted. As one on looker observed, "Tis certain he visits her and has her Company in private every evening."[45]

Although in her own right Dorothy (Dolly) Quincy was highly regarded as an attractive, poised, "Beauty" possessing an abundance of "politeness"

as well as her fair share of "every domestic virtue," she was above all else a Quincy.[46] That meant everything to the Hancocks, especially to Hancock's Aunt Lydia who was eager to arrange a permanent union between the Hancocks and this old and respected Massachusetts family. Under her constant supervision and pressure, Hancock and Dorothy reached a mutual understanding by late August, when she accompanied them on a visit to Bridgewater to pay a courtesy call on Hancock's mother. The visit was a success, and it was reported that they were "all very agreeable," but no actual date was set for the wedding.[47]

As Hancock was far less enthusiastic about his engagement than his Aunt was, this indefinite postponement was not in the least bit disturbing. If anything, it was a relief. For not only was his future domestic arrangements conveniently and satisfactorily settled, thanks to his protective Aunt, but her efforts in this regard now freed him to attend to more interesting and immediate concerns.

Hancock was a poor example of the traditional paterfamilias. His apathetic attitude, even in the selection of his own wife, indicates how little he cared about family and household matters. He rarely, if ever, troubled himself about the feelings and problems of his nearest relatives as he abdicated nearly all of his domestic responsibilities, first to his Aunt and later to his wife. His only really consistent interest remained confined to politics and the cultivation of his public image. It would be rash to conclude, however, that Hancock was insensitive or unfeeling. His indifferent attitude towards his family and family life was more accurately a result of his enormous insecurities, festered in childhood, and which inhibited him throughout life, making it almost impossible for him to initiate a close personal commitment to anyone or anything.

The outstanding exception to this pattern of behavior was in his unabashed affection for and commitment to public life, especially in his favorite role as a philanthropic servant of the people. Repeatedly he loaned or helped establish credit for many worthy young men eager to begin careers in trade but who lacked the necessary financial resources. He also frequently petitioned the General Court for aid on behalf of indigent families or reached into his own pockets to help the needy. Following a disastrous fire in Boston, Hancock personally donated a new fire engine to the town, and contributed L 1,000 pounds lawful money for the construction of a new meeting house for the Brattle Street Church. At times, Hancock's generosity was politically motivated. His offer to dress the speaker's desk in mourning black crepe to commemorate the first anniversary of the "Boston Massacre" was nothing short of an attempt to reinforce his patriotic image through the use of his enormous wealth.[48] These efforts were probably unnecessary, although effective, for Hancock commanded widespread and deeply felt respect and loyalty from the citizens of Boston, if the affections and length of service of his employees is an accurate gauge. As John Andrews respectfully observed, "John Hancock...suffers no body to out doe him in acts of public utility.[49]

Yet even he, who was so ambivalent in his relationship with almost all the members of his family, took a continuing interest in his brother Ebenezer's welfare. In January of the new year, 1771, Hancock turned his attention towards helping his brother reestablish himself in business. After a short perfunctory sermon in which he reminded him that "you are dependent on your own industry for your support and that of your family," and a stern warning that he "reflect" upon his "former

imprudencies" and an admonition that he resolve to "quit" himself like a man, Hancock advanced him the money, goods, and credit to open a small retail establishment in Boston. He also promised to keep a closer eye on him in the future.[50]

Hancock addressed himself to one last personal item of business before turning his full attention back to public affairs. The resumption of trade with Great Britain compelled him to dispatch his clerk, Palfrey, to London to settle business affairs which would only be handled by someone in person. Palfrey was the logical choice for this assignment since over the last few years while Hancock was preoccupied elsewhere, most of the daily operations of his commercial interests were entrusted to his care.

With his interest in trade nearly extinguished, Hancock was content to let Palfrey manage everything so long as his financial losses were held to a minimum and his numerous employees were kept busy. He was much more concerned about how Palfrey, as his personal representative, would be received in London. "Undoubtedly," he warned, "the non-importation plan will be much the subject of conversation, and my name, perhaps, will be frequently and freely used." In that case, he advised his clerk, "to state matters fairly, and with respect to me, to state the truth; and if that prevails I am easy." But above all, he recommended Palfrey "to be prudent...particularly with regard to America, that you may honor yourself and your country."[51]

Satisfied with the direction in which his affairs were now headed, Hancock turned his attention back to the colony's internal political squabbles. Here too he was pleased to find the situation far more peace-

ful than he anticipated. Quite unexpectedly, calm was the prevailing characteristic. The recent schism between radicals and merchants, rather than fostering a new round of disturbances, actually had a tranquilizing effect, as did the resumption of trade, the removal of British troops to their barracks in Castle William, and the acquittal of Captain Preston, accused of instigating the "Boston Massacre". This left only one unresolved inflammatory issue yet to be settled; the Governor's removal of the Massachusetts General Court from its traditional seat in Boston to Cambridge where he hoped it would be immune from the Boston radicals' dangerous influences.

It was over this seemingly inconsequential issue that Hancock and the radicals finally parted ways; although Hancock was careful to avoid a total breach and astutely left the door slightly ajar for a possible future reconciliation. The precipitating cause of this rupture was over how to get the Governor's consent to return the General Court to Boston. Hutchinson let it be known that he was prepared to favor such a request, if the General Assembly asked him to remove them out of a regard for convenience. But if they insisted that he exceeded his authority as Governor by removing them to Cambridge in the first place, and that he was now obligated by right to let them return to Boston immediately, as Sam Adams defiantly urged, then Hutchinson was prepared to keep them where they were for the duration of his administration.

Moderates led by Hancock and Cushing were willing to concede this point to the Governor. They were more anxious for peace and a cessation of the colony's endless divisive political controversies than to argue over what appeared to them to be a meaningless issue. In addition, Han-

cock saw this as an opportunity to challenge Adams's leadership in the alrady badly splintered popular party coalition. His goal was to isolate and reduce Adams's influence in both the Boston Town Meeting and the General Assembly by personally leading the moderates into a closer working arrangement with Hutchinson's conservative supporters. A combination of personal ambition and a legitimate disagreement with the radicals' means and objectives motivated his decision. James Otis's recent defection from the radicals' camp over this exact same issue signalled Adams's vulnerability and Hancock interpreted this as a sign to proceed with his own challenge.[52] But he moved cautiously in order to retain his own independence and not to be too closely identified as a Hutchinsonian.

Even as hints and rumors of Hancock's disillusionment with Sam Adams and his friends began circulating around Boston in early 1771, Governor Hutchinson either did not hear about it or refused to believe these tales. As late as April first, Hutchinson still considered Hancock one of the few people in Boston who held out against him. Otherwise, he claimed that "all the valuable part of the Town has shown me as much respect personally as well as in my public character as I could desire."[53]

Hutchinson remained unconvinced of any real change of mind on Hancock's part even after the latter publicly humiliated Sam Adams by unearthing a long buried skeleton. In the March town meeting, Hancock "intimated his design to move for an inquiry into the state of the finances of the town," in which Adams had "occasioned a great deficiency" through his irregularities as a tax collector.[54] By his insistance on reopening this old embarrassing issue, Hancock pubicly acknowledged his rift with Adams and indicated his intention of breaking off his relation-

ship with him.

Nevertheless, Hutchinson chose to ignore this, as well as the advice of his closest friends and advisors and instead vetoed Hancock's most recent election to the Governor's Council that May. His explanation of his decision indicates that a deal had been previously arranged with the moderates in the Assembly, whereby they would elect the Secretary of the Province, Thomas Flucker, a close friend of Hutchinson, to the Council and in exchange the Governor would also accept Hancock. This was asking too much of the moderates, who intensely disliked the Secretary, and they could not "be prevailed upon" to keep their part of the bargain. Under the circumstances, Hutchinson "thought it would be giving too much" to take Hancock alone, and so he vetoed his nomination.[55]

The Governor almost immediately afterwards regretted his decision, yet continued to rationalize it, claiming that "there had been no advances" directly from Hancock. Without an overt signal or move on his part, the Governor did "not think it proper" to follow the advice of others on so delicate matter as this. Yet based on the reports of several intermediaries, Hutchinson felt "assured" that Hancock "wished to be separated from Mr. Adams," and if he would admit him to the Council, "they had no doubt there could be an end to the influence he has." Hutchinson was encouraged and fully expected that "before another election," Hancock would alter his conduct "so far as to justify my acceptance of him, which certainly will take off that sourness of temper from many people which his negative ocassion."[56] Furthermore, by securing a place for Hancock on the Council, he believed the "faction" would be permanently broken up.

For the rest of the year Hancock intentionally avoided all political controversies. As a result, observed one recent historian, "Hancock tucked with the prevailing winds," and revealed a "shrewdness that should not be underestimated."[57] He quickly notified the Governor, soon after his veto, that he had no desire to be on the Council, while his friends and supporters tactfully informed the Governor just the opposite. Hancock also claimed that his only immediate interest was "to quit all active concern in public affairs, and to attend to his private business, which by means of his attention to the public, had been much neglected."[58]

To underscore this point, Hancock conveniently became ill and was frequently indisposed from late spring until well into the fall. By this means he avoided any participation in Sam Adams's fight to compel the Governor to return the General Court to Boston. Meanwhile, his absence from all political discussions was observed and noted by each of the opposing sides.

Sam Adams was enraged by Hancock's conduct, but powerless to speak out against him for fear of creating an irreconcilable division. For the sake of their public images, both men, at least temporarily, sought to restrain their personal antagonisms and maintained an outward appearance of cordiality. They briefly tried working together on several non-controversial projects, such as the committee to perpetuate the memory of the March 5th "Massacre," and the one supervising the construction of a new powder house for the town. They even shared another triumphant election victory to the General Court in May.[60] Throughout the winter and early spring, Hancock frequently invited Adams and other prominent leaders of the popular party, including Otis, Cushing, Warren,

Church, and Cooper, to his home for informal working dinners. But he often used these occasions to undermine the radicals' scheme for enforcing a non-consumption and non-importation campaign against English Tea by intentionally serving a "Green Tea" of questionable origin to his company.[61] This was a less than subtle reminder of his opposition to Adams's policies and his challenge to his leadership in the popular party coalition.

All this occurred, however, before the Governor's veto of Hancock's nomination to the Council and the hint that next year Hutchinson planned to alter his policy. It also proceeded Hancock's lapse into political inactivity just as Adams was gearing up for a fight with the Governor in an effort to force him to recall the General Court back to Boston. In the face of Hancock's insults, affronts, and hints about Adams's dishonesty as a tax collector, as well as his silence in this latest political cirsis, Adams was hard pressed to restrain himself from attacking his former protege in return. He only avoided fueling a public row by privately confiding his thoughts to his friend James Warren, who sympathized with his predicament. "Too many," Adams complained in regard to Hancock, "are afraid to appear for the publick Liberty," either "for the sake of their own Ease or their own safety." Furthermore, "they preach the people into Paltry Ideas of Moderation," and "I expect that many who to gain the popular applause have bore the name of whigs," will now "fawn and flatter and even lick the Dust of their Masters feet."[62]

Adams was unrelenting in his personal condemnation of Hancock and his moderate policies. He believed them motivated solely by ambition and self-serving considerations, and yet he knew he could do and say

nothing against him. Hancock's popularity within the colony was still enormous, having successfully emerged from the non-importation fiasco with his reputation unimpaired, so much so that in July, 1771, he was accorded an unprecedented honor by the Harvard College Corporation. They invited him to "sit" and "dine" with the governors of the college "whenever there is a public entertainment there."[63] In spite of Sam Adams's embittered distrust, Hancock was, in 1771, much more closely in step with the colony's spirit and desire for peace than was Adams. But he would have been even more alarmed had he been privy to Governor Hutchinson's private thoughts and plans regarding Hancock's role in his administration.

Contrary to Adams, the Governor viewed Hancock's political inactivity throughout the summer with great satisfaction. He was convinced he was on the verge of a major political breakthrough and victory. "The faction seems to be breaking," he boastfully reported to former Governor Bernard. Doctor Church "is now a writer on the side of Government". As for Hancock, his most prized catch, Hutchinson gleefully announced that he "has not been with their Club for two months past, and seems to have a new set of acquaintance."[64] Although the Governor's claim was slightly exaggerated, there was nevertheless a substantial element of truth in it.

Within the year, Hancock's personal relationships underwent a bizarre transformation. Most of his newest friends and associates were drawn from among the colony's conservative ranks. His legal counselor for the past four years, John Adams, was abruptly dismissed with a terse "Farewell." He was replaced by the more conservative Samuel Quincy, a boyhood friend from Braintree, and later Hancock's classmate at Harvard.

Quincy would eventually become a loyalist in the Revolutionary War.[65] Hancock also approached Jonathan Sewall, another supporter of Hutchinson's administration, who once prosecuted the Government's case against Hancock in the "Liberty Affair". "Putting all matters of politicks out of view," Hancock suggested "that a perfect harmony and friendship may be kept up between us, and with rather more familiarity than the common show of friendship expresses."[66]

His overtures to these conservatives were in part motivated by family considerations, stemming from Hancock's anticipated marriage to Dorothy Quincy. Samuel Quincy was Dolly's first cousin, and Sewall was married to her sister Esther, making Hancock and Sewall prospective brothers-in-law. Yet in the final analysis political considerations always influenced his decisions, even in such personal matters as the choice of lawyers and friends. Within only two short years, as the political climate in Massachusetts again changed, Hancock just as easily dismissed Quincy and rehired John Adams. Increasingly throughout 1772 Hancock dined in the company of conservatives like Colonel Ingersoll, Treasurer Harrison Gray, Thomas Gray, Ezkiel Goldthwaite, Solomon Davis, William Coffin, and Arnold Wells. The Governor thought he knew the reason for this drastic change in Hancock's choice of acquaintances.

Through intermediaries, Hutchinson had previously informed Hancock of his willingness to approve his elevation to the Council in spite of Hancock's repeated denials that this was his objective. But "before I can give my consent," Hutchinson also demanded "some assurance" of Hancock's determination "of breaking his connection" off completely with the radicals.[67] The Governor subsequently interpreted Hancock's actions

as a confirmation of this proposal, and was convinced that his goal of dismantling the opposition was at hand. With eager anticipation, he predicted that Hancock's "coming over will be a great loss" to the faction, "as they support themselves with his money."[68] Andrew Oliver was equally excited, reporting that Hancock's defection had so crippled the whigs that even the press was beginning "to recover its genuine freedom."[69]

The conservatives continued in their self-delusions throughout the winter and spring; sustained by Hancock's political reemergence in the Assembly in April where he led the fight to accept the Governor's conditions for returning the General Court to Boston. As a reward for his efforts, Hutchinson confirmed Hancock's appointment as Colonel of the Corps of Cadets.[70] Sam Adams tried to downplay the significance of this move, arguing that the company traditionally elected its own officers, and that "Mr. Hancock was elected by an unanimous vote." It was only out of a "reluctance" to offend a "hundred gentlemen," which accounted "for the governor giving the commission to Mr. H." Yet, Adams reluctantly conceded that it might also have been part of Hutchinson's campaign to secure Hancock as "an instrument" of his administration, especially since it occurred "at a time when he vainly hoped he should gain him over."[71]

For his part, Hancock was excited with his appointment which provided him a much sought out opportunity to act out his dreams of military glory while elegantly drilling his command upon the relatively safe town common. He also injected a typical Hancock touch by advertizing for "Two Fifers that understand playing," as well as "Masters of Musick" who are inclined to "engage with the Company."[72] For if nothing else, he would turn the Cadet Corps into the finest sounding and most colorful

looking military company Massachusetts had ever seen.

While this was all a pleasant diversion, Hancock's real attention remained fixed upon the reconvened General Court sitting in Cambridge. In the absence of Thomas Cushing, home nursing an illness, Hancock was elected the temporary Speaker of the House and was immediately approved by Hutchinson.[73] As soon as a quorum was present, Hancock moved that a message be sent to the Governor, requesting that, "in consideration of the inconveniences of their sitting at Cambridge," he should recall them back to Boston. This was exactly what Hutchinson hoped and expected from him.[74] In the subsequent test of strength, Sam Adams barely mustered enough votes, "by three or four voices only," to defeat Hancock's motion.[75] Adams naturally enough interpreted it as a decisive victory, one assured to make the Tories feel "disconcerted".[76]

But in the long run, Adams's early first round success was undone as Hancock demonstrated that his reading of the public's mind was far more accurate and more closely in touch with current reality than was Adams's. The May 1772 election for Representatives to the General Court confirmed this. Bearing out Hutchinson's belief that he had "divided the faction," Sam Adams badly trailed behind Hancock, Cushing and William Phillips in a show of public support.[77]

Andrew Oliver and the other conservative supporters of Hutchinson's administration were jubilant, predicting that "our friend the governor will get the better of the faction which was so long in opposition to government." For it was already apparent that Adams, "who has been so long the idol of the populace wanted near 200 votes for the number which each of his brethern had who were chosen with him." This was a stun-

ning defeat, and the reason for it was also evident, "he is no longer supported by Mr. Hancock, who appears inclined to be very civil to the Governor."[78] Hutchinson's scheme to divide and tame the popular party seemed well on the verge of a complete success, as he casually observed, "that it must be something very unfortunate which can unite them again."[79]

Hancock had every intention of fulfilling one part, at least, of the Governor's expectations. Prior to the opening session of the new General Court, he and Cushing privately conferred with him. They wanted to know his exact terms upon which he would approve their return to Boston. Hutchinson again warned that there must be nothing in the Assembly's request which tended to deny the King's authority to give instructions to the Governor. As he reported to John Pownall, "they encouraged me that they would comply with my proposal if Mr. Adams did not prevent it,- against whose art and insidiousness I cautioned them."[80]

As promised, Hancock owned up to his end of the bargain by securing the Lower House's acceptance of Hutchinson's demands. This enabled the Governor to claim a great personal victory in this long fought, hard won, two year struggle with the radicals. On May 30th, the Governor proclaimed that the "House has to-day desired me to carry them to Boston, giving up claim of right and urging only inconvenience from sitting at Cambridge."[81] Naturally Sam Adams and his followers were dismayed. Many of them were so discouraged by this defeat that they now took this opportunity to abandon politics altogether. John Adams left Boston to return to Braintree and resume his legal practice. Doctor Benjamin Church secretly changed sides and joined the government as an informer, while Doctor Thomas Young quit the province and sailed for North Carolina.

Just as Hancock hoped and anticipated, this reversal sharply reduced the extent of Sam Adams's influence and severely curtailed the radicals' immediate prospects for stirring up unrest and disorder.

The Governor also kept his side of their unwritten agreement and approved Hancock's elevation to the Council. He explained to an English correspondent how he had "settled" on it "several months ago," and had already "seen the good effects of it," for it "breaks the connection," as they "are all jealous of him, and in the greater part of their measures he forsakes them."[82]

Quite unexpectedly, Hancock declined the appointment and refused taking his seat; and instead chose to remain in the Lower House as an elected Representative from Boston.[83] Almost everyone was caught off guard by his sudden show of independence. Hutchinson tried desperately to rationalize this rebuff by claiming it was not due to "any resentment for former negatives, but from an apprehension that he would show the people that he had not been seeking after it." But if this was true, then Hutchinson would be hard pressed to explain why Hancock worked so hard to undermine the radicals, and at the same time help the Governor win such an important political victory, if at the end he did not even bother to collect his reward. Unable to make any sense out of all this, nor able to perceive Hancock's real motives, Hutchinson was left clinging to one last flimsy hope. As a result of Hancock's frequent inconsistencies and contradictions, the Governor believed these actions would have the effect of "wholly detaching" Hancock from the radicals, or at least "lessening his importance if he should put himself into their hands again."[84] But Hutchinson was ultimately wrong on all counts.

Hancock's startling assertion of his independence actually produced just the opposite effect. His popularity, prestige, and political influence dramatically increased throughout the province. Rather than weaken his base of support, it actually broadened as he was the recipient of a new wave of distinguished honors and privileges, all of which tended to enhance his colony-wide position of authority. For instance, the Selectmen of Boston granted him the sole responsibility for nominating the master of the fire company which operated the fire engine Hancock recently donated to the town. Furthermore, the company was instructed that in case of any future fires, "the estate of the Donor shall have the preference of its service."[85] Not to be outdone, the Harvard College Corporation requested Hancock's portrait "be drawn at the expense of the College, and placed in the Library by his alcove."[86] All told, Hancock's moderation was amply rewarded by a genuine colony-wide outpouring of deferential respect and affection.

The strategy he employed, first separating himself from Sam Adams's influence, then loosening the radicals' grip in the General Assembly, and finally rejecting an appointment to the Governor's Council, firmly established Hancock as an independent force to be reckoned with. Supported by his widespread popularity, and a loosely formed coalition of patriotic conservatives, consisting of rural agrarian interests, merchants from the seaport towns and middle class tradesmen, as well as other leading moderates, like Cushing, Phillips, and Reverend Cooper, Hancock was able to insert himself between the politically polarized extremities represented by Sam Adams and Thomas Hutchinson. Thus situated, he hoped to become a power broker, possessing the decisive influence in the

colony's delicate political balance.

In fact there was very little that was actually new or different in Hancock's political objectives. Moderates traditionally dominated the colony's political life, and Hancock's advocacy of moderation was perfectly consistent with that tradition as well as reflective of his whole career in public life. But ever since the Stamp Act crisis, when the moderates and radicals first acted in concert, the former entered a period of steady decline. They continuously lost ground and influence to the better organized radicals, who possessed the added advantage of being the lesser evil in comparison to the Tories, who tentatively accepted in principle all of Parliament's reform and taxation programs. Now, however, through Hancock's leadership, as exemplified in the fight to return the General Court to Boston while simultaneously keeping his distance from the Governor, the moderates believed they had found a way to reassert themselves and regain their lost influence and power.

For the most part this was a chimera. The moderates had no organization or unifying plan or program. At best, all they shared was a common suspicion of the radicals, a vague opposition to many if not most of Parliament's policies, and a desire to preserve the colony's autonomy. Otherwise, they were internally divided and confused over means and ends. That they succeeded in this one instance was mainly a credit to Hancock's shrewed political insight and skill. He clearly recognized their dilemma as well as the colony's overwhelming desire for stability, order, and peace; and he capitalized on this desire by personally providing the leadership that gave at least the hope of increased moderate influence. It also strengthened his own political hand.

In the long run, however, his solution was no solution at all. His attempt to revive moderate influence during 1771-1772 did not resolve or settle any of the fundamental or emotional issues dividing the colony; nor did it affect the issues that strained the colony's relations with Parliament. All it did was buy a little time, a brief breathing space before the rush of events eventually pushed Hancock and the colony into full-fledged, open rebellion against Great Britain.

Although Hancock's political vision, based more on the province's past experiences rather than some new glimpse into the future, failed to prevent revolution and war, it did permanently establish him once and for all in the forefront of Massachusetts's political and governmental leadership . His dexterity and ability to cut an independent role for himself, to change positions almost effortlessly, and his talent for consistently emerging on the winning side made him an important factor in all subsequent political conflicts and issues effecting Massachusetts right up until the time of his death.

But what did Hancock actually stand for and what did he ultimately hope to accomplish? Aside from promoting his own career, he appeared anxious to preserve the colony's existing social and political character. Yet in pursuing this end, he articulated no systematic design of ideological principles, he expressed no idealistic vision of the future, nor could he conceptualize a set of long-ranged objectives. Politically he was always the epitome of pragmatism and would adopt any plan or scheme which he thought might safeguard the essentially conservative, deferential, and elitist qualities of Massachusetts society which he preferred.

It was this seemingly consistent and conscious defense of Massa-

chusetts's traditional values which made him appear so representative of his environment and undoubtedly accounted for much of his widespread and intensely felt popularity. Furthermore, his enormous wealth, his distinguished social position, and his aristocratic status, rather than creating an obstacle or barrier between himself and his constituents, actually generated confidence in him and served as an important link between him and the masses. For Hancock clearly represented what the colonists themselves wanted most to preserve: that is, he represented a familiar and therefore safe, well-ordered social structure, wherein everyone knew their proper place and function. This was a particularly important attribute during this troubled period when change was feared and especially as these changes seemed instigated by an increasingly foreign and alien Parliament and a remote English administration. Equally significant, Hancock symbolically represented success within this native American social system. He was someone close at hand with whom the common man could identify and even sought to emulate.

Ironically, Hancock's pragmatic approach eventually led him straight down the road to rebellion and ultimately into a commitment to work for American independence. In other words, he willingly participated in a revolutionary process that would possibly jeopardize the very thing he seemed most anxious to preserve, the traditional social and political fabric of Massachusetts. True, Hancock never thought of himself as a revolutionary. Yet as a pragmatist, he was actually a much more dangerous and successful revolutionary than someone who was guided by an inflexible dogma. Hancock, for example, was never bothered by accusations of inconsistency. On the contrary, he considered himself perfectly con-

sistent as he pursued the single most important objective on his political calendar, that of securing the broadest possible base of popular support he could muster in Massachusetts. For this was the bedrock of his political faith; his enormous popularity could and would be turned into political influence and power.

Consequently, Hancock easily and without changing stride accepted these momentous and rapidly occurring changes. For the most part he considered them all incidental, or merely expedients taken in order to achieve a more modest personal objective, that of furthering his own political ambitions. Therefore, as long as he was able to sustain his rapport with the masses, it did not really matter to him what specific system of government existed, as long as it allowed a maximum expression of the people's collective voice, because he correctly anticipated that he would be the principal beneficiary of the people's choice. This then was the foundation upon which his entire faith and trust in democratic and representative government rested. Based on this, all of Hancock's subsequent political decisions and actions flowed.

C H A P T E R VIII

"BURNING TAPERS AT NOON"

"The British thunder you Defy
and Right of Parliament deny
Revile the Kind Peace making Gage,
Who with Great Prudence would assuage,
The Fires lit up by H_____k's Rage."[1]

As 1772 came to an end and the new year unfolded, Hancock found himself in an unexpectedly complicated situation. Aware that much of his current influence in public affairs stemmed from his rapport with the masses, he now became aware that there were serious liabilities with this arrangement. In order to perpetuate his political influence, he repeatedly felt pressured to satisfy the public's expectations. In a real sense, he became a virtual prisoner of popular opinions.

Privately Hancock espoused moderation. His mercantile background encouraged a respect for compromise, stability, and order that was always in conflict with his need for popularity. The current political balance of power which emerged following his successful efforts to bring the General Court back to Boston satisfied all of these requirements. Unfortunately for him it was an unrealistic settlement and could not endure. In the first place, the radicals were more determined than ever to oust Thomas Hutchinson and his supporters. Secondly, British Imperial leaders were about to revert to their characteristically short-sighted view of American affairs. Within months the old question of taxation was stirred up all over again by Parliament's enactment of the controversial Tea Act. These unsettling circumstances compelled Hancock to readjust his own political views especially as he sought to keep up with the

public's hardening attitude towards Great Britain.

So the new year became a critical and pivotal time in Hancock's life as a rush of events convinced him of the necessity to reconcile his outstanding differences with Sam Adams and the entire radical wing of the popular party. It was a difficult decision to make as it meant sacrificing his recently won political independence. Yet, Hancock took the risk in spite of several available alternatives. He might have opted to retire from public life with his popularity and integrity intact and turn his attention to his long neglected business interests. He chose not to. "I have been for some time past and still am so engaged in our General Assembly," he pleaded, "that I cannot now Particularly reply to your last favor."[1] This was his most frequently offered excuse to his overseas correspondents. Besides, he still possessed a strong aversion to commerce and trade. The current economically depressed state of trade offered little encouragement for his quick return to the counting room.[2] The life of a gentleman of leisure left him equally unsatisfied as his political ambitions remained largely unfulfilled. So Hancock kept Palfrey busy at his desk managing his business affairs while he continued his active involvement in the more satisfying world of colonial American politics. Promoting his own career remained the cornerstone of his daily activities.

At first, Hancock was wary and intentionally shied away from the more complex and controversial issues. He side-stepped Sam Adams's attempt to add his name to the recently formed Boston Committee of Correspondence. This new creation was the latest brainchild of radical thought in Boston and was ultimately designed to disrupt the province's

political equilibrium. Formally adopted at the Boston Town Meeting on November 2, 1772, the committee was ostensibly created to protest and alert the public to the dangers of the ministry's newest attempt to subvert their liberties. Rumor had it that in the future all judges' salaries would be paid out of crown revenues collected by the Customs Service rather than by the traditional grants voted by the colony's representative Assembly. This was at least Sam Adams most current argument, but he actually anticipated the committee's existence long before word of this policy change reached America. He envisioned it as a creative piece of political machinery designed to foster and promote the twin goals of resistence and independence.[4]

Several other prominent whig moderates shared Hancock's immediate suspicion of this proposed plan. Representatives Cushing and Phillips, and Selectmen John Scollay and Benjamin Austin joined Hancock in pleading prior personal commitments as their reason for not wishing to serve on the committee.[5] Hancock's deliberate avoidance was an obvious excuse, since he found more than enough free time to enjoy a two week excursion "to visit the eastern parts of this province" on a "party of pleasure."[6] Accompanied by some moderate sympathizers, political allies, and some friends and relatives, including Doctor Cooper, Mr. Winthrop of Cambridge, as well as his cousin Nicholas Bowes, Hancock no doubt found politics and future strategy a main topic of conversation. What bound them together was a mutual wariness of Sam Adams's objectives and motives, particularly his latest effort to circumvent the colony's traditional political institutions. Naturally Hancock was cautious. He wanted to avoid any connection with this controversial

committee, especially as it was so completely dominated by the radicals. Hancock also wanted to walk his own moderate middle path. The likelihood of doing that much longer was, however, rapidly disappearing.

Hancock intentionally sought to keep himself in the public's eye through his less controversial activities in the General Assembly and in local town affairs. For example, he continued to serve as Moderator at the Boston town meetings. The double advantage of this was that it kept him visible and informed without compelling him to take a stand on the issues one way or the other. He also participated on the Provincial committee in charge of repairing the Court House as well as the local town committee investigating the best way to illuminate Boston's streets at night.[7] These activities kept him in contact with his co-representatives, like Sam Adams, while enabling him to duck any commitments on the more controversial questions.

His hesitancy to endorse the committee's actions was more personal in nature than political. The feud with Sam Adams, which festered just below the surface, dominated his thinking but not enough to distort his perceptions of the committee's widespread popularity. Reluctantly Hancock gave in and tacitly endorsed the committee's work as represented by their two reports entitled, "The State of the Rights of the Colonists," and "The Enumeration of the Violations of Our Rights". This occurred, however, only after the town meeting first unanimously accepted these reports on November 20, 1772, while Hancock served as Moderator.[8]

By themselves these two reports collectively known as the "Boston Resolves," contained nothing Hancock personally objected to. They merely argued the colonists claim that they were entitled to specific rights

and not merely the granting of privileges. As enthusiastically as he endorsed and participated in the distribution of these Resolves, Hancock was motivated more out of a respect for public opinion and a fear of disappointing his supporters than out of any sincere desire to promote Sam Adams's recently formed Committee of Correspondence.[9] This gradually evolved into a fairly consistent pattern of behavior on his part. Consciously, Hancock became an outspoken advocate of the public's inarticulate mood and aspirations. In private he maintained a far more hesitant and cautiously conservative approach. These contradictory tendencies only came into conflict and made him appear indecisive when he could not accurately determine the public's mood.

The arrival of a packet of indiscrete letters from England soon provided added evidence of Hancock's extreme sensitivity and responsiveness to public pressure. These letters were the privately written correspondence of Governor Hutchinson, Lt. Governor Oliver, and several other Massachusetts conservatives all addressed to Thomas Whately, a former Undersecretary of the Treasury, recently deceased. Benjamin Franklin, Massachusetts Bay colony's colonial agent in London, mysteriously secured possession of these missives and forwarded them to Thomas Cushing, Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Their potentially destructive contents, written years earlier while the province was gripped in a seemingly unending series of disorders and political conflicts, if published now out of context, could conceivably have a disastrous effect on Governor Hutchinson's ability to govern. Fearful of his own implication in this affair, Franklin insisted that their contents be discretely revealed only to a select group of individuals and

then returned to him in London. He expressedly instructed Cushing that the letters not be printed or recopied.[10]

As one of the privileged few given access to Hutchinson's stolen letters, Hancock reportedly was "deeply affected" by them, and promised to "watch the vile serpent" very carefully.[11] His pledge referred to a forthcoming journey to Hartford, Connecticut he and the Governor were about to make along with General Brattle and Major Hawley. Their mission was to represent the colony at a conference designed to settle a long standing boundary dispute with New York. Since Hancock was also not feeling well lately, he undertook this journey "as well for the recovery of his health as to transact some public business."[12] Because the Massachusetts Commission was appointed well before the packet of letters reached Boston, the popular party's leadership held off on any decision regarding their use until the Commissioners returned from their mission.[13]

In spite of Hancock's professed sense of outrage and shocked disbelief, he was not really all that surprised by the arrival of the letters. For almost the last two years he was aware of their existence. His clerk Palfrey, while on a business mission to London for him in 1771, reported back that a Mr. Temple, the same Temple who most likely delivered these letters to Franklin, told him that "it would amaze any person to be informed of the misrepresentations which have been made for four or five years past to the ministry by persons on your side of the Atlantic." Furthermore, Temple also expressed the desire, soon to be realized, that the contents of these letters would "come out in time."[14] Alerted by Palfrey's early warning, Hancock's subsequent caution was grounded as much by reason and common sense as by personal

political preference. Consequently he was extremely careful not to appear too closely aligned with the Governor. This also clarifies his adamant refusal to accept Hutchinson's approval of his election to the Council. It also sheds light on his reluctance to break openly with Sam Adams and the colony's radicals.

The anticipated disclosure of Hutchinson's letters presaged a drastically altered political picture in Massachusetts. Sensing this, by the time the Boundary Commission returned from Connecticut, successful in their negotiations, Hancock was ready to surrender his short lived role as the colony's principal power broker.[15] With the Hutchinsonian side of the colony's political triangle about to be discredited and verging on collapse, Hancock saw no other option but to join in the actual process of engineering the Governor's disgrace. It took little imagination on Hancock's part to anticipate the public's negative reaction to these letter's contents. There was never any real doubt that inspite of Franklin's orders to the contrary, these letters would eventually find their way into print.

Hutchinson's letters proved as damaging as Hancock expected, although they contained nothing new beyond what he had already said publicly on many previous occasions. But the timing of their revelation was decisive. These unguarded messages were originally written at a time of great political and emotional stress, beginning about the time of the "Liberty" crisis. Their contents, which might easily have been overlooked then, were much more inflammatory and provocative during this current political lull. For in his off the cuff remarks, written as one private citizen to another, Hutchinson castigated almost every

single political institution within the colony, from the Governor's Council and General Assembly down to the town meetings, and including the local grand and petty juries as well as the Boston newspapers. Even the citizens of Boston failed to escape his pent up rage and frustration. Hancock and Otis were specifically singled out by name for special criticism. As Hutchinson described it, the entire colony lacked a sense of order and proper respect for authority. He further contended that the suppression of popular influence in government and revisions in the colony's charter were necessary in order to restore peace and respect for government within the province.[16]

To the citizens of Massachusetts Bay Colony, these thoughtless comments and observations only confirmed what the radicals had said all along, that there was indeed a conspiracy afoot to rob them of their traditional English liberties. Ironically, Hutchinson's letters helped defeat his own grand strategy. Instead of successfully exploiting Hancock and Adams's jealousies and rivalry for his own advantage, he inadvertantly provided them with a pretext for reconciling their differences. After more than two years of constant political squabbling, during which time the colony experienced its first real period of calm in almost a decade, Hancock and Adams were reunited in a single political objective at Hutchinson's expense.

Sam Adams was overjoyed with the surprisingly fortunate turn of events. Of Hutchinson's predicament, he boasted, that the Governor "never will be able to recover."[17] He was equally pleased to squelch the rumors and speculations circulating around, even as far away as in England, that he and Hancock were at odds. Writing to Arthur Lee, in

London, Adams insisted that there never was a breech between Hancock and himself and any story to the contrary was only a desperate and wily fabrication propagated by the Governor and his party. "Mr. Wilkes," he asserted, "was certainly misinformed when he told you that Mr. H (ancock) had deserted the cause of Liberty."

Hancock celebrated their renewed friendship by commissioning his neighbor, John Singleton Copely, to paint two portraits, one of Adams and the other of himself. Both were intentionally hung side by side in Hancock's Beacon Hill home to commemorate their political reunion.[19] Within days of Hancock's return from Connecticut, following the Boundary Commission meetings, he and Adams along with the other leading popular party spokesman met to plan their forthcoming election strategies as well as how to most effectively employ these letters against the Governor. Officially, knowledge of their existence was still regarded as confidential.

So far only a very select group of individuals were given access to the Governor's letters although rumors about them were intentionally circulated more freely. This was part of the popular party's pre-election strategy designed to assure their control in this year's General Assembly. Hancock was fully aware of this; but at an election eve celebration at Justice Quincy's home in Braintree, he almost inadvertantly disclosed the party's entire strategy while entertaining "a large company of both sexes," with "a particular account of all the plans of operation" for the next day's vote. This prompted John Adams' assessment, that "such a leaky vessel is this worthy Gentleman."[20] Whether or not Hancock's performance impressed Dorothy Quincy, as it was more

than likely intended to, his tactlessness apparently had little negative effect on the results of the election. In Boston, he, Cushing, Phillips, and Sam Adams were again overwhelmingly reelected as the town's representatives to the General Court.[21] The popular party was also assured control in the House of Representatives. Unlike most recent years, the Boston delegation was prepared to take their seats as a single bloc, united in their resolve to bring down the Hutchinson administration, and were not openly plagued by internal rifts and personal disagreements.

As in previous years, at the opening session of the General Assembly Hancock was again elected by the House of Representatives to sit on the Governor's Council. For the second year in succession, the Governor approved and Hancock refused, thus retaining his seat in the Lower House where he was about to perform his part in a contrived comic-drama.[22] Primarily written and directed by Sam Adams, this skit was designed to force the public disclosure of Hutchinson's incriminating correspondence. The curtain rose early in the new session with Hancock's electrifying announcement that "in less than eight and forty hours a discovery would be made which might be improved to put the Province in a happier state than it had been in anytime for fourteen years past."[23] Although many of the House members already knew what this meant, nevertheless a sense of heightened drama and anticipation was created.

While the House members anxiously awaited more news about this mysterious "discovery," they were called upon to respond to an urgent request from their sister colony of Virginia, suggesting the formation of intercolonial Committees of Correspondence. The suggestion was

quickly adopted and fifteen Representatives, including Hancock, were appointed to serve on the Massachusetts Committee of Correspondence.[24] Although modeled upon the Boston Committee of Correspondence, which Hancock had still not officially endorsed, he did accept his appointment to this colony wide version and for obvious political reasons. This new committee enjoyed much wider public support and its membership was better balanced, containing many more like minded moderates. Its legitimacy was also better guaranteed because the Assembly authorized its formation. Lastly, Hancock realized that his resistence would be counterproductive and even harmful to his popularity. Hancock was a political realist who swam with the current tide.

Once committed to serving on the Committee of Correspondence, Hancock thoroughly immersed himself in its activities and functions. Throughout the spring and summer of 1773 he regularly attended its frequent meetings and served on several of its special subcommittees which were empowered to list the colony's grievances and communicate them to the other colonies.[25] This was his first sustained experience and exposure to intercolonial politics. His varied activities on behalf of the Committee of Correspondence also put him in contact with the leading personalities throughout the American colonies, many of whom already knew of him through old newspaper accounts of the "Liberty Affair". This sudden awareness of his continental wide reputation, combined with the exciting responsibilities of his work on the Committee left Hancock with a heady sense of his own importance and whetted his appetite for more important duties. As much as this new emphasis on intercolonial communication succeeded in furthering the emergence of a unified resistance to Great

Britain, and establishing the groundwork for the calling of a Continental Congress, it also had an immediate effect upon Hancock.

Beginning in the summer of 1773, he grew noticeably more outspoken than ever before in the cause of American liberty. His boldness was nourished by the support emanating from the other colonies, confirming his perceptions of massive popular approval for this course of action. The declining strength of Massachusetts' conservatives helped make it easier, safer, and politically appealing for him to assume this combative posture. In other words, Hancock's zeal, his disregard for caution, and his spirit of resistence were all kindled and fueled by the widening signs of unrest and emerging sense of American unity. An intuitive appreciation of this trend made it easier for Hancock to play such an overtly foolish part in engineering the disclosure of Hutchinson's letters.

Only a few days after Hancock's first warning of an important impending discovery, and following the Assembly's approval of the establishment of a Provincial Committee of Correspondence, the stage was set for bringing down the final curtain on the Governor's career. Primarily for dramatic effect the galleries of the Lower House were cleared of spectators and the doors to the chamber barred. With privacy assured, Sam Adams addressed the representatives and informed them that certain letters, written by "persons of rank in America," were in his possession but that he was unable to reveal them publicly because of restrictions placed on their use by his unnamed source. Following a brief review of Franklin's restrictions the House agreed to honor them but insisted that they be read aloud.[26] Then it was Hancock's turn. He rose and

with a straight face swore to the members that while walking in the town common an unknown stranger handed him a packet of letters which sounded similar to those Adams had just finished reading.[27]

A special House committee was immediately set up to compare the two sets of correspondence. When they reported back to the whole House that both were identical, it cleared the way for their publication and dissemination.[28] The rationale for this decision was simple. The letters printed were those delivered to the House by Hancock and not those of Adams's unnamed source. Therefore, Franklin's restrictions were technically honored. But this thinly veiled ruse fooled no one as it was obvious that the letters Hancock presented to the House were nothing but hand written copies of the originals.

Hancock and Adams's methods were devious and crude; yet the strategy was effective. In the House of Representatives the letters produced an instantaneous hostility against the Governor. By a lopsided vote of 101-5, they indicated that they interpreted Hutchinson's words to mean that he actually favored the overthrow of the constitution and sought to introduce arbitrary power into the province. Another committee was hastily charged with the responsibility for drawing up specific resolutions against this and including a formal request for the Governor's immediate recall.[29]

This reaction was tame compared to the public's outrage. By the end of the month, as knowledge of Hutchinson's letters spread, the execrations against him became torrential, permanently ending all hope of his ever regaining sufficient authority to govern effectively.[30] The anger directed against Hutchinson also sheltered Hancock from any adverse

political fallout or criticism about his part in this sordid little affair. Expediency again won the day. Furthermore, Hancock's attachment to the radicals was strengthened now that the colony's political balance was tilted even further in their direction as a result of the Governor's humiliating defeat.

In the aftermath of Hutchinson's disgrace, Hancock's popularity continued to soar. The Overseers of Harvard College unanimously chose to honor Hancock by electing him the school's new Treasurer, and entrusted upwards of fifteen thousand pounds of the college's money into his care.[31] To reciprocate for this new wave of honors and outpouring of respect, Hancock severed his association with the Kennebec Company because of its large Tory membership.[32] Yet, even before this symbolic gesture went into effect, the Governor and his dwindling number of supporters abandoned all efforts to secure Hancock's support for the administration. Still, Hancock sought to leave himself a little room for maneuvering. Although totally disgraced in the eyes of staunch supporters of Hutchinson's administration, he was careful not to offend the crown. Consequently, on June 4th, in honor of the King's thirty-fifth birthday, and later again on September 22nd, the anniversary of his coronation, Hancock paraded the Cadet Company on the town commons in all their full pomp and military splendor. Said one witness, "such a Quantity or Rather Multitude of People as Spectators I never saw before."[33]

These spontaneous public demonstrations of affection were vital in maintaining Hancock's emotional stability. He continually needed tangible indications of approval in order to affirm his own inflated, yet insecure, perceptions of himself. He also interpreted these outpourings

of respect as a vindication of his political conduct. This in turn inspired even greater and more extreme behavior of a similar kind. Therefore, with the radicals riding a wave of popular approval, Hancock intentionally sought to identify himself with them and their cause. The collapse of conservative resistance, symbolized by Hutchinson's disgrace, only solidified Hancock's connection with the radical, or popular opposition. In the absence of any effective conservative restraint, the events leading up to and culminating in the "Boston Tea Party," took on an inevitable aspect.

The only real checks upon the radicals were those offered by their more moderate collaborators, particularly from the merchant community. This was reflected in the often obscure, but intense internal struggle for control fought out behind the scenes between Hancock and Sam Adams; which more accurately typified their long history than did their apparent cooperation. Neither of these men really trusted the other. Adams disliked the entire merchant community, which Hancock represented. To him they were all greedy, self-seeking and self-serving opportunists. Hancock, meanwhile, distrusted Adams' extreme puritanical attitudes as well as his disrespect for privilege and property. Their frequent efforts at cooperation were mere marriages of convenience. As for the "Boston Tea Party," where their current attempts at cooperation and rivalry eventually led, the events leading up to it were of far less importance than the results.[34] For the "Tea Party" set in motion the final chain of events which culminated in the American War for Independence.

Hancock's role in this celebrated act is as ambiguous today as it was then. As a substantial property owner, he naturally shrank from

openly advocating the premeditated destruction of private property, even that belonging to the hated East India Company. The likelihood of offending the Crown must also have weighed heavily on his mind. Nevertheless, there were even greater pressures pushing him in the opposite direction which proved impossible to resist.

The tea crisis was precipitated by Parliament's unfortunate decision, in May 1773, to enact a Tea Act designed to bail out the financially distressed East India Company. Once again the unsettled and inflammatory questions of an American revenue and Parliament's authority to tax the colonists directly were reopened.[35] Coming as it did on the heels of the Hutchinson letter episode, many American were convinced that its timing was not coincidental, but was part of a larger conspiracy aimed at undermining their liberties. Although the specific details of the Tea Act did not reach Massachusetts until after the first cargoes of tea were already dispatched from London, Hancock was luckily spared any embarrassment by the timely actions of his trusted ship's captain, James Scott, and his English correspondent, George Hayley. On their own initiative, both men refused all offers to ship the company's tea to Boston on board Hancock's trans-Atlantic vessels.[36] Consequently, when the details regarding the act were finally known in America, and ignited an enormously hostile public reaction, Hancock was free to help lead the protest without any contradictory or self serving vested economic interests at stake.[37]

Throughout the duration of the tea crisis, important differences of opinion occasionally surfaced between Hancock and Adams. Although they were in general agreement that the tea must be prevented from being

landed, they differed over the tactics best suited to achieve that end. Adams favored the use of intimidation and threats of physical violence. "Our credit is at stake," he argued, "we must venture, and unless we do, we shall be discarded by the sons of liberty in other colonies."[38] With the help of his influential friend and ally, Dr. Joseph Warren, they set about formulating their plans at a secret meeting of the North End Caucus held at the Green Dragon Tavern. Immediately afterwards, on the night of November 2nd, an orchestrated campaign of coercion began, directed specifically against the tea consignees. In size and scope it was vaguely familiar to the campaign of almost a decade earlier against the Boston Stamp distributor.[39] Only this time the results were less encouraging. The tea consignees were made of sterner stuff and refused to bow to the intimidations of the mob.

Meanwhile, Hancock and other moderate voices gently pushed on in their attempt to convince the town to accept a more orderly approach to the problem. They hoped that the prestige and influence of the Town Meeting would be enough to convince the tea consignees of their folly and at the same time curb the radicals and their excessive reliance on force. Three days later a special session of the town meeting convened with Hancock acting as moderator.[40]

In the short run, the results of the town meeting were as equally unproductive as were the radicals' more aggressive efforts. The consignees responded to the town's request for their resignation with the counter claim that they never received confirmation of their appointment and therefore had nothing to resign. Under increasing radical pressure, the Town Meeting rejected this argument, calling it "daringly affrontive";

but the consignees' refusal to quit their positions represented a serious setback for the moderates and their efforts to control the future course of events.[41] It was also a personal defeat for Hancock, who patiently sought a middle way around the twin problems of the tea consignees' intransigence and the radicals' penchant for disorder. His own mercantile background and class allegiance made Hancock sympathetic to the consignees' plight, yet political necessity dictated his opposition to the Tea Act and strengthened his determination to resist the unloading of East India Company tea in Boston.

As Moderator of the Town Meeting, Hancock deserved some credit for his tactful handling of a potentially embarrassing episode at the start of this important session. The discovery of a controversial pamphlet in the hall, entitled the "Tradesmen Protest," threatened to throw the entire place into confusion. He skillfully defused the situation by reading the pamphlet aloud and then led the approximately 400 tradesmen present in a unanimous disavowal of its contents.[42] The meeting then turned to more serious matters.

As expected Boston adopted a set of resolutions against the Tea Act that were previously endorsed by the City of Philadelphia. A committee comprised of Selectmen and radical leaders was formed to visit the consignees. It was not until the next day, November 6th, that they returned with the consignees' "affrontive" rejection of the Town's request for their resignation.[43] This opened the way for a brief, yet revealing glimpse into Hancock and Adams' ongoing rivalry for control.

In spite of their defeat, the moderates attempted a face saving ploy by suggesting that "the thanks of the Town" be extended to Hancock

for "the dispatch he has given to the business thereof." Sam Adams emphatically and strenuously opposed this ceremonial gesture. He argued that "a vote of thanks should be given upon very special and signal services performed for the public," which by implication, Hancock's services were not.[44] But this was not the real issue. Rather it was a superficial, yet symbolic, test of strength between Hancock and Adams for philosophical and political dominance within the Town Meeting. A vote to "thank" Hancock would represent a moderate victory as well as an endorsement of their cautious approach to the entire tea question. Hancock's defeat, on the other hand, would clear the way for the more extreme measures advocated by the radicals.

Hancock diplomatically skirted the whole issue by opposing the motion and requesting it be withdrawn.[45] It was a politic decision. Consequently, he avoided a potentially divisive confrontation between the radicals and the moderates which might have split the popular party coalition into several warring factions. At the same time it was a concession to political reality. Hancock swallowed his pride with difficulty, yet he accepted this mild rebuke because it was far safer than risking either a hard won victory or a narrow defeat if the motion was allowed to come up for a vote. With the public's hostility running strongly against the Tea Act and the consignees, for the third time that decisive year Hancock abandoned his own privately held beliefs in favor of public opinion and political expediency. Just as with the Committee of Correspondence and the Hutchinson letter episode, Hancock went in the direction of popular sentiment. Rather than accept the consignees' rejection of the moderates' overtures as a fatal defeat, Hancock ignored

their rebuff and climbed aboard the radical bandwagon. In so doing, however, he in no way jeopardized his close relationship with the other moderates who continued to regard him as their primary spokesman.

Within a week, Hancock enjoyed his first opportunity to display his newly acquired militancy. When Governor Hutchinson commanded him to hold his company of Cadets "in readiness" in the imminent likelihood of renewed outbreaks of public disorder, Hancock intentionally disregarded his instructions.[46] This act of deliberate defiance was succeeded by frequent impassioned public declarations designed by Hancock to stiffen resistance to the tea's landing. "It is in everybody's mouth," the Governor reported, that Hancock claimed at the conclusion of a large public gathering that he "would be willing to spend his fortune and life itself in so good a cause."[47]

Hutchinson sought to develop a legal case against him for these and other equally provocative and "unguarded" comments, but without success. He could not find anyone willing to openly testify against Hancock, no doubt out of fear of reprisal. In desperation, the Governor inquired if not "public printed papers" were sufficient as "presumptive evidence to proceed upon."[48] But this attempt also failed.[49]

Experience taught Hancock the necessity of caution, and he was extremely careful not to fall into any simple legal trap. For instance, as the tea crisis inched closer to its inevitable climax, the legally constituted Town Meetings gave way to another example of those extralegal assemblies that Bostonians were particularly fond; and these were familiarly known as meetings of the "body".[50] Hancock intentionally avoided acting as the "body's" moderator, thereby protecting himself

from any possibility of later prosecution. Yet, he attended these sessions as a private citizen and addressed the crowds with some of his most uninhibited and provocative invective.

As of December 7, 1773, when the last of the three tea shipments entered Boston harbor, the town still remained deadlocked over how to prevent the tea from landing and time was running perilously low. Meanwhile, Hancock and members of his Cadet Company assumed the responsibility for guarding these vessels around the clock to prevent the tea from being secretly unloaded. But a more permanent resolution was needed by December 16th when the twenty day grace period allowed by law expired. If the tea duties were not paid by then, the cargoes would be legally confiscated by the Customs House and brought ashore. Yet as long as the duties were unpaid, the tea could not be returned to England nor reexported anywhere else.[51] The alternatives open to Hancock, Adams, and the "Body" were dwindling rapidly.

With the deadline drawing nearer, only a handful of moderates argued in favor of a compromise, whereby the tea would be temporarily stored in local warehouses awaiting future developments. Hancock, Adams, and the majority of townspeople rejected this suggestion outright and were determined to prevent the tea from ever touching shore. Yet, even as late as December 14th, as Francis Rotch later testified to the Privy Council, Hancock vetoed a radical's proposal that the tea ships and their cargoes be all set afire. Rotch swore that Hancock "opposed any such proceedings."[52]

Two days later an orderly band of citizens, poorly disguised as Mohawk Indians slipped on board the three tea ships on the Boston water-

front. Quietly and methodically they threw the entire shipment of tea into the harbor, and then dispersed as quickly as they arrived. Considering the prevailing mood in the town, their actions had all the outward appearances of marked self restraint.[53]

This demonstration of willful, yet controlled behavior, suggests an important behind-the-scenes compromise by two previously irreconciable forces, one represented by Hancock and the other by Sam Adams. Since the inception of the tea crisis, the town's responses oscillated back and forth between the radicals' zealous insistence on a physical confrontation and the moderates' demand for an orderly and legal attempt at rational persuasion. Neither effort, however, seemed likely to succeed on its own. This internal struggle for control only heartened Governor Hutchinson and his remaining conservative supporters who believed, or at least hoped, that the opposition was on the verge of internal collapse.[54] Eventually Hancock spurred a compromise by conceding to the radicals that the tea must be prevented from landing, even if it meant destroying it first. But the manner by which this was carried out, the precise surgical destruction of only the tea, with no additional harm done to any other person or property, was an important concession to the moderates. In the end, the "Boston Tea Party," in spite of its extreme departure from all previous acts of colonial resistence to English law, was popularly viewed as a wonderful example of moderate self control and restraint.[55] To a large extent, Hancock's part in these proceedings contributed to this widely held perception.

John Adams rejoiced, calling the tea party "the most magnificent Movement of all. There is a Dignity, a Majesty, a Sublimity in this

last effort of the Patriots that I greatly admire." Furthermore, he predicted that it was "so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible," that it must have "important consequences," and that "I cannot but consider it was an Epocha in History."[56] Hancock was much less effusive about the "tea party," bordering almost on complete silence. In keeping with his fear of exposure, which ever since the Hutchinson letter episode reached near paranoiac proportions, Hancock grew more restrained than usual in not committing his thoughts and deeds to paper. Consequently, nearly all of his subsequent correspondence suffers from an almost total lack of substance. Even to his close friend and associate, George Hayley, Hancock denied possessing any intimate knowledge regarding the "Tea Party," couching his comments in the broadest possible generalities. "We have been much agitiated in consequence of the arrival of the Tea ship," he wrote, but "after every effort was made to Induce the consignees to return it," the whole shipment "was thrown into the saltwater." As to "the particulars, I must refer you to Capt. Scott, for, indeed I am not acquainted with them myself, so as to give a Detail."[57]

In spite of his fervent denials to the contrary, there is little doubt Hancock played a crucial part in both planning and executing the destruction of the tea. As already noted, the respectful regard for personal property, other than for the actual chests of tea, bore the mark of Hancock's moderating influence. That he was also aware of its imminent destruction was attested to by one of the participants who afterwards reported how Hancock addressed a group of "Mohawks" earlier in the afternoon, imploring that "the matter must be settled before

12 o'clock that night," and adding that he wished "every man do what is right in his own eyes."[58] Even if Hancock was not physically present on the docks that evening, his approval and authorization certainly helped lead the way. Of course, his participation or not was a moot point as the English authorities were convinced of his guilt and held both him and Sam Adams mutually and personally culpable.[59]

The "Tea Party" jolted both colonists and Parliamentarians alike, particularly shaking the latter out of their lethargic and dreamlike faith that the American problem would somehow miraculously resolve itself peacefully. Yet even Americans much closer to the scene were also stunned by Boston's audacity. Hancock and Adams's brashness went so far as to defy the sympathetic advice of die-hard supporters, like Charles Thomson of Philadelphia. Thomson warned them both not to initiate any rash policy that would "hazard a breech" with England. But Hancock, who in almost all other instances would have found himself in closer philosophical agreement with Thomson rather than Adams, ignored his advice; which in any case arrived too late to alter the final decision.[60]

Rather than advice, it was the Bostonians' overwhelming sense of anger and defiance - a contagious mood, weeks ahead of the rest of the continent - which spread, infected and engulfed Hancock's decision making process. So much so, that when Governor Hutchinson subsequently condemned the people of Boston, calling them all guilty of high treason, and announced his intention to confer with the Attorney General, Jonathan Sewall, to convince him of this, it was an enraged Hancock who came to the town's defense. In response, he proposed calling another "Body Meeting," this time in order "to take off that Brother-in Law of

His."[61] Calmer heads prevailed and nothing came of Hancock's threat.

Meanwhile, news of the "Tea Party" spread rapidly, carried south by the patriot's messenger, Paul Revere. Regardless of the immediate surprised reaction, Hancock confidently predicted that "no one circumstance could possibly have taken place more effectively to unite the colonies than this manouver."[62] His impressions were confirmed by the Governor, who reported that "the people seem regardless of all consequences."[63] It was specifically this insight on Hancock's part, an instinctual anticipation of broad based popular support, which initially motivated his active involvement in the colony's resistence to the introduction of East India Company tea. Now these same perceptions were about to seal his and the radicals' commitment to a course of action that would permit them no other recourse but the pursuit of American independence.

Fundamentally, John Hancock was an opportunist, albeit a perceptive and liberal one. Once he accurately measured the public's prevailing mood, he consciously aligned and deliberately shaped his own thoughts and feelings in conformity with theirs. In Massachusetts' intrinsically conservative society, he was naturally deferred to out of respect for his enormous wealth and status; and was, therefore, generously bestowed with both honorary and substantive places of leadership. This was immensely satisfying to him personally and helped him to compensate for many of his inherent insecurities. Nevertheless, many of his more virulent critics contended that this was all he was ever after. Yet, there was another deeper and more complex side to Hancock's personality.

As a life long native and resident of Massachusetts, Hancock was raised and imbued with a sincere nationalistic devotion to local and

province wide institutions. Furthermore, as the son and grandson of pragmatic Congregational ministers, and as a life long member of the Brattle Street Church in Boston, under the equally pragmatic spiritual tutelage of Reverend Samuel Cooper, Hancock absorbed and adopted as his own their bland views of Calvinistic orthodoxy; which as its major tenet claimed that God's wish was for the continued prosperity of his people.[64] Lastly, as a wealthy merchant and extensive property owner, Hancock genuinely believed it was his inherent right to feel secure both in his person as well as in his property.

But in the everyday world of practical experience, Hancock's intimate knowledge of the Customs Officials, and the English legal and political systems convinced him that most, if not all, of his deeply held beliefs and values were in serious jeopardy. In the sobering aftermath of the Boston "Tea Party," the tumultuous events of the past decade fell into an onimous and depressing focus. What he forsaw for the future offered neither hope nor promise of relief; only more of the same or worse, unless permanent and reasonable solutions were quickly devised. It was therefore as much in the spirit of defensiveness, fear, and patriotic ardor, as it was an expression of his need to be in the public limelight, that motivated him to accept the town's invitation to address them on the fourth anniversary commemorating the Boston Massacre.

By ten o'clock on March 5th, 1774, "the Greatest Number of People that ever met on the occasion" gathered at Faneuil Hall to hear Hancock's "massacre" oration. The crowd was so unexpectantly large that the hall quickly filled to capacity and the overflow spilled out onto the streets. By necessity the meeting adjourned to the South Meeting House with its

more spacious accommodations. Even the many who wished to attend were unable to find room in the packed hall.[65]

At the last minute there arose some doubts whether Hancock would be able to attend. Since the "Tea Party" last December, he was periodically indisposed and confined to his bed with recurring attacks of gout.[66] His affliction was no doubt a testament to his indulgent life style, consisting of an enormous consumption of rich foods and wines combined with little physical exercise. Exactly how ill Hancock really was is impossible to determine since it was not unknown for him to use his history of poor health as a convenient excuse to avoid touchy political problems. Perhaps he was only keeping a deliberately low profile in the wake of the tea's destruction. But if that was widely believed, Hancock soon deflated that notion by "rising" from his "sickbed" to deliver one of the most impassionately eloquent and unforgettable speeches Bostonians yet heard against British tyranny and injustices.

Hancock's address was in several ways a rather conventional "massacre" oration in that he restated many of the colonists' most basic and long familiar grievances against British imperial policies. The King was naturally absolved of all responsibility and blame was typically reserved for his evil ministers "who dared advise" their master to adopt "such execrable measures." And of course his speech contained the obligatory evocation of the memory of the town's fallen martyrs as well as their wicked and vile murders. "Ye dark designing knaves, yer murders, parricides! how dare you tread upon the earth, which has drank in the blood of slaughtered innocents, shed by your wicked hands?"

After fulfilling these perfunctory requirements, Hancock "gladly

quit the gloomy theme of death," and returned to his basic and fundamental premise. "Security to the persons and properties of the governed, is so obviously the design and end of civil government," he asserted, "that to attempt a logical proof of it, would be like burning tapers at noonday, to assist the sun in enlightening the world." Furthermore, "it cannot be either virtuous or honorable, to attempt to support a government, of which this is not the great and principal basis." On the contrary, Hancock argued, "it is to the last degree vicious and infamous" to support such a government "which manifestly tends to render the persons and properties of the governed insecure."[67] This was Hancock's plain and simple message, and no one up until that time ever said it with any greater clarity or force.[68] Hancock then presented himself to the people of Boston as a true and virtuous patriot, ready and willing to lead them, proclaiming, "I am a friend to righteous government, those founded upon the principles of reason and justice; but I glory in publicly avowing my eternal enmity to tyranny."[69]

Once Hancock finished establishing a basis for legitimate opposition towards an established government, he set out to review the history of British-American relations over the past ten years. As expected, he repeatedly found Great Britain guilty of trying to subvert American liberties by failing to show any respect for her people or their possessions. The only reason England's efforts failed, he observed, was due to the colonists' constant vigilance. But, "while we rejoice that the adversary had not hitherto prevailed against us," he warned, "let us by no means put off the harness. Restless malice, and disappointed ambition, will suggest new measures to our inveterate enemies. There-

fore let us also be ready to take the field whenever danger calls."[70]

At this point, Hancock shifted to his second major theme of his address, an appeal for closer intercolonial cooperation and unity. "Let us be united and strengthen the hands of each other," he urged, "by promoting a general union among us." After quickly summing up efforts recently undertaken in that regard, particularly the contributions of the various committees of correspondence, Hancock suggested the convening of a "general congress of deputies from the several houses of assembly, on the continent, as the most effectual method of establishing such an union." For only in his proposed colonial union, Hancock predicted, could the people hope to "restore peace and harmony to America, and secure honor and wealth to Great Britain even against the inclinations of her ministers." Ultimately, he argued, it was the only reasonable way "we shall also free ourselves from those unmannerly pillagers who impudently tell us, that they are licensed by an act of the British parliament to thrust their dirty hands into the pockets of every American."[71]

Hancock's performance was a stunning personal triumph, even if there was some lingering confusion over who actually authored his speech.[72] Almost everyone spoke of it "with Great Applause." John Andrews of Boston heard such fine reports about it that he sent a copy of it to a friend, stating that "its generally allowed to be a good composition (and asserted to be his own production)."[73] Regardless who wrote it, John Adams considered Hancock's delivery to be "elegant," exceeding "the Expectations of everybody." Many of the sentiments, he noted in his diary, "particularly against a Prefference of Riches to Virtue, came from him with a singular Dignity and Grace."[74] The text of the speech

received an even wider circulation as Sam Adams saw to it that it was disseminated throughout the continent, even sending a personal copy along to John Dickinson of Pennsylvania.[75] The townspeople of Boston also expressed their approval by voting to thank Hancock for his efforts and by re-electing him to all of his numerous public offices. The vote for his return to the General Assembly was unanimous.[76] Only a new siege of gout marred Hancock's enjoyment of his success. It forced him to beg the town's indulgence as he excused himself from serving as a fire warden because of his poor health.[77]

There may also have been another "political" reason for Hancock's relapse of gout. Only two days after delivering the "massacre" oration, Hancock volunteered to present his Cadet Company at the funeral services for Lieutenant Governor Andrew Oliver. Sam Adams vehemently opposed this public display of respect, claiming that Oliver was so objectionable to the people of Massachusetts, that he did not deserve it. Hancock replied that he was merely paying respect to Oliver's office and not the man.[78] Yet even Governor Hutchinson privately remarked that Hancock's offer represented "unaccountable conduct" on his part.[79] But all Hancock was trying to do was assert his independence from Sam Adams, especially in view of his recent address which outwardly suggested a wholesale adoption of Adams's radical position, something Hancock wanted to play down. In any event, he ignored Adams's objections and appeared at Oliver's funeral with his full military Company, fired a volley, and then departed. Afterwards there were some minor but nasty incidents as "a large Mob attended & huzzaed at the intombing Body."[80] Hancock, not wishing to make anything more out of this incident which might further

detract from his latest public success, probably welcomed the return of his normally painful ailment as a convenient excuse for temporarily withdrawing from public view.

This episode aside, the importance of Hancock's address was not diminished. By openly clarifying his position, through his defiant appeal for continued resistance, Hancock propelled himself into the forefront of Massachusetts' opposition leadership. In British eyes he became a marked man. Rumors quickly spread predicting Hancock and Adams' imminent arrest and deportation to England for trial.[81] Although these stories were mostly untrue, they helped boost Hancock's popularity, and thus enhanced his political importance.

Although months ahead of its time, Hancock's appeal for continental union also proved prophetic. In a practical sense his call helped prepare the way by planting the idea in people's minds long before Britain's response to the "tea party" was officially known. Consequently, when Parliament finally revealed its ignorance and insensitivity to American affairs by enacting a provocative series of measures, known as the "Coercive Acts", which were specifically designed to punish the inhabitants of Boston, Hancock's call for unity assumed an even greater sense of urgency.[82]

The first tentative steps in that direction occurred as the colonies reacted furiously to Parliament's arbitrary decision to shut down Boston's commercial trade. Writing to Hancock from Philadelphia, Joseph Reed expressed his town's "general indignation" over "your singular & barbarous situation."[83] With sympathy mounting everywhere for Boston's plight, colony after colony came around in support of Hancock's suggestion

calling for a "general congress of deputies from the several houses of assembly." On September 5th, 1774, just six months to the day after initially proposing the idea, the first Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia.

Ironically, Hancock was not among those selected to attend, Instead, he was in Salem, where General Thomas Gage, the colony's newly appointed Governor was supposed to open the Fall session of the General Assembly. Since his arrival in mid-May, accompanied by two regiments of British soldiers as well as with confirmation of Parliament's punitive enactments, Gage had been incapable of placating the people of Massachusetts, who were gripped in a state of unprecedented tension. Everything he did only seemed to acerbate the situation. First he ordered that the General Court be removed to Salem, away from the incendiary influence of Boston's radicals. Then when he learned that the Lower House appointed delegates to attend the proposed congress in Philadelphia, he dissolved the Assembly.[84] His ineptitude that summer knew no bounds as he followed each blunder up with another. In August, for example, Gage curtly dismissed Hancock as Commander of the Cadet Company, alledging that "Mr. Hancock had used him ill by personally affronting him...and that he would not receive an affront from any man in the province."[85] Yet, this backfired by merely strengthening Hancock's province wide popularity as the entire Cadet Company came to his support and "disbaned themselves." They then "delivered their standard to his Excellency," the Governor, claiming their right to choose their own officers.[86] Finally, in September, with the political situation in Massachusetts rapidly deteriorating all around him, Governor Gage cancelled the writs for the election

of representatives to the General Assembly; a meeting which he himself had just recently scheduled for October 5th in Salem.[87] Meanwhile, as Gage blindly stumbled on throughout the summer of 1774, Hancock also faced a familiar problem; one which in part explained his exclusion from the delegation attending the first Continental Congress.

Traditionally, the Boston merchant community regarded the use of economic sanctions, boycotts, and non-importation agreements as their own privileged and personal political weapons. They further held that they and they alone were to decide how and when to best employ these devices as well as regulate and enforce their compliance. In June 1774, in response to the "Coercive Acts," the radically dominated Boston Committee of Correspondence implemented its own non-consumption scheme, entitled a "Solemn League and Covenant," and were aggressively promoting a public subscription to it.[88] The motivation behind this radical plan was to transform the boycott into a much more effectvie weapon of resistance than the previous non-importation agreements.[89] It was also based on Sam Adams's conviction that the merchants as a group could not be trusted, as they "will be forever divided when a Sacrifice of their Interest is called for." Instead, only the yeomanry, Adams insisted, whose "virtue" alone "must finally save this country," could be relied upon to enforce this stringent measure. At the same time he hoped that the yeomanry would also learn to desert all those who will not support it.[90] Meanwhile, the town of Boston, under strong merchant pressure, rejected the "Covenant," and instead adopted its own milder non-consumption plan.[91]

This prepared the way for an inevitable clash between the radicals

from the Committee of Correspondence and the merchants who resisted and opposed them. On June 27th, at the Boston Town meeting, these two forces collided over a motion proposed by the merchants that called for the Committee of Correspondence's censure and annihilation, because it exceeded its authority by initiating the Solemn League and Covenant.[92] At stake here was the entire future control and direction of the province's resistence movement, but the outcome was a foregone conclusion in spite of the lengthy and heated debate. By a lopsided vote of four to one, the Committee of Correspondence was preserved, although the town still refused to endore the "Covenant".[93] Nevertheless, the power and influence of the merchant bloc was severely curtailed as they were left divided and embittered. From then on their enmity was primarily directed against Sam Adams who they held responsible for their defeat.[94]

Throughout this intense but brief debate, Hancock was conspicuously silent. As in the past, whenever an issue pitted the radicals against the merchants, he retired into seclusion, and this case was no exception. He sensed this was a no win situation for him, and therefore, he carefully avoided all town meetings throughout May and June.[95] Only afterwards did he reemerge and with his reputation relatively unscathed. In July he was promptly appointed to a town committee entrusted with the responsibility of preparing a "Declaration" addressed to "Great Britain and all the world," setting forth the town's grievances. A week later he was placed on the newly formed Boston Committee of Safety, "for the purpose of Consulting proper Measures to be adopted for the Common safety, during these Exigencies of our Public Affairs, which may reasonably be expected."[96] Consequently, Hancock secured the best

of all possible situations, remaining both a popular party leader as well as an ally and friend of the merchants. By itself, this was almost a superhuman balancing act.[97] The only penalty exacted from him took the form of a mild chastisement by the radicals who refused to send him to Philadelphia as one of the representatives to the first Continental Congress from Massachusetts.

While the Continental Congress met in late Autumn of 1774, Hancock and all of Massachusetts braced for trouble. British provocations occurred almost daily, causing Hancock to warn his mother away from Boston on one of her infrequent visits to her sons.[98] A handbill circulated among the British troops indicated the trouble. "It being more than probable that the King's Standard will soon be erected from rebellion breaking out in the province, it's proper that you Soldiers, should be acquainted with the authors thereof and of all the misfortunes brought upon this province." After listing the colony's most prominent leaders, including Hancock, the writer suggested that "the instant rebellion happens, that you will put the above persons immediately to the sword, destroy their houses, and plunder their effects."[99]

Hancock wasted no time informing the Governor about this ominous threat upon his life. Gage replied that "he might have a guard" to attend him day and night, "if he chose it." Hancock naturally declined the offer.[100] Meanwhile, the prospects for peace received another setback as the Governor ordered the army to fortify Dorchester Neck as well as prepare the entire town's defenses. Boston began to bristle like an armed camp.[101]

Unmoved by the Governor's display of military preparedness, nor

intimidated by the increasing probability of civil war, Hancock pushed ahead with unprecedented self assuredness. In Sam Adams' absence as a delegate to the Continental Congress, Hancock strained to assert a more powerful role in the province's resistence movement. Sacrificing all semblance of a private life, he threw himself into a seemingly endless round of meetings, conferences, and public activities. All of this was extremely well publicized as Hancock seemed to be everywhere at once.

On October 5th he was in Salem, along with a majority of the recently elected representatives to the General Assembly, all of whom intentionally ignored Gage's order cancelling the session. After waiting a day for the Governor to rescind his order, they declared Gage's proclamation "unconstitutional, unjust and disrespectful to the Province." As a body they then resolved, that since the legal General Assembly would not be held, they would turn themselves into a Provincial Congress.[102] After selecting Hancock their Chairman, he adjourned the meeting until the 11th, when they would reconvene at the court house in Concord.

When they met again a week later, Hancock easily out-maneuvered all others, including Dr. Joseph Warren, who was Sam Adams' hand picked interim successor during his absence, and was formally elected President of the Provincial Congress of Massacushetts.[103] Under his lead, the first positive steps towards providing the colony with a legitimate and effective revolutionary government was begun. Furthermore, the Congress inaugurated plans for insuring the province's defense by the establishment of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. Nine members were appointed, including three from Boston, Hancock, Warren, and Church. Hancock again dominated the proceedings and was elected the committee's

chairman.[104] Finally, after nearly a month of almost continuous sessions, Hancock recessed the Provincial Congress until November 23rd, when he ordered it reconvened in Cambridge, expecting by then that the colony's delegates to the Philadelphia Congress would be home and ready to report.[105]

The hurried tempo of Hancock's activities did not abate with the adjournment of the Provincial Congress. From early November until the very outbreak of fighting, he busied himself with all the minute details and affairs of the Committee of Safety. The responsibilities were prodigious. A proposed army of 15,000 men needed provisions, arms, and powder. Cannon had to be collected and distributed to the units. Military stores had to be purchased and hidden away from the prying eyes of British spies and patrols. Plans also had to be coordinated for calling out the militia in the advent the British army tried to seize their supplies.[106]

Other demands and concerns encroached equally upon Hancock's rapidly dwindling free time. Convinced that war was both inevitable and imminent, Hancock honorably sought to settle his large outstanding debt to George Hayley, his long time English friend and correspondent. At the outset of the year, Hancock's obligation stood at L 11,000 pounds Sterling, while his own business was at a virtual standstill.[107] Yet, before the "Boston Part Act" officially closed the harbor to all trade, Hancock managed to purchase several large shiploads of goods and dispatched them to London where Hayley sold them at good prices. The profits were immediately applied to Hancock's debt. As a result of these efforts, and with his own imports cut to nearly nothing, by the eve of

the Revolution, Hancock's major overseas obligations were erased, with even a slight credit balance existing in his favor.[108]

The herculean efforts Hancock exerted in settling his debts to old friends like Hayley and Harrison were in marked contrast to the intentional neglect he paid to other debts of equally old friends like Harrison Gray, the Provincial Treasurer; John Singleton Copley, his artist neighbor; and even his own cousin, William Bowes.[109] Apparently he rationalized his attitude by making it an extension of the political situation. Since the latter three men were all Tories or Tory sympathizers, Hancock assumed no personal responsibility for settling his accounts with them. This also proved extremely convenient for him because after settling his huge debt to Hayley, Hancock was left with a severe shortage of cash. This problem would remain with him throughout the Revolutionary War.

While Hancock struggled to put his financial affairs in order, the political situation again demanded his attention. On October 23rd, the Provincial Congress reconvened and for nearly three full weeks he was in constant daily attendance as its presiding officer. Among the most pressing issues facing this session of Congress was their consideration of the Continental Congress's resolution for the establishment of an "Association" to end all commercial relations with Great Britain.[110] The plan was quickly studied and adopted; and procedures for enforcing it were ordered established. In Boston, for example, a committee of sixty-three, headed by Hancock, Sam Adams, and Thomas Cushing, as well as including Hancock's brother Ebenezer, was charged with the task of putting the "Association" into effect locally.[111] Meanwhile, in recog-

nition of Hancock's spirited and selfless devotion to American liberties, the Provincial Congress elected him to replace James Bowdoin as one of the province's five delegates to the next session of the Continental Congress in May.[112]

The underlying motives for this change in representatives were undoubtedly more complex than a mere desire to present him with another political garland to add to his already extensive collection. The radicals knew that Hancock's presence in Philadelphia would be extremely beneficial; lending the proceedings there an added measure of needed respectability because of his reputation and long record of public service. Furthermore, since the British authorities already considered him one of the principal architects of rebellion, his attendance in Congress would compel them to take its activities more seriously. Finally, Sam Adams wanted Hancock close by his side where he could keep an eye on him.

During Adams's first brief absence that Fall, Hancock walked off with every important political position established under the auspicies of the Provincial Congress. Adams feared this much concentration of power in any man, but especially in Hancock, whom he distrusted. Nor was he fooled or lulled into a false sense of security, like so many Tories, who ignorantly convinced themselves that Hancock was "weak almost to idiotism, and has been a prey to hypocritical flatters and vultures ever since the Stamp Act."[113] Adams knew better. He saw Hancock as a cunning and dangerously ambitious aspirant, as well as rival, for power. But ultimately he distrusted and feared Hancock's close and continuous relationship with the merchant class, a group Adams considered as threatening to American liberties as the British. For his part,

Hancock was excited by the prospect of visiting Philadelphia, welcoming it as a rare opportunity to perform on a larger and more grandiose political stage.

When the Provincial Congress adjourned on December 10th, at which time Hancock was duly thanked "for his constant attendance and faithful services as President," there was still no relief for him from his hectic schedule. Preparing the colony's defenses was the most serious pressing problem. Colonel Charles Lee's arrival in Boston helped a little. He was one of the few professional soldiers in the American colonies who willingly offered his insights to the Committee of Safety. Frequently in Hancock's exclusive company he toured the town discussing the military situation.[114]

While trying to keep abreast of all his enormous public responsibilities, personal sacrifices were unavoidable. For one, Hancock's anticipated marriage to Dorothy Quincy was indefinitely postponed. She, nevertheless, took up residence in Hancock's Boston home, keeping Aunt Lydia company during his long absences on behalf of the Provincial Congress and Committee of Safety. But the strains of Hancock's demanding duties gradually crept into their relationship. "I am," he explained, "necessitated to abide here to add my mite towards completing Business of the utmost importance." Consequently, he was unable to see her as planned, but promised to "return as soon as possible," and hoped that she would not "be saucy" when he arrived.[115]

Hancock's responsibilities as Treasurer of Harvard College were likewise neglected in the ensuing rush of events. President Samuel Langdon repeatedly expressed an appreciation of Hancock's "patriotic

exertions," which rendered "it difficult for him to attend to college affairs." But with his departure for Philadelphia fast approaching, Langdon was all the more anxious for him to settle the school's accounts now, and leave his papers in the Corporation's hands while at Congress, "otherwise all will be confusion."[116] Insecurity and pride prevented Hancock from accepting this reasonable suggestion. Instead he indignently and defensively replied that he "is not Disposed to look upon it in that Light, nor shall the college suffer any Detriment in his absence."[117] Subsequently, Hancock ignored every request made by the school's overseers that he meet with them, claiming he was too preoccupied with more important matters, which was in part true.

In February 1775, the second Provincial Congress of Massachusetts met in Cambridge. Again representing Boston, Hancock was immediately reelected its President and reappointed to all his previous committee assignments as well as several new ones. As his obvious prominence and importance within the province's revolutionary apparatus grew, the more he was increasingly singled out by the British authorities for unusual forms of harassment and mockery. Aside from the persistent rumors of his planned arrest and deportation to England for trial as a rebel, there were new stories circulating that his property would be confiscated and distributed among the army officers. Soldiers were periodically "sent to insult" him under the "pretense of seeing if his stables would do for barracks." Others entered his property and "refused to retire after he requested them to do so." The Tories delighted in lampooning him for his supposed "ignorance," and ridiculed him as the "milch cow" of Boston.[118]

The cumulative effect of all this was to force Hancock to abandon Boston out of a genuine fear for his safety.[119] He was joined in flight by Sam Adams, who accompanied him to Lexington where they descended on the doorstep of Hancock's cousin, Reverend Jonas Clarke, for a visit of unforeseeable duration. Clarke proved a gracious host, providing them food and lodgings for as long as they wanted. Furthermore, his house was conveniently located; offering them easy access to nearby Concord where the Provincial Congress recently reconvened. In early April, Aunt Lydia and Dolly joined them there as part of the swollen stream of refugees fleeing Boston for the safety of the countryside. This exodus, in part initiated by Hancock and Adams's example, prompted Hancock's proclamation on April 14th as President of the Provincial Congress. "Whereas the numbers of people, from their unhappy situation in the town of Boston, are removing with their effects," Hancock recommended that the people of Massachusetts help them as much as possible on as "easy and cheap terms as they can possibly afford."[120]

These refugees also brought alarming news which convinced Hancock "that very little if any expectation of the redress of our common and intolerable grievances is to be had."[121] Apparently Governor Gage decided to confiscate the province's military stores hidden at Concord as well as seize Hancock and Adams.[122] In response, the Committee of Safety organized an alarm system, whereby the surrounding countryside would be alerted if Gage decided upon a sudden foray. Shortly after midnight, on the morning of April 19th, a messenger from Boston aroused the sleeping Clarke household with news that confirmed Hancock's dismal prediction. British soldiers were at that very moment en route to

Lexington from Boston. With that all further hopes of a negotiated peaceful settlement of American-British differences were ended. Only war remained as the final arbiter.

CHAPTER IX

"A PINNACLE OF FAME"

"As for their King John Hancock
and Adams if they're taken
Their heads for signs shall hang up high
Upon that hill called Beacon"[1]

Paul Revere's sudden alarm, warning that the British troops were only a few hours march behind him, prompted Hancock to order the town's bell rung immediately. In response, a partially armed collection of townsmen and local farmers gathered quickly on the Lexington common and waited. Meanwhile, Hancock, spurred on by romantic images of war and his own heroics, as well as a manly desire to impress his future wife - whose reciprocal feelings were suspect - spent the rest of the night preoccupied with military posturing. He laboriously cleaned and recleaned his gun and sword, and occasionally patrolled the common, offering encouragement to the shivering company of men formed there to bar the British army's path to Concord.

Only after long hours of incessant pressure from both Reverend Clarke and Sam Adams did Hancock reluctantly agree to flee. But not before Adams clapped him on the back and exclaimed that fighting "is not our business, we belong to the cabinet."[2] He came to his senses just in time. Barely ten minutes before the British actually arrived, he and Adams, along with a sergeant of the militia as their guide, Paul Revere, and Hancock's secretary, John Lowell, all climbed aboard Hancock's carriage and rode off in the direction of Woburn.[3] Somewhat embarrassed about his hasty departure, Hancock left swearing aloud that "if I had my musket, I would never turn my back on those troops." A few

hundred yards out of town, Hancock suddenly remembered leaving behind an important trunk full of letters related to the Provincial Congress. Lowell and Revere were dispatched to retrieve it while the rest of the party pushed on towards safety.[4]

Much of Hancock's confusion and indecision that day and in the following weeks was in part related to his shaky relationship with Dorothy Quincy. He was very much attracted to her and increasingly dependent upon her for any little sign or indication of her mutual affection; she less so of him. What held them together was Hancock's aunt Lydia, who was promoting the match as was Dolly's father Edmund Quincy. Meanwhile, Hancock was trying to impress her in his own way. Consequently, as soon as he safely arrived at Reverend Jones's house in Woburn, he dispatched a hurried note to the two ladies left stranded in Lexington, revealing his whereabouts and urging them to come over quickly by carriage. Then with a complete insensitivity to the importance of that morning's events, or merely as an intentional attempt to appear heroicly self controlled, Hancock suggested they bring along "the fine salmon thay had had sent to them for dinner."[5]

Later in the afternoon they were reunited. Just as they were about to sit down to enjoy their freshly cooked salmon, having first listened to Dolly's eyewitness account of the fighting at Lexington, another messenger arrived warning that the British were returning again. This time, without prompting, Hancock and Adams took to the swamp and hid until the alarm was over. Upon emerging from their hiding place, new plans were set for all of them to ride over to Billerica in the morning; but not before the tensions and stresses of the day boiled over into

a heated clash of wills between Hancock and Dolly. She insisted on leaving him in order to return to her father. Hancock vehemently objected. "No madam," he insisted, "you shall not return as long as there is a British bayonet left in Boston." She, nevertheless, remained equally adament. "Recollect Mr. Hancock," she reminded him, "I am not under your control yet. I shall go into my father tomorrow." Years later as an old woman, Dorothy Quincy Hancock Scott recalled this episode, and wistfully noted "I should have been very glad to have got rid of him," but Aunt Lydia was determined that this "would not happen."[6]

Hancock was a far less effective influence upon Dolly than was his Aunt who mediated a compromise. It was agreed that the party should split up. While Hancock and Adams slowly made their way to Worcester, in preparation for their approaching trek to Philadelphia, Lydia and Dolly headed for Point Shirley, seeking news of Edmund Quincy's whereabouts. After several fruitless days of aimless wandering around the Massachusetts countryside, the two women abandoned their effort to enter Boston, which was rapidly converting into a beseiged Tory outpost. Instead, they turned west and also made their way to Worcester where they again met up with Hancock and Adams, who finally surfaced there on the 24th of April.[7]

If he was relieved to see Dolly, his thoughts quickly turned to other more pressing concerns. For nearly a week, since his flight from Lexington, Hancock was out of touch with recent events and disturbed over his own uncomfortable circumstances. "Mr Adams & myself just arrived here & find no intellegance from you & no Guard...What are we to depend upon, we travel rather as Deserters which I will not submit to," he informed

the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. If something was not done promptly to rectify the situation, Hancock threatened, "I will return & join you if I cannot travel in Reputation."[8]

Personal pettiness aside, Hancock also wanted more accurate information. In the same letter to the Committee of Safety he requested, "Depositions of the Conduct of the Troops, the certainty of their firing first, & every Circumstance relative to the conduct of the troops from the 19th instant to this time that we may be able to give some Account of matters as we proceed & especially at Philadelphia." Furthermore, he had some military suggestions of his own to offer. "Boston," he insisted, "must be entered," and the British troops there "sent away." Our friends are valuable, he conceeded, "but our Country must be saved." Even though he had a personal interest in Boston, "what can be the Enjoyment of that to me if I am obliged to hold it at the Will of Genl Gage or any one else." Therefore, he concluded, "we must have the Castle," and the harbor blocked "against large vessels coming" into it.[9]

Over the course of the next few days a clearer picture of the military situation gradually emerged. He learned of the British army's costly retreat from Concord and of the swelling ranks of Massachusetts militiamen now laying seige to the British and their Tory sympathizers in and around Boston. Meanwhile, preparations for his and Sam Adams's departure for Philadelphia continued, while Hancock busied himself with a lengthy correspondence with the Massachusetts Committee of Safety; making recommendations of friends and associates for appointments in the Massachusetts army and trying to secure needed paper in order that Isaiah Thomas could resume printing his newspaper in Worcester.[10] A

few last minute personal matters were also settled, including turning his business affairs over to a former employee, William Bant.[11] Finally everything was concluded and Hancock, along with his Aunt Lydia, Dolly, Sam Adams, and Robert Treat Paine, who recently joined them, all set out for Connecticut, en route to the Continental Congress.

Hancock escorted Lydia and Dolly only as far as Fairfield, Connecticut, where he left them in the care of Thaddeus Burr, a distant cousin of his. He then proceeded on to Hartford for a brief conference with the colony's leaders, including Governor Trumbull. Here a plan was hastily "concerted" for seizing the two British forts at Crown Point and Ticonderoga.[12] John Adams joined him there on the following day, and after Cushing's arrival completed the delegation's composition, the entire party set out together for New York, the next step in their long journey.

From Hartford south, wherever Hancock and his fellow delegates went, large enthusiastic crowds gathered to greet them and hear first hand accounts of the fighting in Massachusetts. The public was so overwhelmingly responsive, that the delegation's mere presence spurred a rush of volunteers streaming towards Boston to aid in the seige of the town. By far the most tumultuous reception was the one they received in New York. Hancock's vivid description of it in a letter to Dolly, indicated just how much he was enjoying this exhilarating experience; convinced that much of it was exclusively meant for him.

> "I Dined and then Set out in the Procession for New York, the carriage of your humble servant, of course, being first in the Procession. When we Arriv'd within three miles of the City we were met by the Grenadier Company and Regiment of the City Militia under Arms, Gentlemen in Carriages and on

> Horseback, and many thousands of Persons on Feet; the roads fill'd with people and the Greatest Cloud of Dust I ever saw. In this Situation we Enter'd the City...amidst the Acclamation of Thousands...When I Got within a mile of the City, my Carriage was stopt, and Persons...insisted upon Taking out my Horses and Dragging me into and through the City, a Circumstance I would not have Taken place...not being fond of such Parade...but when I got to the Entrance of the City and the Numbers of Spectators increas'd to perhaps seven Thousand or more, they Declar'd they would... Drag me themselves, thro' the City...I was much Oblig'd to them for their good wishes and Opinion; in short, no Person could possibly be more Notic'd than myself."[13]

Nevertheless, Hancock was "fatigu'd" by his long trip and New York's boisterous reception. One observer recalled that he appeared "as if his journey and high living, or solicitude to support the dignity of the first man in Massachusetts, had impaired his health."[14] In truth, Hancock was not feeling well. In his letter to Dolly, he explained that his "poor Face and Eyes" were "in a most Shocking Situation, burnt and much Swell'd and a little painful;" the cumulative effect of this arduous journey upon his delicate constitution. Consequently, a few days' rest was in order, as he begged Dolly to "write lengthy and often," especially with news of her father and "every Circumstance Relative" to his dear Aunt Lydia.[15] But two days was all the rest Hancock enjoyed in New York, as the delegation prepared for what he hoped would be the final leg of this tiring trek which began only nine days less than a month earlier in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Still, all things considered, the cheering crowds, the bands, the ringing bells, and the colorful military units that lined his route from Hartford to New York, and then again across New Jersey to Philadelphia, were probably the most satisfying rewards he ever received, or wanted, during his entire public life. In that sense his critics were

right. Hancock thrived on adulation, praise, and the illusion that popularity was equivalent to virtue and competence. Naturally, this myopic condition distorted his perceptions and allowed him to maintain an inflated vision of his own importance, as well as obscuring the tremendous difficulties that lay ahead if the American colonies were to succeed in their armed struggle with Great Britain. Of course, Hancock was committed to their success. His property, position, and even his very life hung in the balance. Yet his lack of vision, his petty political rivalries with members of his own delegation, and his self interested desire to boost his own importance frequently combined to produce a pattern of behavior that was consistent with his earlier conduct. That is, he continued to reflect, but rarely influenced popular sentiment. Consequently his contributions as a revolutionary political leader tended to be more circumstantial than deliberate. Nevertheless he made numerous and significant contributions to the revolution's eventual success and perhaps others that were never properly credited to him.

On the outskirts of Philadelphia, the Massachusetts delegation, joined by representatives from Connecticut and New York, met with an all too familiar sight. A body of some three hundred horsemen waited to escort their caravan of coaches the last five miles into the city and deposited them at the famous City Tavern of Philadelphia. From there the Massachusetts delegates individually made their way over to Mrs. Yard's boarding house where they dined and unpacked for their as yet indeterminate stay.

That same evening they met at Carpenter's Hall with all their fellow delegates for the opening session of the second Continental Congress.

Peyton Randolph and Charles Thompson of Philadelphia were re-elected President and Secretary respectively. Following the presentation of each delegation's credentials, Hancock, acting as Massachusett's unofficial spokesman, laid before the Congress a letter from the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, along with various other resolves, letters, depositions, and documents. With that, he in effect established the basis for the entire session's forthcoming debate. Since Massachusetts was already determined to raise an army and resist Great Britain, the question was, could they count on the full support and co-operation of their sister colonies, "so far as it shall appear necessary for supporting the common cause of the American colonies."[16] Securing their support was the immediate task confronting Hancock and his fellow Massachusetts representatives.

The opening of this session of the Congress found Massachusett's delegates more united in their common objective than they would ever be again. But precisely for that reason they aroused deep suspicion among other more moderate delegations. In composition, this Congress was not unlike the first. Ture, there were some differences in personalities. Hancock of course was new, as were Benjamin Franklin and James Wilson of Pennsylvania; five new faces were added to the New York delegation; and even a representative from Georgia arrived, marking that distant colony's first appearance at these proceedings. But for the most part those present, including Richard Henry Lee, George Washington, Silas Deane, Ceasar Rodney, and John Dickinson to name only a few, were veterans; returning with basically the same attitudes and positions they held at the previous congress.[17] These views broke down into two opposing groups.

One consisting of moderates still hoping to negotiate a peaceful resolution of America's grievances with England, and two, those convinced that only war would resolve the differences.

The latter, more radical group, was initially dominated by an informal working alliance between the Massachusetts and Virginia delegates, centered upon the close personal relationship existing between the Adamses and the Lees that pre-dated the Boston Tea Party.[18] Together they pressed for Congress to adopt a stronger military posture. In time they would also be the first to encourage a declaration of independence and the formation of foreign alliances.

In opposition stood the moderates, initially headed by John Dickinson and supported by various cliques of merchants and southern planter interests. They insisted on making yet another peaceful overture to the King and meanwhile opposed the adoption of any excessively provocative warlike measures that would endanger a peaceful settlement.[19] Hancock's sympathies were mainly with the radicals, but his mercantile background, his aristocratic bearing, and his generally affable manner encouraged moderates to hope that he could be secured more closely to their position, in spite of his Massachusetts origins and radical connections. Furthermore, a distinctly favorable impression of Hancock preceded his arrival in Philadelphia. A typical view was that voiced by Elihu Hewes of Massachusetts in a letter to his brother Joseph Hewes, who represented North Carolina in the Congress but was personally unfamiliar with Hancock.

> "You'l have an opportunity of an Acquaintance with Colo: John Hancock who is the Superior Man our Province affords. I have had an opportunity to Eye him from the Moment his Uncle

left the World and Him invested with an Independent Fortune. His whole time since has been spent in a Round of Benevolent Acts, and Opposing the Enemies of his Country. I hope you'l contract an Intimacy with him, my Indigent Circumstances only has kept me from an intimate Acquaintance with him for he was Accessible to the Poorest as well as the Rich."[20]

General Gage conveniently enhanced Hancock's reputation even more by his June 1775 act of proscription. "In His Majesty's Name," Gage offered a "Most gracious pardon to all persons who shall forthwith lay down their arms, and return to their duties," except for Hancock and Sam Adams. Their offences were deemed "too flagitous a nature to admit of any other consideration than that of condign punishment."[21] Yet, this final backhanded compliment to Hancock's patriotism was unnecessary. He already possessed sufficient appeal in Congress, as each group perceived him as sympathetic to their position, that when Peyton Randolph was suddenly recalled home to Virginia, Hancock was everybody's unanimous choice to succeed him as President. He was "thereby thrust toward a pinnacle of fame that is peculiarly his own."[22]

Hancock assumed his new duties with as little knowledge of what was expected of him as any man present. For a precedent, the only available example was that of Peyton Randolph, but under his tenure the President's functions were severely narrow. Aside from serving as the Congress's presiding officer, a task not much unlike that of a moderator at a town meeting, the President was also responsible for looking after certain official correspondence. But on his own, the President possessed no independent executive authority, and although he was allowed to participate in the formal debates, he customarily declined to take advantage of this privilege.

Inspite of all these shortcomings, for obvious reasons the office was a prized political plum, instantly making its occupant an international figure and celebrated personality. Hancock obviously relished his election, so much so that he shocked many people by refusing to relinquish the chair upon Peyton Randolph's return to Congress later that Fall. Some of Hancock's colleagues from Massachusetts, who initially advocated his selection, were now outraged by his conduct. John Adams went so far as to inform James Warren, Hancock's successor as President of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, that "Mr. Randolph our former President is here and sits very humbly in his seat, while our new one continues in the chair, without Seeming to feel the Impropriety."[24]

The rancor surfacing among the Massachusetts delegates, however, was not really related to Hancock's refusal to surrender the President's chair. His claim to it was really beyond reproach since he was unanimously elected to the post by the entire Congress and he had every right to continue on as their presiding officer. What was at issue was a fundamentally different outlook regarding Congress's future course of action, and the radicals' perception that Hancock was deserting their cause.

As President, Hancock's natural fence straddling tendencies were inadvertantly put to a good purpose. His years of experience as moderator of the raucous Boston town meetings were now applied to the Congress where a bewildering array of diverse factions, cliques, and interest groups formed and reformed around every issue raised before the Congress, regardless of its immediate relevance. A late arrival, Henry Laurens of South Carolina, quickly sized up the situation and discovered that there

were "parties within parties" and "divisions and subdivisions" permeating throughout the Congress.[25] Thomas Burke found that a "great part of our time is consumed in debates, whose object on one side is to increase the power of Congress, and on the other side to restrain it." But to complicate matters even more, he noted that "the advocates do not always keep the same side of the contest."[26] Hancock's constant attempt at mediation and compromise proved a physically tiring and equally thankless task, requiring all the tact, diplomacy, and patience he could muster. "In short, from my Scituation in Congress," Hancock conceeded, "I have great Duty to Do," and he promised to "perservere even to the Destruction of my Constitution."[27]

Inevitably he was caught in the middle of these factious disputes and found no way he could possibly satisfy everyone's expectations. To his credit, he managed to placate some. Only two days after assuming his Presidential duties, a compromise series of resolves were adopted calling for additional military preparedness as well as the drafting of a new petition addressed directly to the King.[28]

In the weeks that followed, however, his radical colleagues, particularly those in his own delegation, grew increasingly suspicious and jealous of his relationship with the moderates. John Adams fretted over the fact that Hancock received more news from home than he did.[29] He resented John Dickinson's obviously seductive overtures in support of his "Olive Branch Petition," fearing that he "had made no small impression on three" men in his own delegation, namely Hancock, Cushing, and Paine.[30] Finally it was galling to hear moderates like Benjamin Harrison of Virginia sing Hancock's praises. In a letter to George Washington

Harrison declared, "I do not know what to think of these men, they seem exceeding hearty in the Cause, but still wish to keep everything among themselves. Our President is quite of a different Cast, Noble, Disinterested, and Generous to a very great Degree."[31]

Still, a breach was unavoidable. The issue which drove a final wedge between Hancock and the Adamses was over the selection of a Commander in Chief for the Continental Army. The problem arose as a result of Massachusett's May 16th request for Congress's assistance and guidance on two urgent matters. The first was related to the establishment of legitimate civil authority in the province now that the British administration stood repudiated. The second question was would the Congress assume full responsibility for the "regulation and general direction" of the army forming about Boston so that its "operations may more effectually answer the purposes designed."[32]

The answer was not long in coming. Thanks to Hancock and Cushing's rapport with the moderates, and the Adamses influence among the radicals, Congress responded favorably to both requests, although perhaps less strongly than the radicals hoped. On the first question, the moderates held away. Congress suggested that the Massachusetts Provincial Congress call for an assembly of elected representatives who would in turn elect members of the Governor's Council. Together they would abide by the provincial charter and jointly exercise the powers of government, "until a Governor, of his Majesty's appointment, will consent to govern the colony according to its charter."[33] This was less than either of the Adamses wanted, but satisfied Hancock and Cushing who opposed any major deviation or departure from the Province's

traditional mode of government.

The radicals were encouraged more by Congress's responses to the second question. Beginning on June 10th and continuing on a daily basis for over a week, Congress increasingly assumed wider and direct responsibility over all aspects of the "American Army" beseiging Boston. Orders for manufacturing gunpowder, plans for financing the struggle, directives for raising additional military units, and salaries, rules and regulations for governing the army were argued, drafted, adopted, and issued in the name of the Continental Congress and endorsed by President Hancock. Behind the scenes another struggle developed regarding the selection of a commanding officer and his subordinates.[34]

Hancock clearly believed he deserved this highest honor and his claim was not without merit. Even his opponents later conceded as much. Years afterwards, John Adams recalled that "to the compliment," Hancock "had some pretensions, for at the time, his exertions, sacrifices, and general merits in the cause of his country had been incomparably greater than those of Colonel Washington." Continuing in this reflective mood, Adams also recalled that it was Hancock's "delicacy of his health, and his entire want of experience in actual service, though an excellent militia officer," which were the "decisive objections" to his appointment.[35]

Actually, John and Sam Adams hoped to block Hancock's military aspirations regardless of his health or experience. Under no circumstance did they plan to support his candidacy and were in fact working hard to secure the position for George Washington of Virginia behind Hancock's back. Their reasons were both political and personal. Po-

litically Washington's nomination as Commander in Chief was designed to appease and placate the southern delegates who resented and feared Massachusett's dominating influence within the Congress. Personally it was a calculated slap at Hancock's independence and vanity as well as an attempt to lessen his future political importance, something they both secretly dreaded. Finally, John Adams's detailed description of Hancock's shocked reaction to Washington's unexpected nomination suggests an added element of cruel personal delight in observing Hancock's embarrassment.

> "Mr. Hancock, who was our President, which gave me an opportunity to observe his Countenance, while I was speaking on the State of the Colonies, the Army at Cambridge and the Enemy, heard me with visible pleasure, but when I came to describe Washington for the Commander, I never remarked a more sudden and sinking change of Countenance. Mortification and resentment were expressed as forcibly as his Face could exhibit them. Mr. Samuel Adams Seconded the Motion, and that did not soften the President's Phisiognomy at all."[36]

Hancock never fully recovered from this disappointment, nor did he ever completely forgive or trust the Adamses again for their underhanded role in this devious humiliating surprise. What upset him the most was their intentional failure to consult beforehand and warn him of their plan. Their lack of faith in him was a bitter blow to Hancock's already low basic sense of insecurity and put him on guard against them from that instant on. Not surprisingly, John Adams recounted, again later in life, Hancock "never loved me so well after this event as he had done before and he made me feel at times the Effects of his resentment and of his Jealousy in many ways and at diverse times, as long as he lived."[37] Hancock sufficiently recovered his own poise, however, in order to write a warm letter of introduction on Washington's behalf

to his colleagues and friends in Massachusetts. There was no personal resentment on his part against Washington, who he described as a "fine man" and "a Gentleman you will all like." He also suggested they greet him with a warm reception upon his arrival, and "Pray do him every honour." He concluded by suggesting that they "have his commission read at the head of the whole Forces."[38]

The rupture within the Massachusetts delegation, occasioned by Washington's nomination, propelled Hancock closer into the waiting arms of the Congressional moderates. Both philosophically and socially he found them more congenial, sympathetic, and appreciative of his temperate views and moderating efforts than his own Massachusetts colleagues, with the single exception of Thomas Cushing. These two former "merchants" repeatedly discovered that they shared a common opposition to the radicals both in Congress and at home in Massachusetts.

In their overall objectives, the radicals and moderates were actually united. Both wanted to preserve and defend American liberties. The difference was over the best means to achieve this goal. The radicals favored a hearty prosecution of the war, the use of Congressional authority to help draft new constitutions for the provinces that would eliminate royal authority, forging foreign alliances with other nations, and urging the formation of a Confederation among the various colonies.[39] The moderates hoped to preserve their colony's basic social and political structure which these innovations threatened to undermine. Consequently, Hancock also began paying more careful attention to the political situation back home, fearing an attempt would soon be made to adversely effect his influence and authority there. The appointment of

James Warren, an intimate associate of the Adamses, as Paymaster General of the Army, and Cushing's election defeat as representative from Boston, confirmed his suspicions. He was only somewhat relieved to learn in late July of his and Cushing's subsequent appointment to the Governor's Council. But to further strengthen his political connections, Hancock requested all his friends and relatives to "write him of all the affairs" so that he might keep in closer touch with events at home.[40] Increasingly his differences with the radicals in Congress mirrored the internal political struggle occurring simultaneously in Massachusetts between moderates and radicals.

But the most far reaching consequence of Hancock's feud with the Adamses and his thwarted military ambitions - his request to serve in the army under Washington was politely but firmly refused - was his subsequent attempt to increase the prestige and importance of his duties as President of the Congress.[41] This intentional effort on his part released an heretofore untapped source of supressed energy. Suddenly Hancock began devoting every waking moment to his duties, as meager as they initially were. Yet, by dint of hard work, personal commitment, and his egocentric personality, gradually an added measure of status was instilled into the office, although much of it remained purely of a symbolic nature. Still, its long term effect was important, as the Presidency began a slow evolutionary process that ultimately culminated in its emergence as an independent executive branch of government in the future federal republic.

Again, it should be clearly noted that Hancock's objectives were largely personal, somewhat selfish, and mainly pragmatic; and certainly

not based on any philosophical or ideological set of principles. He correctly perceived that his continued prominence in Congress directly and positively improved his good standing and potential influence at home in Massachusetts internal politics. Furthermore, he saw himself as next in line as a potential successor or replacement to Washington in the event he should stumble or fall. His intentional efforts to enhance the Presidential office were therefore both selfserving as well as historically important.

Following Washington's departure for Boston, where he planned to assume command of the American army after the recent bloody engagement at Bunker Hill, Hancock began to redefine his Presidential responsibilities. "It is my duty," he announced in July, "to see every Resolve of Congress executed."[42] This unauthorized interpretation of his authority, however, was unsupported by any supplementary grant of power of enforcement. Consequently, the best he could do was to become a prodigious letter writer as he hoped to persuade the colonial assemblies to voluntarily comply with Congress's resolves on the strength of his own personality. His record of achievement in this regard was mixed, nevertheless, his efforts created the appearance that the President was the official spokeman for the entire Congress. His efforts were generally respected.

Hancock also took a sincere enjoyment in the performance of his duties. He willingly attended the endless hours of debate without complaint, as he familiarized himself with everyone's particular view and opinion. He exhausted himself each night by staying up late signing military commissions and drafting Congress's official correspondence.

As all letters to and from state officials and military officers passed through his office, where he either presented them to the Congress or assigned it to one of the special or standing committees, he was perhaps more familiar with Congress's intimate affairs than anyone else.[43] Yet he rarely used his extensive knowledge and position to influence or effect policy decisions. Instead he sought to remain aloof enjoying the trappings of power without risking an open confrontation or conflict with any particular interest group. The one exception to this was with the members of his own delegation, but even there an effort was made to keep their rivalry a secret.

Still, these submerged tensions had an effect. His exhausting work load, the feud with his former friends and allies, and a sense of isolation from home all combined to produce in him an increased emotional dependence upon Dorothy Quincy. But his frustrations were in no way relieved because of her infrequent and haphazard responses to his constant stream of love letters. By June, his patience with her was wearing thin.

> "My dear Dolly: I am almost prevail'd on to think that my letters to my Aunt & you are not read, for I cannot obtain a reply, I have ask'd million questions & not an answer to one, I beg'd you to let me know what things my Aunt wanted & you, and many other matters I wanted to know, but not one word in answer. I really Take it extreme unkind, pray my dear use not so much ceremony & reservations, why can't you use freedom in writing, be not afraid of me, I want long letters. I will forgive the past if you will mend in the future."[44]

Dolly's negligence was in part a reaction to the presence of Aaron Burr, who unexpectedly visited his uncle's home in Fairfield only a few weeks after Dolly and Aunt Lydia's arrival. Burr was also reputedly something of a ladies' man and Dolly was intrigued with him. Even

Burr's uncle observed his nephew's strange effect upon Miss Quincy, commenting that "if Mr. H. was out of the way I don't know but she would court him."[45] Dolly remembered it differently. "Aaron was very attracted to her," but Aunt Lydia, alert to the situation, did everything to prevent them from being alone together, "lest he should gain her affections, and defeat her purpose of connecting her with her nephew."[46] Hancock knew nothing of all this.

When Congress adjourned for the month of August, Hancock set out for home, but was still troubled by Dolly's continuous inability to write a satisfactory letter. "Pray write me one long letter, fill the whole paper, you can do it," he encouraged her, "if you only set about it."[47] His brief stay in Massachusetts, where he helped deliver badly needed funds to Washington's army, was marred by recurring attacks of gout and eye trouble. In spite of his discomfort, Hancock cut short his visit home in order to spend more time with Dolly on the return leg of his trek back to Philadelphia. Upon arriving in Fairfield, Connecticut, he was surprised by, yet responsive to, Aunt Lydia's insistent demand that he marry Dolly at once. Obediently and with a minimum of fanfare or fuss they were married on August 28, 1775; and shortly after the ceremony they set off together by carriage for Philadelphia where the Congress was about to reconvene.

Hancock's father-in-law, Edmund Quincy, although unable to attend his daughter's spur of the moment wedding, was both delighted and relieved. Now, he hoped, "the virulent tongues of certain persons far and near, which used to give themselves a Latitude with nothing better than Malice and Envy could have led them into," would be silenced.[48]

Many others regarded Hancock's decision to marry when he did, while his and his country's future seemed so uncertain, as a patriotic act of defiance, clearly demonstrating his faith in his country's ultimate success. These considerations were well beyond Hancock's immediate objectives. Instead, he was just plain relieved that his loneliness in Philadelphia and his insecurities regarding his relationship with Dolly were alleviated.

When Congress resumed its deliberations in September, Hancock was in high spirits. To accommodate his family, now grown to include Dolly, several servants, and a secretary, he rented "a large and roomy house," located "in an airy, open part of the city," near Arch and Fourth streets. His preference for an active social life, plus the ability to afford one, led him to turn his home into Congress's principal social center.[49] Visitors to Congress were regularly invited and later expected to pay a courtesy call on the President at his home, thus giving concrete evidence of his slightly superior status among his fellow representatives. In time he monopolized other ceremonial functions. Socially he became recognized as the first member of Congress and assumed responsibility for receiving guests and extending official hospitality.[50] When he was publicly insulted by a disgruntled soldier, a long debate in Congress ensued, whereby the offender was eventually ordered to appear in person and apologize to the President.[51]

Outwardly, Dorothy Hancock graciously assumed her social responsibilities as the President's wife; but living with and entertaining the nearly one hundred men connected with the Congress was a difficult task to suddenly assign an inexperienced bride. Nevertheless, she tried hard

to live and behave "with Modesty, Decency and Discretion." Her personal conduct "is easy and genteel." Furthermore, "she avoids talking upon Politicks," and in large and mixed company, "she is totally silent, as a Lady ought to be."[52] But in private she was much less comfortable with her situation that John Adams's favorable description implied. Later she would admit that she never liked Philadelphia very much, although she possessed a few good friends among the Quakers. The most vexing part of her work, however, was that forced on her by her husband's ambitions and duties. For months after their wedding, she and Hancock spent their evenings engaged with scissors as they trimmed the rough edges off the bills of credit printed by Congress. After each one was properly cut and signed by the President, they packed them up in bundles and shipped them off to the military in order that the army might meet its enormous expenses.[53] Eventually the Congress authorized Hancock to hire additional secretarial help, but not until after Hancock admitted that his wife was "not very well."[54] Yet, whatever problems and disappointments Dolly Hancock experienced as the wife of an ambitious politician, she was for the most part a silent sufferer. Their marriage may have lacked warmth, intimacy, and even love, but to all external appearances they seemed a happy and affectionate couple.[55]

Meanwhile, Hancock consistently sought new ways and means to extend his presidential influence without endangering his popularity. It was a tightrope he walked many times before. In Congress he managed to maintain his delicate balance by simultaneously endorsing contradictory positions. For example, he supported John Dickinson's Olive Branch petition while voting in favor of a proposed American invasion of Canada. When

the King rejected this last American peace overture in the Fall, Hancock was all set to patriotically declare that General Montgomery's seizure of St. Johns and Montreal cannot fail "in preserving that Liberty" that a "corrupt Parliament intended to annihilate in America."[56]

By then Hancock was a fervently outspoken advocate of strong military measures directed against the British. Beside praising General Montgomery's actions and encouraging him not to resign his commission, he also supported Congress's directive to General Washington. In it Congress ordered the General to "destroy the (British) Army and Navy at Boston in any way He and a Council of War shall think best, even if the Town must be burnt."[57] Hancock personally reaffirmed these views in a private note to Washington, wishing that God may "Crown your attempt with success," even "thou' individually I may be the greatest sufferer."[58] In spite of these statements of support for military action, which so pleased the radicals, Hancock carefully hung back from endorsing their equally insistent cries for an immediate declaration of American independence. This satisfied the moderates who still regarded Hancock as one of them. Only his radical cohorts from Massachusetts were disgusted with his conduct, as they whispered behind his back about his vanity, ambitions, and insincerity.

On balance, however, Hancock's chameleon-like ability to blend in with each contending party was an extremely beneficial attribute for the presiding officer in this badly divided, slow moving congress. In return he earned genuine respect and sincere applause from his colleagues who respected his diligent efforts, gracious manners, and moderating influences. The only dissenting voices came from John and especially

Sam Adams. The basis of their hostility sprang from their insightful realization that political domination in Massachusetts's post colonial government would eventually produce a power struggle between themselves and Hancock. Consequently, they rued their original support for him as President, which now came back to haunt them. They regretted elevating Hancock to a position from which he was likely to help himself politically back home.

Sensing Hancock's invulnerability to attack from within the Congress, where he got along so well with everyone, the Adamses decided to probe his unguarded rear. Their twin goals were to weaken his basis of support at home and further isolate him within the Massachusetts Congressional delegation. To achieve these ends, they sought to defeat Thomas Cushing, Hancock's political friend and ally, by denying him reelection as a delegate to next year's session of Congress. The issues they chose to assault him on were his resistance to declare openly in favor of immediate American independence and his conservative views regarding the Massachusetts Militia Act, a domestic but important political issue in Massachusetts. It was no coincidence that Cushing's views on both issues were almost identical with Hancock's. In a nutshell, the militia controversy revealed for the first time a deep and enduring division within Massachusetts's popular party. Radicals and reformers, primarily from the western counties along with some support from radical elements in Boston, dominated the Assembly, while an eastern bloc of moderates and conservatives controlled the Governor's Council. Each claimed sole authority to name the province's militia officers based on conflicting interpretations of resolutions issued by the Continental Congress. One

resolution authorized "assemblies" to appoint militia officers, while in another one Congress told Massachusetts to abide by its traditional charter. This meant that in the Governor's absence, his prerogative powers devolved into the Council's hands, including the right to appoint officers. By itself this was a minor issue, but the principle was important. For what was at stake were two opposing and hostile views of legitimate authority; by which one group demanded change and reform while the other sought to preserve the province's traditional form of government.[59]

To help resolve the impass, the Council sought the advice and views of the province's delegation to Congress, knowing full well they could rely on Cushing's support, probably Hancock's and even the Congress's. For the same reasons the Adamses were apprehensive. As expected, after "frequent Consultations with my Colleagues," John Adams reported that the delegates from Massachusetts "are not unanimous." Consequently, he and Sam Adams both offered their own separate opinions in support of the Assembly's position.[60] Hancock was put on the defensive and simultaneously difficult position of trying to avoid antagonizing either party. He and Cushing, writing together, stalled for more time. They informed the Council that they would seek Congress's opinion directly rather than offer their own personal views, but as they were currently preoccupied with more urgent matters, they had not yet the opportunity to do so.[61]

Within a week, however, Hancock's fast thinking resulted in a reasonable solution to his dilemma. Again acting in tandem with Cushing, they both informed the Council that the informal sentiment within the Congress was that the Council was justified in its claim. Yet, because of the need for a quick settlement of the issue, Hancock pragmatically

suggested that the Council should "gratify" the House in this instance, "but not by any Means any further deviate from the Charter" in the future.[62] His advice was accepted and the Council finally allowed the House the privilege of appointing the militia officers, retaining only a veto power over their selections.

Although the immediate issue was settled amicably, the principle involved remained unresolved. By exploiting this and the Assembly's unsatisfied reformist impulse, the Adamses pressed their case against Cushing; stressing his continued resistence to independence and his opposition to the House in the militia controversy. Writing to his friends in Massachusetts, John Adams repeatedly complained that Cushing was out of step and a hindrance. "I could not get him to agree with the rest of us...nor could I get him to say what opinion he would give." Lastly and most bitterly, Adams argued that, "it is very hard to be linked and yoked eternally with people, who have either no opinions, or opposite opinions."[63] Sam Adams was no less unkind in his written assaults against Cushing, who he claimed "has no doubt a right to speak his opinion when ever he can form one."[64] But either of the Adamses could just as easily have substituted Hancock's name for Cushing, for their intent was the same, only Cushing was the more vulnerable.

In December, their combined attack finally paid a dividend as the Massachusetts General Court voted to replace Cushing with Elbridge Gerry. Prior to the official vote, James Warren, the Speaker of the House, predicted its outcome. "It gives me great pleasure," he notified John Adams, "to see the credit and reputation of my two particular friends increasing here," while "a certain colleague of yours has lost, or I am mis-

taken, a great part of the interest he undeservedly had."[65] After Cushing's defeat was confirmed, Warren sarcastically declared that his "absence could no longer be dispensed with! the important post he holds in the County of Suffolk requiring his Attendence may be the Reason."[66]

Hancock knew the real motive behind Cushing's defeat. His earlier suspicions of an effort to undermine his position by attacking him at home and by defeating his friends was confirmed by Cushing's second election defeat in six months. It was apparent that the Adams-Warren faction possessed the upper hand politically in Massachusetts. But Hancock was not ready to surrender to them without a struggle. He immediately moved to shore up his own position.

In a series of warm overtures to Cushing, Hancock first offered his consolations. "Altho' some would gladly have it thought that you are totally deserted, by no means, My Good Friend, let the circumstances of the Election discourage you from the noble pursuit in which you are engaged."[67] This was followed by more concrete proposals.

> "I shall Look on you as a stated friendly Correspondent, I make offers of sincere Attachment and Friendship to you, and wish for a Return of yours, and you may Rely on every Service in my power, and that I am totally undisguis'd, and beg that our friendly correspondence may continue, I will give you every thing from hence, both in and Out of Doors, that I consistently can, and pray write me every Occurance with you, by every Post, omitt no Opportunity."[68]

The fruits of their understanding were soon apparent as Cushing returned to Massachusetts and assumed his seat on the Governor's Council. His instructions from Hancock were precise. "I am oblig'd to you for the hints you give respecting the Designs of some against me, and wish in your next (you) would be as particular as possible, and let me know

everything passing in your quarter."[69] Fully convinced that the threats against him were serious, Hancock strove for the first time to use his accumulated influence and authority as President of the Congress to assist his friends and allies, punish his foes, and generally increase his popularity at home. He designated Cushing as his personal representative and agent on the scene.

To strengthen Cushing's hand, Hancock used his position on the newly formed Congressional Marine Committee to appoint his friend to the important task of overseeing the construction of two warships slated to be built in Massachusetts for the Continental Navy.[70] "By all means, let ours be as good, handsome, strong, and as early completed, as any... for your Reputation and mine are at stake, and there are not wanting those who are fond of prejudicing both," Hancock warned Cushing.[71] Again his prediction was correct, as John Adams complained that Hancock "became ambitious of stealing the glory of it-of the naval armament."[72] But Hancock had more practical goals in mind beyond accumulating "glory". As a personal favor of Cushing, he asked that "if there be anything in the way of these Ships that would be Serviceable and Agreeable to my Brother...I shall be Glad you will give him the preference, in this, or in any other thing from the Council or House that you could serve my Brother in, I shall Take it as a very particular favour."[73] Cushing's favors proved more substantial than that.

One of Hancock's reasons for so carefully trying to avoid antagonizing either the House or the Council was his desire to secure a high ranking militia appointment for himself. He indicated as much in his January correspondence with Cushing when he inquired "how goes the Militia

matters in Assembly, am I to be noticed in the appointment of officers."[74] The answer was yes. A month later he was nominated by the House to the province's senior militia post with the rank of first Major General. His rival, James Warren, was named second, and Azor Orne ranked third.

But that was not good enough. Hancock and Cushing also wanted to humiliate the Adams-Warren faction by securing the Council's veto of Warren's nomination. "We have not surmounted all our difficulties," Warren sadly reported to Sam Adams. "I am glad to be out of the list, but the Council have done it in a manner as ungracious and Indelicate as Bernard or Hutchinson would have done."[75] Yet, as pleased as Hancock was by this sudden and unexpected good turn of events, his vanity momentarily got the better of him. In March, he showed more interest in his own appointment than in taking further opportunity to press his advantage of his rivals. In his letters to Cushing, he repeatedly urged him to speed up the delivery of his commission in order that "I may Appear in Character."[76] This was at a time when the entire Congress was deeply engrossed in the most important and difficult question yet confronting it, whether or not they should declare America's total and unanimous independence from Great Britain.

While Congress hesitatingly approached a decision regarding a declaration of independence, Hancock's thoughts reluctantly returned to Massachusetts's internal politics as a result of his now publicly known feud with Sam Adams. The reasons for their long history of disagreement were numerous. But basically it stemmed from an irreconciable rivalry between the two of them for preeminence in Massachusetts public affairs. In the past, however, they were willing, and even needed, to keep their

differences hidden from public view. This was no longer true. Consequently, gossip accurately spoke of "an irreconciable difference" that has "certainly taken place between these 'eminent worthies,' John Hancock and Samuel Adams."[77] The specific issue dividing them was the question of independence, but for all practical purposes it was merely a convenient pretext for what was long considered inevitable.

The importance of this single issue forced Hancock to remain in Philadelphia in spite of his expressed desire for rest and a brief return visit to Massachusetts. Meanwhile, Congress authorized him to appoint yet another private secretary, thereby further acknowledging the growth in the presidential department under Hancock's direction. Still, he confessed that he was "almost worn out, my Duty is Constant. I have hardly time for necessary rest." Writing to Cushing, Hancock confidentially admitted his desire "to be with you, but I cannot with propriety request Leave at present." Instead, he merely requested "a very particular Account of the State of Boston, the Tories, etc. and what you are doing at the Assembly."[78]

It was politically impossible for Hancock to leave Congress just as this single most important issue was about to be decided. At the same time his views regarding independence were typically ambivalent. In mid-January 1776, Hancock perceived the struggle with England as one designed solely to defend our liberty, "and that cost what it may, we will perservere with unremitting Vigour to maintain that inestimable jewel, which we received from our ancestors and transmit the same unsullied Lustre to our Posterity."[79] But not one word about American independence crossed his lips. A month later he concurred with General Washington's

realistic assessment "that should an accommodation take place, the terms will be severe or favorable, in proportion to our ability to resist."[80] So while Hancock advocated the strengthening of the military, he remained noncommittal on independence. This set him diametrically opposed to Sam Adams and the impatient radicals in Congress.

Hancock's attitude genuinely reflected his naturally conservative tendancies, his reluctance to appear too far out ahead of public opinion, and his bitter distrust of Sam Adams. As their mutual disdain for each other intensified, the closer Hancock attached himself to the conservative faction led by John Dickinson, James Duane, and Benjamin Harrison. Privately, however, Hancock confided to Cushing that the likelihood of a peaceful reconciliation with Great Britain appeared remote.[81] Nevertheless, he stood with the conservatives in Congress and tried to assist their cause as best he could. John Adams described the consequences.

> "This is the first Appearance of Mr. Harrison as Chairman of the Committee of the whole. The President had hitherto nominated Governor Ward of Rhode Island to that conspicuous distinction. Mr. Harrison had courted Mr. Hancock, and Mr. Hancock had courted Mr. Duane, Mr. Dickinson and their Party, and leaned so partially in their favour, that Mr. Samuel Adams had become very bitter against Mr. Hancock and spoke of him with great Asperity in private Circles, and this Alienation between them continued....Governor Ward was become extreamly Obnoxious to Mr. Hancock's Party by his zealous Attachment to Mr. Samuel Adams and Mr. Richard Henry Lee. Such I suppose were the motives which excited Mr. Hancock, to bring forth Mr. Harrison."[82]

Hancock's personal animosity against Sam Adams temporarily distorted his normally flawless political judgment and led him to support a position less inclined towards independence than demanded by contemporary public opinion. Fortunately for him a combination of factors and events finally persuaded him to alter his position before his career or repu-

tation suffered any irreparable harm.

The British army's evacuation of Boston in mid-March prompted Hancock's letter of congratulations to Washington for "the partial victory we have obtained." Yet, even before the initial excitement wore off, Hancock, recognizing the protracted nature of this war, somberly predicted that the "rage of disappointment and revenge" would compel Great Britain to "inflict every species of calamity upon us" as far as her power extended.[83] If this insight was not enough to convince him of the ultimate necessity of declaring American independence, his father-in-law's advice pushed him even closer into making that commitment.

Edmund Quincy regularly sent his son-in-law written accounts of all the latest news, gossip, and personal opinions regarding the state of Massachusetts's internal affairs. Hancock welcomed and appreciated these reports as much as he respected their source. Throughout his career he was continually dependent upon the superior counsel and wisdom offered by a substitute father. His Uncle Thomas and later Sam Adams each served him well in that capacity. Now it was Edmund Quincy's turn to fill the void created by Hancock's enstrangement with his former political mentor. To his credit, Quincy's advice and arguments were intelligent and convincing. After the British left Boson, he wrote Hancock advising that "nothing will answer the end so well as a Declaration to all the world of our absolute Independency." Those "who shall act under its banners," he argued "will strongly unite, cement, and combine, by a mutual association and assistance."[84] Suprisingly, Hancock continued to hold out. But what finally clinched Hancock's support was an unexpected election defeat back home. In May 1776, Hancock learn-

ed to his great surprise and mortification that he was deliberately "left out" of both the Massachusetts Lower House and the Governor's Council. "I can't help it," he confessed to Cushing, "they have a right to do as they please," yet "I think I do not merit such treatment."[85] Nevertheless, he got their message.

Convinced beyond doubt that the popular mood in Massachusetts indeed favored independence, Hancock, in only a matter of days, enthusiastically adopted a similar attitude as if the idea was originally his own. Like most converts, he promptly felt the need to preach the faith to all who would or were compelled to listen. Writing to General Washington and a host of other correspondents, Hancock conveyed to them Congress's momentous decision. "The Congress have judged it necessary to dissolve all connection between Great Britain and the American Colonies & to declare them free & independent States as you will perceive by the enclosed Declaration." In a more sermonizing, almost evangelical tone, he added that "altho it is not possible to foretell the Consequences of Human Actions, yet it is nonetheless a Duty we owe ourselves, and posterity...to trust the Event to that being who controuls both Causes & Events to bring about his own Determination."[86] But, to his old friend William Cooper, clerk of the Boston town meeting, he professed his complete faith in his country's future and his personal hope that "we shall be a free and happy people, totally unfetter'd and released from the bonds of slavery."[87]

His confidence was that of a man who knew no other alternative. The last slender hope of effecting a compromise reconciliation was gone. From then on he claimed "our religion, our liberty, the peace and happi-

ness of posterity," which he defined as the grand objects in dispute, were all "at stake".[88] Then in a revealing comment to General Gates, Hancock unwittingly admitted his own personal interest in the Revolution. While inadvertantly referring to himself, Hancock claimed that "he... will undoubtedly meet with the greatest applause," who renders on behalf of his country" the most useful and signal services."[89] His elegant, yet oversized signature on the Declaration of Independence was a way of drawing that desired attention and applause to himself. It was also his conception of a "most useful and signal" service. Naturally, this gesture did nothing to improve his relationship with Sam Adams or the other radicals who continued to distrust Hancock's motives and ambitions. But, it endowed the Declaration with an aura of immediate respectability because of Hancock's popularity and patriotic reputation throughout the continent.

Concomitant with Hancock's change of mind regarding independence, came an added impetus to use his patronage and influence on behalf of his friends, relatives, and political associates. As noted earlier, Thomas Cushing was the first beneficiary of this effort. Through Hancock's influence, he was entrusted with the authority to dole out subcontracts for the two Continental Navy warships under construction in Massachusetts. When James Warren unexpectedly resigned as Paymaster General of the Army in April 1776, Hancock used his influence to see his former aide, William Palfrey, named as his successor.[90] Shortly afterwards, Congress decided to create a new office known as the Deputy Paymaster General for the Eastern Department, and Hancock secured that post for his younger brother, Ebenezer. Mindful of his brother's past fi-

nancial difficulties, when Hancock wrote to inform him of his appointment, he also enclosed a reminder that he pay "very close and strict attention to the business" of his new position.[91] Similar appointments for his other friends and employees followed. To his credit, Hancock never tried to use his public held offices for his own financial gain. As President of the Continental Congress, his only self interested objectives were to improve his political fortunes in Massachusetts and satisfy a personal need for recognition and applause.

Some Congressional delegates resented this. Josiah Bartlett also complained that Hancock was trying to do too much and that he was "constantly employed" with an "immense number of letters which he is constantly receiving on the most interesting subjects." As a result, it "makes it impossible for him to attend to them all and lesser matters must be neglected."[92] Bartlett's criticism was true, but he overlooked how vital this flow of news and information was to Hancock. His intimate knowledge of political affairs, both in and out of Congress, combined with his willingness to assume new duties were the twin sources of his growing Presidential authority. As he diligently worked to strengthen his own position, through a natural process of transfer, he also enhanced the office of the Presidency by establishing a precedent and pattern for the future growth of the office's responsibilities and powers.

Congressional approval of the Declaration of Independence was the high point of Hancock's long tenure as President. For the equally long remainder of his term, he and his colleagues were preoccupied with the less exciting, more tedious, unheroic, and personally unsatisfying chore of administering the war effort. Experience proved it was much easier

to declare independence than achieve it. Repeated military reversals, financial difficulties, conflicting ideologies, and personality clashes were only some of the many serious problems that helped prolong the conflict. As Hancock's earlier visions of glory, fame, and honor slowly vanished amid the tedium of day to day mundane routines, his interest in the Presidency waned. In addition, a mounting array of personal problems intensified his longing for home.

Throughout his Presidency, Hancock was frequently embarrassed by a chronic shortage of money. Nevertheless, he refused to permit this to inhibit his normally extravagent life style. Critics complained that this was setting a poor example for the people who were sacrificing everything while the nation fought for its very survival. Hancock contended that he was only maintaining the dignity of his office. Privately, however, he was furious at his agent, William Bant, for not collecting the rents due on his extensive property holdings in Boston. Since abandoning trade as his profession, this was Hancock's primary source of income. But Bant's job was rendered virtually impossible by the British army's occupation of the town. Hancock was forced to accept the awkward situation of living above his means and accumulating debts he had little chance of repaying. In time he also forgave his agent, but not before receiving Bant's effusive apology. "I love you," Band professed, and "indeed sir, my Life is at your service...and be assured, Sir that nothing can make me so unhappy as to reflect that I have been the occasion of giving you a <u>moments</u> pain."[93]

Hancock also feared the vindictive destruction of his Boston property by the occupying British army. Washington's assurance that his es-

tate was left relatively unscathed after the British evacuation came as a welcomed relief.[94] Still, the total damages done plus the loss of rental income amounted to the staggering sum of nearly L 5,000 pounds.[95] This was hardly offset by the L 130 pounds salary voted him by the Massachusetts General Court.

Another old problem continued to plague him, one with potentially harmful political overtones. The Overseers of Harvard College were still after him to settle the college's delinquent accounts. At first Hancock ignored their letters, but when they hinted at removing him as Treasurer, he grew more attentive. "The matters of the College, I am sensible, ought to be attended to , and should have been sooner by me; but from the confused state of our Province, I concluded there was no possibility."[96] To appease the Overseers, Hancock suggested that William Winthrop be named his official representative, but as in the past nothing more came of this except further delays. Part of the problem was that Hancock forgot to bring the college records with him when he came to Philadelphia. Therefore he only now ordered Winthrop to deliver them to him so that he might quickly put them in order.[97] But seven months later in January 1977 when Hancock has still not lifted a finger to settle the college's accounts, the Overseers dispatched an agent of their own with orders to recover the records from Hancock's possession. Meanwhile, they also censured him for his negligent behavior. Hancock was outraged. He believed their action to be politically motivated; a brazen attempt to humiliate him in the public's eyes, probably engineered by his political rivals.

He responded to this perceived insult to his reputation by question-

ing the Overseers' "severe and unmerited censure of me." Writing to them from Baltimore, where the Congress recently fled in the wake of Washington's defeat in New York and subsequent retreat across New Jersey, Hancock countered with the argument that "I did not run away with the Property of the College, No Gentlemen, I saved it."[98] But in an attempt to defuse this issue, Hancock tactfully agreed to surrender some of his records, along with the college's securities and bonds he had been holding for safe keeping, to the school's agent who followed him to Baltimore. His conciliatory gesture came too late. With their patience entirely spent, the College Corporation voted in July to replace him with Ebenezer Storer as Treasurer.[99] Hancock's political opponents in Massachusetts calmly observed these proceedings with mild amusement, but found no way to convert his embarrassment into any meaningful political advantage. Still, these events further convinced him that it was time to return home and personally shore up his sagging political fences. It also left him permanently resentful towards the Harvard College Corporation.

Congress's hasty flight to Baltimore, out of fear of an imminent British assault on Philadelphia, threw the government's affairs into complete confusion. Robert Morris, who remained behind in order to try and maintain some semblance of order, accurately predicted to Hancock, that "great inconveniences will arise daily in every department during your absence."[100] Hancock's personal problems were further complicated by the birth, only a few weeks earlier, of his first child, a little girl, Lydia, named for his Aunt. This enlargement of his household, which now included his wife, daughter, sister-in-law, Katy Quincy, and several servants, made the move to Baltimore with all his household effects and

presidential papers, extremely difficult. Fortunately the military situation unexpectedly improved as a result of Washington's Christmas Eve counter attack at Trenton. "I entertain the most pleasing Expectation," he informed Washington, "that our Affairs will henceforth assume a better complexion."[101]

Hancock and the Congress's brief three month exile in Baltimore turned out to be an administrative nightmare, beset with continuous delays, confusions, and anxieties. "As things have turn'd out," Hancock complained, "I am very sorry we Remov'd at all, and indeed I think we were full hasty enough." Not only was public morale and confidence dampened, but his hoped for quick return to Philadelphia was stalled by the more urgent need to set up the government's printing presses in order to relieve a severe shortage of money. Another removal just now, Hancock warned, "would occasion so great a Delay."[102]

The intermittent flow of reliable news and information to Baltimore, strained Hancock's already tense nervous condition. "This Interval," he observed, "we pass in the greatest Anxiety and Suspense, and wish to be relieved from it in any Manner, rather than be tormented with Doubt and Uncertainty."[103] These tension eventually induced a mild state of depression. He complained to Morris that he was "Confin'd to Business" with "no time for relaxation" and that all he wanted was to return to Philadelphia and be with his friends at the Oyster Club "as usual."[104] By February this wish evolved into a determination "to go to Boston in April," even though Mrs. Hancock was not willing to leave until May at the earliest, because of their infant daughter's poor health.[105]

John Adams interpreted Hancock's impatience to leave Congress as

evidence of his all consuming ambition to become the next Governor of Massachusetts. "What aspiring little Creatures we are," he observed regarding Hancock's passion. "How clearly it sees its Object, how constantly it pursues it, and what wise plans it devises for obtaining it."[106] Edmund Quincy saw Hancock's motives quite differently. "I perceive Mr. H's strong attachment to...improvement in the military as well as Civil Department, be his resolution to apply to Congress for leave to return home that he may pressure the interest of his country...I indeed wish he may succeed for doubtless more such men are wanted among us - to inspire the whole by their example."[107]

In preparation for his anticipated return to Massachusetts, Hancock first sought the General Court's permission before making a similar request of Congress. The General Court approved his request, granting him leave to return "for the recovery of his health...whenever he shall find it necessary."[108] Meanwhile Hancock was preoccupied with the immediate problem of transporting himself, his family, and their personal effects back to Philadelphia, in preparation for their eventual journey to Boston. A shortage of wagons and horses complicated the move. Out of necessity, he temporarily left his family behind in the care of Samuel Purviance, a prominent Baltimore merchant, and he went on alone.

Once back in Philadelphia, Hancock was again overwhelmed with the responsibilities of his Presidential office. He complained to Dolly that, "I am up to my eyes in Papers." In typical Hancock fashion, he found all the minor personal inconveniences caused by the war and the recent flight from Philadelphia to be extremely bothersome. His insensitivity to the sufferings and difficulties of those less fortunate than

himself bordered on arrogance. "I spend my evenings at home," he cried, and "snuff my candles with a pair of scissors," and dip "the gravy out of the Dish with my pewter tea spoon," but "I shall make out as well as I can."[109]

On a more emphatic level, Hancock genuinely suffered from his family's brief separation. He especially missed his wife, promising her that "when I part from you again it must be a very extraordinary occasion." He was equally concerned about his daughter, and looked everywhere "to get a gold or silver rattle" for her. He also made arrangements with Doctor Bond to innoculate her against the small pox when she arrived. Until then he warned Dolly to "take good care of Lydia."[110]

In a lengthy series of rambling letters written to Dolly in mid March, Hancock explained in detail the arrangements he had made for their transportation to Philadelphia. In addition, he offered numerous traveling suggestions, interspersed with concerns for her well being and comments about his own loneliness. "My Dear Soul, I long to have you here, & know you will be as expeditious as you can."[111] Near the end of March they were finally reunited, but their relief and joy quickly turned to bitter grief as Lydia sickened and died, probably from the small pox. A depressed Dorothy Hancock returned to Boston alone that summer, while her equally depressed and much overworked husband, promised to join her there soon.

The worsening military situation interrupted Hancock's plans. In late July, General Howe pulled his forces out of New Jersey, loaded them on transports and landed them at the head of the Chesapeake Bay, only fifty miles southwest of Philadelphia. Washington tried to stem

their advance but was badly out maneuvered at Brandywine Creek in early September, leaving the road to Philadelphia virtually wide open. For the second time in less than a year Congress fled at the approach of the British army.

Hancock ordered Congress to leave upon receipt of an alarming message from Alexander Hamilton, then serving as Washington's aide-de-camp. "If Congress have not left Philadelphia," he warned, "they ought to do it immediately without fail, for the enemy have the means of throwing a party this night into the city."[112] For almost the next full two weeks, Congress was in a controlled state of confusion and movement. Eliphalet Dyer detailed the events as Congressmen, either singly or in groups "were soon on the wing and made our flight with all speed to Trenton." From there they "Journyed to Bethleham and through Reading to Lancaster... but we only met there to adjourn to this place where we Open Congress this day," in York, Pennsylvania.[113]

When Congress finally stopped running and reconvened at York in early October, Hancock was instrumental in helping to reestablish administrative order. Yet, in spite of this renewed dependence upon him, he reamined adament about leaving for home as quickly as possible. On the 18th he wrote Dolly informing her of his latest plans. "My stay here was nearly Determined for the winter...but various reasons have occur'd to induce me to alter my resolutions...my present Intension is to leave Congress in eight days."[114] Encouraging military reports from the Northern Department may have been the decisive factor. Word was daily arriving that a British force commanded by General Burgoyne was on the verge of immiment surrender. Meanwhile nearby in Philadelphia, the British army commanded by General Howe was preparing to go into winter quarters.

With the military situation suddenly stabilizing, Hancock prepared for his departure, thus setting the stage for the final controversy of his presidential administration.

Opinion regarding his presidency was divided, but the prevailing attitude was that Hancock was indispensable. One congressmen wrote:

> "How we shall do without him I know not, for we have never yet put in a chairman, on a committee of the whole house, that could in any measure fill his place. He has not only dignity and impartiality, which are the great requisities of a president of such a body, but he has an alertness, attention and readiness to conceive of any motion and its tendency, and of every alteration proposed in the course of a debate, which greatly tends to facilitate and expedite business."[115]

But even flattery could not persuade Hancock to alter his decision. As he explained to General Washington, "it is now above Two years since I have had the Honour of Presiding in Congress...but the decline of Health ...join'd to the situation of my private affairs, have at length taught me to think of Retiring for two or three months."[116] Washington sympathized with Hancock's decision, but personal and general motives "make me to regret the necessity that forces you to retire." In light of their lengthy correspondence over the past two years, "the manner in which you have conducted it on your part," Washington wrote, "accompanied with every expression of politeness and regard to me, gives you a claim to my warmest acknowledgements." As a parting favor, he honored Hancock's unusual request for an armed military escourt home, in spite of the pressing manpower shortages and urgent need for these troops elsewhere.[117]

Before departing, however, Hancock also requested unprecedented permission to deliver a farewell address to his colleagues in the Con-

gress. In it he reviewed his past services, but left it up to them to decide whether or not he earned their "Approbation". In his own mind he had, having faithfully served them to the "best of his Ability." He then thanked them all for the "Civility they had shown him," and returned to his seat.[118] A New York delegate promptly moved that the Congress should publicly thank Hancock for "the unremitted attention and steady impartiality which he has manifested in discharging of the various duties of his office."[119] This motion sparked an unexpected furor. Speaking on behalf of the republican elements in Congress, Sam Adams objected, noting that "we have had two Presidents before," neither of whom "made a departing speech or received the Thanks of Congress."[120] A second motion was then introduced claiming that it was "improper" to thank anyone for discharging the duties of his office.[121]

A lengthy debate over these issues ensued and was not finally resolved until after Hancock's departure, which was held up several more days because of poor weather. But the motion to thank him was eventually approved, by a narrow six to four margin. His own state, led by Sam Adams, voted against him. This galling insult was not forgotten.[122] Nevertheless, the majority view in Congress prevailed. En route home, to an expectant hero's reception, Hancock was duly informed of Congress's decision by his successor, Henry Laurens of South Carolina.[123]

Years later Hancock recalled his congressional service, remembering it as a period of confusion and personal sacrifice. "Congress was in an unsettled state," as there were "no public officers," and the "business of every department Devolv'd upon me & my time & attention wholly Engag'd by the Publick, that I had not even time to attend to the Domstic

concerns of my Family."[124] Hancock's sacrifices, however, were neither unique nor as great as many others. Still, he did not deserve the unkind nor false accusations made by Benjamin Rush, who claimed he lacked both "industry and punctuality" and referred to him as a "disinterested patriot."[125] This was not the opinion of most who knew and worked with him during the first hectic years of the Revolution. Even his most severest critic, Reverend William Gordon, in his history of the period claimed that "in the early stages of his presidency he acted upon republican principles" and that it was only afterwards that "he inclined to the aristocracy of the New York delegates...and became their favorite."[126] But perhaps the single best contemporary analysis of Hancock's contributions as President came from William Tudor, who although not knowing Hancock personally, interviewed many of Hancock's surviving contemporaries. Tudor concluded that Hancock's "voice was powerful, his acquaintance with parliamentary forms accurate, and his apprehension of questions quick." Furthermore, "he was attentive, impartial, and dignified." And most significantly, he "inspired respect and confidence wherever he presided."[127] This was no mean accomplishment, and by itself justified the "singular honor" he received by being President while "the glorious Act of Independency" was adopted.[128]

CHAPTER X

"THE TINKELING CYMBALL"

With or without the American Revolution, John Hancock's passion for social and political status would have been the same; and in either case, any failure to reach the summit would have resulted in deep disappointment and frustration. For this was an immensely personal need, one born out of family tradition and training, and intentionally cultivated in his youth by his ambitious Uncle Thomas Hancock, whose own assault on Massachusetts' social hierarchy was partially thwarted. John Hancock's goals were, therefore, conveniently divorced from the complexities of political theory, ideology, or reformist ideals. Instead his ambitions were self serving, while unknowingly designed to compensate for his dual fears of rejection and anonymity.

In a less turbulent era, his efforts at gaining recognition might easily have been ignored; witness his inability to achieve his early goals as a merchant. But the Revolution saved him from oblivion and fostered a situation where success, as he perceived it, was obtainable, especially as the old established obstacles to his advancement were violently uprooted and swept away. The repudiation of the crown and the dislodgment of many old entrenched New England families left Hancock, because of his wealth and prior political activity, in a commanding position of authority and influence. The Revolution became an avenue for personal advancement and fulfillment which inspired self confidence and when combined with his cunning political insight enabled him to secure those flimsy ornaments of success which meant more to him than anything else. Thus by late 1777, bored with his unheralded labors on

behalf of Congress, determined he had advanced as far in the Presidency as it was possible to go, frustrated by the superior recognition accorded those in the army, and convinced that his future lay in Massachusetts, Hancock arrived home all set for a hero's welcome. But as John Adams warned his friends back in Massachusetts, Hancock was about "to put his hand upon the Pummell of one chair, and leap into another, at 370 miles Distance," referring to Hancock's ill kept secret ambition to become Governor of Massachusetts.[1]

The widely circulated Independent Chronicle colorfully reported Hancock's entry into Boston. Accompanied by his wife Dorothy, who met him on the road from Hartford, the paper described how "his Excellency John Hancock, Esq., President of the American Congress and first Major-General of the Militia of the State" arrived "under escort of American Light Dragoons," and that "by his coming into town sooner than was expected, he avoided some public marks of respect which would otherwise have been paid him." Nevertheless, he was heralded by "the ringing of bells, the discharge of 13 cannon of Col. Craft's park of artillery on the Common, the cannon from the fortress on Fort Hill, and the ships in the harbor." The Independent and Light Infantry companies also smartly saluted him as "he received the compliments of gentlemen of all orders, and recent indication was given of the sense the public has of his important services to the American Cause."[2]

The warmth of Hancock's homecoming reception was a painful reminder to his rivals of his enormous popularity with the people of Massachusetts. Their pain became nearly unbearable as the same newspaper perfunctorily reported two weeks later that Samuel and John Adams had also returned

from Congress; and as Sam Adams acidly commented, "his Colleagues arriv'd in the Dusk of the Evening and without Observation."[3] Hancock's love of pomp and ceremony added to their discomfort and forced them to question his true motives. "He is the most happy who has the greatest share of the Affections of his Fellow Citizens, without which," Sam Adams declared, "the Ears of a sincere Patriot are ever deaf to the Roaring of Cannon and the Charms of Musick."[4] But as much as the Adamses and Warrens complained and made fun of Hancock's preference for show and display, they could not avoid the inescapable reality that he was the most popular and highly touted citizen in the state and was increasingly a threat to their own political objectives and ambitions.

Publicly Hancock acknowledged that he had come home for a brief rest in order to regain his health and to attend to long neglected personal matters. Regarding the latter, one of his first tasks was filing his late Aunt Lydia's will in Probate where he was named executor and principal beneficiary.[5] This gave him control over the last significant outstanding portion of his late Uncle's once huge estate, but did not alleviate his current shortage of cash.[6] In spite of this war related problem, which by necessity forced Massachusetts to adopt a barter economy, Hancock's substantial inheritance remained largely intact. It was carefully protected by intelligent investments in land, property, and personal effects scattered across much of New England. The single largest concentration remained in Boston, but there was hardly a community in Massachusetts where he did not have a valuable piece of property or asset.[7] Symptomatic of the shortage of cash, however, when Hancock decided to purchase a summer home in nearby Jamaica Plains from Doctor

Lemuel Hayward, upon his return from Congress, instead of paying in cash, Hancock turned over eight of his shares in Boston's Long Wharf in a straight exchange.[8] Massachusetts' economic difficulties was also one of the major political controversies currently raging across the state; and it was politics, Hancock admitted privately, which really prompted his return home.

Above anything else, Hancock wanted to become Governor. And even his most ardent opponents, who personally preferred either James Bowdoin, James Warren, or Professor John Winthrop for the position, doubted "whether the Popular Breath will blow that way," and reluctantly conceeded that Hancock had an excellent chance.[9] Yet even with his enormous popularity, Hancock's was was not without obstacles and pitfalls. The most obvious impediment was the state's confused political make up. As a result of the Revolution, a torrent of long repressed demands for greater social and economic reform were suddenly released. This situation was further complicated by the emergence of overly ambitious young men each seeking recognition and advancement to fill the power vacuum created by the Tories flight or suppression. Into this maelstrom stepped Hancock, possessing no program, no ideology, and no commitment to anyone or anything. All he had was his reputation as a patriot, his popularity, and an ambition to succeed.

In spite of their deeper complexities, Massachusetts' internal divisions were perceived as a relatively simple clash between western agrarian and eastern commercial interests. The former dominated the lower House of Representatives and sought to introduce a more equitable form of government by adopting a new more democratic state constitution

to replace the old colonial charter of 1691. The more conservative eastern interests, who constituted a majority of the Council, wanted either to prevent this or retain a stable mixed government as near to the present system as possible.[10]

Predictably, easterners and westerners also disagreed over the causes and remedies for the state's spiraling inflation rate and shortages of circulating currency. Farmers claimed that the merchants and traders were responsible for the situation because of their monopolizing practices and artificially high price fixing. Merchants blamed the farmers for intentionally holding back their produce from market in order to force prices up even higher. These and other equally unresolved differences led to a stalemate in the General Court, holding up the process of drafting a new constitution. This deadlock scared Hancock away, forcing him to postpone his original plan of returning home in the early Spring of 1777, for fear of being dragged into this controversy. But by November the political scales in the General Court was altered and convinced him that it was a safer and more opportune time to return.

Throughout the 1777 sessions of the Massachusetts General Court, the original western majority in the Lower House gradually melted away as it traditionally did even in the colonial period. As farmers, these delegates could not afford protracted absences from their farms and fields. This enabled the eastern representatives to teach them a punishing political lesson. A series of deflationary and economic measures, favorable to the state's commercial interests, were adopted which in effect established Massachusetts' general fiscal policies for much of the next decade.[11] The western farmers were outraged and redoubled their deter-

mination to secure a new constitution that would protect them from these slick political maneuvers in the future. Meanwhile, Hancock and his friends saw in all this an opportunity for furthering their own political objectives by assuming the role of compromisers.

From the moment he arrived in Boston, Hancock discreetly avoided any statement that would suggest he supported one side against the other. Nevertheless, his presence and influence was immediately, although subtely felt; primarily through the coordinated efforts of his two closest supporters, Thomas Cushing of Boston and John Pickering of Salem. Both men were identified as eastern conservatives, but on Hancock's behalf they set about to work out a compromise that would eventually bring a draft constitution before the towns to either approve or reject. By late February the details of their plan was finally worked out as they arranged an agreement by which two key points were conceded to the western towns. Under their proposed Constitution of 1778, any incorporated town could elect a representative to the General Assembly, provided the town agreed to meet all of his expenses; and Governor's powers were curtailed by depriving him a veto.[12]

The content of the proposed constitution was far less important to Hancock than the immediate adoption of any constitution, so long as it called for an early statewide election for Governor. While his friends were still busy ironing out the final details of the compromise, Hancock started campaigning for the position. To bolster his image as a patrician, in December he distributed free firewood to Boston's poor; and among the more affluent, he intentionally circulated rumors that General Washington was thinking of resigning his command and that he was

his likely successor.[13] He affirmed his republican credentials by frequently circulating among the coffee house patrons, where one observer noted:

> "This man, who the most zealous republicans call 'the American King,' in order to provoke us, looks to all appearance, worthy of the position he holds as the first man in America. Moreover, he is so frank and condescending to the lowest, that one would think he was talking to his brother or relative. He visits the coffee houses of Boston, where also congregate the poorest of the inhabitants - men who get their living by bringing weed and vegetables to the city."[14]

Finally, to redemonstrate his patriotism, if any more proof was needed, Hancock advertised in the newspapers that all outstanding debts due him should be settled in "Continental Bills," whose value had steadily depreciated since Congress first issued them.[15]

Not everyone was convinced of his genuineness. "Does Mr. H. in fact mean to give his debtors the difference or to induce his own creditors to take of him their dues at that rate or to become popular and obtain votes at the choice of Governor next May," asked one skeptic. But this was strictly a minority view as most people applauded Hancock's gesture as a sincere act of patriotism. After nearly a three year absence from the state, he was easily re-elected as a delegate to the Continental Congress, one of Boston's representatives to the General Court, and he was the Town Meeting's unanimous choice as Moderator, all within only a few weeks of his return to Boston. Even the Overseers of Harvard College fell into line. In order to atone for their former dismissal of Hancock as Treasurer, they sought his permission to hang his portrait in the college, so that they claimed, they might "perpetuate the memory of so great a benefactor."[18] By appealing to his vanity, they hoped that as Governor he would be sympathetic to the school's fi-

nancial needs, for like Hancock himself, they were convinced of his almost certain election.

Hancock's plans were temporarily unhinged, however, when the towns of Massachusetts overwhelmingly rejected the proposed constitution of 1778. Like many compromises, this one satisfied no one. Westerners thought it sanctioned too powerful a central government, while easterners considered it weak and unrepresentative of the state's diverse social and political elements.[19] In anticipation of this approaching defeat, Hancock wisely instructed his supporters and friends to drop their support for ratification. Consequently, once the election was over, Hancock actually emerged politically strengthened. Eastern conservatives continued to identify with him as a bulwark against democratic and republican extremism, while westerners appreciated Hancock's earlier efforts at compromise which at least enabled them to vote on a proposed draft constitution. His only disappointment was that the elections for Governor would now have to be postponed.

Following the Constitution's defeat in the Spring of 1778, Hancock took the offensive against his hapless rivals and thereby caught them off balance. The result was the gradual emergence of a new "party" or faction, based on a cult of personality, which acknowledged Hancock as its leader.[20] The Hancockites, as they were called, were for the most part aspiring local politicians who envisioned their own political success by attaching themselves to Hancock's inviting coattails; hoping either for future patronage appointments, or election victories based on their identification with the ever popular patriot. Hancock did whatever he could to encourage their ambitions. The similarities be-

tween this political development and the structure of pre-revolutionary Massachusetts politics paralyzed republicans like James Warren with anger and frustration. Writing to Sam Adams, who unlike Hancock had returned to the Continental Congress several months earlier, Warren fumed at those who had formerly worshipped Governor Hutchinson, and now set up a new idol in the person of Hancock, who if not possessing the late Governor's "abilities, certainly equals him in ambition and exceeds him in vanity."[21]

Typically, Warren was so obsessed with Hancock's vanity that he underestimated his craft and cunning. By allowing his recently forged network of political connections do the dirty work of silencing his most vocal critics and further isolating his principal rivals, Hancock was able to maintain the appearance of a disinterested patriot, one serenely detached from all the petty political squabbles of the day. This image was important to him and was part of his calculated attempt to appease everyone and thus avoid alienating any segment of the Massachusetts electorate. Hancock clearly understood that his own political future depended upon his continuous statewide popularity. This was the glue that held his "party" together and provided what little unity there was among such divergent interests groups as those making up Hancock's coalition.

Although Hancock never personally expressed this view, his father-in-law came very close to doing so as he tried to explain to his somewhat skeptical daughter exactly what her husband was trying to do. As Quincy understood it, Hancock's objective was especially noble, trying to become a unifying symbol of order and continuity in a period of great

stress and change, and that this would become even more important once the war ended and independence was secured. Finally he concluded:

> "Pater Patriae or Father of his Country has been and always must be esteemed ye the most illustrious Title which any modern or ancient hero, the Lover of his Country, has ever heretofore sustained or may expect, and as Providence has seen fit, thus far to indulge our generous friend with ye exaulted Character, He seems also to point out to him ye path which he has yet to tread in order to its completion: may it be that 'of the just which shineth more & more un to ye perfect day'"[22]

Despite the general public's impression of Hancock's aloofness from the current political turmoils, insiders were aware of a no-holds-barred behind the scenes struggle shaping up as Hancock's supporters prepared for the May elections to the General Court. On Hancock's orders, both Sam Adams and James Warren were singled out for a scurrilous attack intended to deny them a seat in the Assembly. Warren talked freely and bitterly about this successful campaign which turned his own town of Plymouth against him. He observed how "a party here, who have set up an Idol," referring to Hancock, "have even made use of the Tories to prevent my being Chose by my Town."[23] Warren also warned John Adams of the threat which made them all "obnoxious to a Certain great Man, and his numerous party by holding me up to view in Competition with him, the policy therefore has been to get me out of sight and prevent my being an Obstacle to his Glory and Ambition."[24]

Sam Adams, the other target of Hancock's campaign of villification and slander, was away at Congress and was unable to defend himself from the onslaught, although alerted to the danger by Warren's frequent warnings. "The plan," wrote Warren, "is to sacrifice you and me to the shrine of their Idol. I hope...they won't succeed against you."[25] The

means chosen was to launch a whispering campaign against Adams aimed at convincing the people of Boston that he was actively conspiring against General Washington. To demonstrate his own loyalty to the General, Hancock pompously christened his newborn son, John George Washington Hancock, on May 24, 1778.[26] Meanwhile, Sam Adams was publicly reprimanded by the Boston Town Meeting at a session conveniently chaired by Hancock.[27] His efforts at undermining Adams's position proved as effective as those against Warren, for both men were denied seats in the General Court. From then on, Adams's influence in Boston was permanently curtailed.[28]

The May elections to the General Court were an unqualified victory for Hancock and his supporters. Their influence in the Lower House was immediately demonstrated by the removal of Hancock's vocal critic, Reverend William Gordon, who was promptly dismissed as Chaplain of the House by Hancock's friends.[29] But to secure his triumph, Hancock had been compelled to remain at home, away from his duties in the Continental Congress, thus evoking another stream of criticism from his opponents which his feeble excuses about his poor health and his wife's confinement failed to silence. Abigail Adams complained, "our Great Man designs soon for C(ongress)s it has been (said) for more than a month, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. Was there every any thing decisive in him?"[30] But with the election safely completed, Hancock calmed his critics by setting off again on a quick visit to Congress. Naturally he provoked a new wave of hostile comment by departing Boston with all "the pomp and retinue of an Eastern Prince," a common hallmark of his public appearances.[31] Doctor Samuel Holton, who accompanied him, described their departure.

"I set out from Boston with the Hon. Mr. Hancock at 1 o'clock & a large number of Gentlemen with their Servants & Carriages accompanied us to Watertown, where an elegant dinner was provided. I rode in Mr. Hancock's Carriage with Mr. Hancock, Dr. Cooper & Genl. Heath. After we had dined, a large number of toasts were drunk & a salute of Cannon and upon our setting out three cheers were given from very large number of people assembled on ye occasion. We proceeded to West Town where we lodged."[32]

Festivities like this one were Hancock's greatest moments. Besides satisfying his need for attention they were also politically motivated. These public ceremonies comforted the merchant and propertied classes of eastern Massachusetts, who fearing the democratic aspirations of the lower classes, took refuge in Hancock's popularity and encouraged it as an act of continuity with pre-revolutionary political and social stability. Even the working classes were unabashedly attracted to Hancock's elaborate displays, satisfying their culturally ingrained need to pay deferential respect to their social superiors. The combination of Hancock's aristocratic pretentiousness, his republican familiarity, and his patriotic postering made him an irrestible object of veneration, emulation, and respect.

Hancock stayed just long enough with Congress to sign the Articles of Confederation and enjoy the July 4th celebration in Philadelphia, commemorating two years of American independence.[33] Then using his wife's poor health as well as his own as an excuse, Hancock hurried back to Massachusetts to pursue his principal objectives, keeping his rivals off balance and preparing the way for his anticipated election as Governor.[34] He was also genuinely disturbed by his wife's thoughtlessness. "This is my seventh letter," he complained, "and not one word have I heard from you. It really is not kind, when you must be sensible that I must

have been very anxious about you and the little one."[35]

Yet for a man presumably too ill to attend Congress and one deeply troubled by his wife's insensitivity to his requests, Hancock was, nevertheless, remarkably energetic. No sooner had he arrived back in Boston and changed out of his civilian clothes into his Major-General's uniform when he again left town, this time in command of the Massachusetts militia units marching south to liberate British occupied Newport.[36] This campaign was the first test of the recently concluded American-French alliance. United under the overall command of General John Sullivan, units of the Continental Army and militia units from New England were to coordinate their assault along with elements of the French Fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral the Comte d'Estaing. It was an extremely complex military enterprise, requiring enormous skill, patience, diplomacy and plenty of luck in order to succeed. But none of these obstacles and difficulties made much of an impression on the militarily inexperienced Hancock, whose own objectives were largely political. He also envisioned this as an opportunity for personal glory and self-aggrandizement.

By mid-August, a series of unfortunate mishaps, unseasonably heavy rain, and poor coordination with the French turned the Rhode Island Expedition into a shambles; setting off a series of hostile recriminations which threatened the fragil American-French relationship. Hancock's part in all this was minor, as he did little more than sit in his tent writing letters, and parade on horseback in front of his troops. But he shared the commonly held American belief that the French were principally responsible for the expedition's failure because of their fleet's hasty withdrawal from the engagement. "What could Influence the Officers of

the Fleet to pursue this line of Conduct am at a Loss fully to Comprehend," wrote Hancock, but "it ought to Excite the Resentment of every good man."[37]

It was no secret that Hancock had long opposed and was a major critic of the entire idea of forging a French alliance. When the first French warship docked in Boston the previous May, Hancock went out of his way to absent himself from the "Elegant Entertainment at Marston's house," prepared by the Council for the benefit of the French officers aboard. As Warren described the incident, "the danger of Popery" was held up to the people by Hancock, "for the sake of establishing his own popularity," and that he publicly warned that the alliance "will ruin America."[38] The French fleet's ignoble behavior off Newport gave concrete substantiation to his initial warning.

But Hancock's initial objections to the alliance were politically motivated. His pronouncements merely reflected and used New England's traditional antipathy towards the French and Catholicism for his own political and personal advantage. Yet, when the opportunity arose to attach his name to a formally drafted written rebuke of the French for their part in the abortive assault on Newport, he hesitated. At the last moment Hancock feared "it might prejudice me with some French Gentlemen with whom I wish to stand fair."[39] This also signalled his complete about face, and subsequent enthusiastic endorsement of the alliance. The motivation was again political.

Hancock's popularity in Massachusetts was probably greater now than at any previous time. Corroboration of this arrived from a likely source. Edmund Quincy noted in a hurriedly written message to his son-

in-law, how Hancock's "well known and universally approved zeal and activity in ye patriotic defense," of his "injured country" was widely appreciated in the newspapers throughout Massachusetts.[40] Consequently, Hancock decided to risk endorsing the alliance because it was militarily more important for his country's future security than it was a political liability. Furthermore, he wanted to avoid provoking a controversy with the Marquis de Lafayette, who, as General Washington's personal representative, was responsible for coordinating American and French strategy during the campaign.

But once the French fleet abandoned the waters off Newport, claiming severe storm damage to several warships as their excuse, the unsupported American land forces were also compelled to retreat.[41] While the French sailed safely into Boston harbor for refitting, the Americans fought off a British counter attack and successfully escaped without suffering any additional damages. Meanwhile, Hancock, seeking to disassociate himself from the expedition's humiliating retreat, hurried back to Boston, abandoning the army, and claiming he would help "forward the repairs of the fleet," and "prepare the mind of the Count for a speedy return."[42] He traveled armed with a letter of introduction from the Marquis de Lafayette to the Count d'Estaing, describing him in glowing terms as a modern day "living Brutus."[43]

In private, the Marquis de Lafayett's opinion of Hancock's abilities was much less flattering. He thought him jesuitical, spiritless, and vain; and claimed that Hancock had "little eagerness for English bullets," which probably affected his decision to return so abruptly to Boston rather than his claim that he wanted to assist the fleet. In a

second letter to d'Estaing, Lafayette confidentially described how Hancock was equal only in vanity to the reputation Europeans had generously bestowed on him; but because he was powerful in Boston, he therefore might be useful to France.[44] Hancock was no less of an opportunist. He too was prepared to use the Count d'Estaing along with his newly acquired passion for American-French cooperation as a convenient cloak to cover up his own embarrassing connection with the Rhode Island fiasco.

For much of the next several weeks, Hancock busied himself by providing a constant stream of the "most Magnificent Entertainments" for the Count and his officers.[45] The effect on his reputation was almost immediate and very positive as General Greene reported to Washington how "Hancock takes unwearied pains to promote a good understanding with the French Officers. His house is full from morning till night."[46] Even the Count d'Estaing was compelled to return the favor, declaring that Hancock was "the true friend of France in America, a great statesman and an able General."[47] The local newspapers picked up on this, providing detailed descriptions and accounts of Hancock's celebrated parties, dinners, and balls. They made such a fuss about Hancock's every move and gesture, that his critics slowly began to suspect his true motives, which they correctly saw had nothing to do with the French alliance. "Our Boston Papers never fail to mark all the Movements of Great Men and to give honor where Honor is due. The 'spirited Exertions' of our Major Generals to be sure ought properly to be noticed." But, complained Sam Adams of Hancock, "some of them have had the good fortune never to be out of the way of making a Figure while others are wisely following the unpopular steps of Fabius."[48]

What in effect had occurred was a genuine quid pro quo, one that was born not out of any preconceived plan or agreement, but rather it was the product of convenience and opportunity. In exchange for his well publicized dinners, balls, and toasts to future American-French cooperation, by which the French fleet's responsibility for the expedition's failure was largely overlooked and forgotten, Hancock's reputation as a great statesman, peacemaker, and unselfish patriot was enhanced, thanks to the excessive compliments of his appreciative French guests. Even rivals like James Warren conceded that Hancock played a helpful part in dispelling the ill will that threatened to impede future American-French relations.[49] His rivals might continue to chide him for his vanity, showmanship, and superficiality, but once again he had beaten them to the punch and turned a potentially harmful situation into a political advantage.

This episode was typical of Hancock's unique political style, with its emphasis on appeasing all sides by a subtle blend of facade and symbol in place of substance and decision. On another divisive issue, regarding the banishment of Tory sympathizers and the confiscation of their estates, he adopted a similar approach. The issue reflected the deep divisions within the Massachusetts body politic which Hancock was carefully trying to balance. But by itself the issue was rather straightforward. Republicans, radicals, and many western reformers shared a desire to seize Tory property in order to strengthen the state's financial situation. But within the merchant community and among moderates, many of whom were related by either blood or marriage to the Tory refugees, there was generally a more sympathetic regard for their plight.

This then posed a serious problem for Hancock, who resolved it in his customary manner. According to James Warren, "some people of Influence" were genuinely opposed to the confiscation and banishment plans on principle, but Hancock, "having no principle," except for his "own ambition and popular applause," publicly supported these plans, yet privately sought to "reduce it to Nothing" by limiting the number of people actually named for proscription.[50] As a result, he first managed to placate the Whigs and then the Tories, which according to Warren, was his only purpose. Furthermore, Warren was disgusted with the ease by which Hancock succeeded with this deception; bemoaning how "most people will be pleased and trumpet the praises of some Men," in this case Hancock, "however Inconsistent their Conduct is and however Manifestly Calculated to serve their own Ambitious purposes."[51]

In spite of Warren's claim of inconsistency, Hancock's political methods were well calculated to achieve his objectives. Throughout 1778-1779, he used his popularity to create an unnatural political coalition, consisting of western agrarians, eastern merchant and maritime interests, moderates, Tory sympathizers, and a varied assortment of opportunists who sought to attach themselves to his political coattails. Putting this together was a painstakingly slow process, requiring his constant attendance and attention. This prompted him to ignore repeated calls that he "repair" immediately to Congress.[52] But even these attempts to embarrass him failed to harm his reputation as his friends saw to it that new honors were continually heaped on him. Among these was his election as the new Speaker of the House, providing him a convenient excuse for further delaying his return to Congress.[53] The only

cost was the alienation of John Pickering, Hancock's supporter who formerly held the post.[54]

Hancock also ignored attempts to heal the breach between himself and Sam Adams initiated by friendly third parties.[55] Instead he escalated his campaign against him, trying to force his recall from Congress. That effort failed, but Hancock managed to erode enough of Adams's support in the Massachusetts House that he was compelled to resign as Secretary. John Avery, Hancock's friend and ally, was elected his successor.[56] Hancock's influence also saved Thomas Cushing from defeat. Never very popular, Cushing, with Hancock's timely assistance, was narrowly elected to the Governor's Council by a margin of only one vote. But these efforts were basically peripheral to Hancock's larger objective, which was getting the towns of Massachusetts to approve a call for a constitutional convention. Western support for this plan was assured. The big breakthrough came as Boston, under Hancock's leadership, voted unanimously at the May 10th, 1779 Town Meeting to endorse the proposal. This opened the way for a Constitutional Convention held later that summer in Cambridge which Hancock attended as one of Boston's twelve elected delegates.[57]

Hancock's primary interest in the constitution was that it be acceptable to the majority of Massachusetts towns. He was less concerned about its actual content, yet he was aware of a conservative reaction to the public's almost apathetic response to the previous attempt to ratify a constitution. He also knew that many republicans saw this as the last chance at saving many of the gains achieved by the revolution. Therefore in a shrewd but calculated gamble, Hancock stepped aside and allowed his republican critics and political rivals a nearly free hand in draft-

ing the proposed constitution. Much of the work fell on John Adams who had only recently returned from a diplomatic mission to Europe when he was promptly elected a delegate to the convention by his neighbors in Braintree . Adams's eventual draft provided for a two-house legislature, a strong executive and an independent judiciary. A moderate property qualification assured most males over twenty-one years of age the right to vote and the Governor was granted an absolute veto power over all legislative acts. He was also named commander in chief of the military but could only serve five out of seven years.[58] Still, this was more than Hancock could have hoped for and justified his faith in the inborn conservative instincts among even Massachusetts's most ardent revolutionaries.

After much debate and some modifications, including provisions for overriding the Governor's veto, the Convention endorsed Adams's draft and sent it on to the towns for their consideration. Again, almost every town found something to complain about, but when the reconvened Convention met in June to count the votes, the conservatives and moderates were firmly in control and were determined to see the constitution approved. By manipulating the votes from the towns, they managed to create the appearance of an overwhelming acceptance when just the opposite was true.[59] But the opposition was fragmented, disorganized and incapable of resisting the outcome. What Hancock had long hoped and worked for now existed, and the new state constitution opened the way for the election of a Governor. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that he would be a leading candidate. The only serious opposition that emerged was from the unexpected return to public life of James Bowdoin, who sought to rally

the forces long associated with Sam Adams.

James Warren was unrealistically optimistic and thought Bowdoin's chances of winning were good, but feared whatever the results, the state would be badly split along geographic lines.[60] This was something he and John Adams had long feared and worked against. Bowdoin's other supporters, however, were more realistic about his chances against the ever popular Hancock. William Gordon took some comfort in predicting that "the most knowing and sensible" people would support Bowdoin, "but the common people, who are ignorant" of Hancock's "true character - have had his name so often dinged in their ears," that they "will be likely to pitch upon him."[61] Finally, Abigail Adams observed that "the Man who from Merit, fortune and abilities ought to be our Chief is not popular, and tho he will have the votes of the sensible judicious part of the state, he will be more than out Numberd by the Lovers of the tinkeling cymball."[62]

The September 1780 election for Governor proved Abigail Adams partially right. Hancock's supporters easily out numbered all of his opponents added together in what was a smashing personal triumph. Out of 10,383 votes cast, Hancock received 9,475 while his nearest rival, James Bowdoin, received only 888.[63] "His popularity is greater than ever," mourned a disconsolate James Warren. Although his dire warnings of a badly divided state was proven ill founded as a result of Hancock's across the board election sweep, Warren quickly found something else to complain about. "Frequent and brilliant Entertainments strengthen his popularity," he lamented, "and whether it will end in Absolute Adoration, or in the Exhaustion of the sources of profusion I cant say."[64] Sam Adams was also stunned by Hancock's one-sided landslide victory. "I

confess I did not forsee that Boston would have been so united as I find they were, when two such Competitors as he & Mr. Bowdoin were set up." Yet Hancock had received all but 65 of Boston's 923 votes for Governor.[65]

Hancock's success at the polls was more than just a mere testament to his personal popularity, in spite of Abigail Adams's snide remarks about his resemblance to a "tinkeling cymball." Instead it was positive proof of his innate political talents with which he was able to reconcile the broad differences existing within the Massachusetts electorate. His victory also affirmed the soundness of his strategy whereby he eschewed all controversial issues and concentrated instead on becoming a representative of unity and continuity. In the process he successfully appeased most of the state's major political factions. Republicans were pleased by the nearly free hand they had in drafting the state's recently adopted constitution. The commercial interests of the eastern seaport towns were reconciled by the constitution's conservative tone which thwarted the democratic reforms insisted by western agrarians. Even the agrarian reformers were partially satisfied in that they had at least secured a written constitution in spite of the opposition of eastern conservatives. All of these factions demonstrated their appreciation of Hancock's efforts by providing him an enormous election victory, and in his own way, Hancock achieved a degree of unity in what one historian termed "bipartisan support for the constitution and for himself as governor."[66] But the unity Hancock provided also had its price, and that was the lack of effective, purposeful, and decisive leadership.

As the first popularly elected Governor of Massachusetts, Hancock's personal ambitions were for the most part satisfied. At the same time he had very little to offer in the way of solving the state's many internal problems. Instead he soon grew preoccupied with maintaining his popularity, enjoying the privileges of power, settling petty and irrelevant animosities, and delighting in a ceremonious and extravagant life style which was quickly emulated by the rich and would be rich. The Adams-Warren-Bowdoin faction railed against him, especially for his frivolous unrepublican life style, but to no avail. Hancock's hold over the electorate was too firm to be undone by their scathing and libelous attacks, and would remain so until his death. He assured himself of the public's continuous support by employing the same strategies, tactics, and ploys he so successfully used to become Governor. By avoiding sides in the debate over the Congressional Impost of 1781, or the internal struggle over the state's fiscal policies, particularly on the impost and excise proposals of 1781-82, and by his frequent enigmatic addresses to the General Court on any potentially devisive issue, Hancock repeatedly postured as an unsullied, independent patriot, standing far removed from the pettiness of self-interested politicians, opportunists, and agitators. This approach worked well for him and enabled him to convince the people of Massachusetts that as an aristocrat turned republican, they had nothing to fear from him and that they had no reason to doubt his commitment to the new constitution.[67]

His first inauguration as Governor was the high point of his career in public life. In a short but eloquent address, he pledged his obedience and support to the constitution and outlined the priorities of

his administration. They included the establishment of a strong army in order to secure American independence, correction of the state's fiscal problems resulting from the depreciation of the currency, and assistance for public education "by which not only the freedom, but the very existence of the republics, are greatly affected." In conclusion, he offered the hope mixed with a warning that the new government would try and "diffuse a new animation through the whole political body;" but he feared that "the people expect much from it, perhaps more in some points than circumstances will allow it to perform."[68] If nothing else, Hancock was a political realist.

Throughout his successive administration as Governor, Hancock reiterated the same themes but did little to encourage legislation that would achieve these goals. Almost all legislation and policy decisions were left in the hands of the Assembly, which was easily dominated by the eastern commercial and maritime interests who were mainly concerned with their own financial well being and their future economic opportunities. Hancock had no desire to tangle with this powerful interest group and allowed them a relatively free reign in the legislature.[69] Instead, he was preoccupied trying to look and act like a Governor, while carefully using his patronage powers to secure for himself all the necessary friends and allies he needed to ensure his annual reelection victories.[70] One disinterested observer recorded that his "credit with the Masses is great," and "his policy is shrewd and even crafty."[71] Naturally his conduct provoked a storm of criticism from a predictable source, but this too added to his political success by diverting the public's attention away from more serious and divisive problems.

The Warren-Adams-Bowdoin faction was bitterly frustrated by Hancock's unchecked success, particularly because it came at their expense. They held him personally responsible for their own exclusion from public office and consequently attacked him at every opportunity, no matter how minor the provocation. James Warren orchestrated these assaults from his home in Plymouth, where he vented his spleen in a streak of angry letters of denunciation addressed to Sam Adams. "Nothing Excited my resentment so much," he wrote, "as the Neglect you are treated with, neither your Beloved Town, the County, the State, or the Two Houses have shown any Gratitude for your many and great Services." The reason for this, he reasoned, was Hancock. This was the fate of "every Body that will not worship the Great Image." Warren even went so far as to assert that Hancock was designing "to establish himself Perpetual Archon," and whether or not "he will be able to convey that Honor to his Family by hereditary right," only time would tell.[72]

Sam Adams was soon expressing the same sense of bitterness and joined in on these attacks, claiming that "we are reduced to the Hutchinsonian times" again. He particularly despised Hancock's affection for elaborate ceremony, and argued that there is now "more Pomp and Parade" in government, "than is consistent with the sober Republican Principles," intended by the framers of the constitution to be the basis of good government. But even when Adams decided that human nature was also at fault, because it was too "debas'd to relish these Republican Principles," he still held Hancock responsible for intentionally leading the people astray by taking advantage of the fact that "mankind is prone enough to political Idolatry," without needing any additional encouragement.[73]

Writing under the name of the "Constant Republican," Adams's criticisms eventually found their way into the newspapers. He singled out for attack Hancock's propensity for excessively lavish public entertainments, balls and galas, profuse expenditures, and granting of too many commissions for Justices of the Peace, in order to gain popularity. Hancock's friends immediately came to his defence. James Sullivan, one of Hancock's closest and most intimate advisors, answered Adams by arguing that entertainment was necessary for the public's cheerfulness, and was perfectly alright if consistent with the host's financial means. He also claimed these festivities help affirm America's relationship with its French allies.[74]

Not merely content with defending him, Hancock's friends, presumedly with his blessing, counter attacked with equally outlandish and irrelevant accusations of their own against his critics. James Bowdoin was portrayed as a Tory sympathizer because his son-in-law, John Temple, had close associations with the British government, and Temple was accused of being a British spy. Anyone trying to defend either of them was likewise slandered.[75] Consequently, this sort of attack and counter attack distracted the public from more important issues, such as the conduct of the war and the state's fiscal problems. Politically this was to Hancock's advantage and he capitalized on this development by appearing to ignore these hostile exchanges, while quietly leaving it to his friends to fight it out in his behalf. Meanwhile, as long as the quality of political debate, particularly on the gubernatorial level, was allowed to degenerate into this meaningless clash of personalities and revolve around such irrelevant issues as Hancock's life style, republican virtues,

and patriotism, then Hancock's continued reelection as governor was a certainty.[76]

In October 1781, General Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, effectively ending the American War for Independence, although the last British troops would not evacuate American soil for at least another two years. Hancock's contribution to this final military effort was negligible, and in some ways his haphazard handling of administrative details actually hampered Washington's planning for this campaign. From May through August, Hancock failed to respond to Washington's frequent requests for the transfer of Massachusetts militia units and supplies to Albany in order to free regular army units from New York slated to take part in the Yorktown operations.[77] Under the circumstances, Hancock's behavior was inexplicable, but it was not entirely the product of any personal animosity or jealousy directed at Washington, as some opponents claimed. Rather it was the result of his administrative habit of entrusting all details to subordinate officers. Once apprised of the fact that his orders to the state's militia were not carried out, he personally ordered the brigades to "hasten their march," and although arriving later than requested, Massachusetts's militia units still arrived in Albany before any others.[78] His failure to keep Washington informed, however, was inexcusable.

Hancock's laziness and his inability to carry through on projects once begun was as much a part of his administration as Governor as they were characteristic of his earlier career as a merchant or even as Treasurer of Harvard College. In addition, his obsessive desire to become Governor was now somewhat transformed into an equally compulsive

need to retain his office, which from his political point of view meant avoiding any serious confrontation with major political problems. The most serious one was the state's rapidly deteriorating economy. Independence only magnified the problem and brought matters to a head more quickly. Eastern commercial interests loudly complained about the ruinous post war influx of British goods which glutted the market, while their own export products were barred entry to English ports. Westerners were pleading for tax relief and lamented the scarcity of cash and the decline in farm prices. The state's debt was steadily growing, along with the interest charges which were further strained by having to absorb the state's share of the Continental Congress's war debts.[79]

His evasive tactics were familiar and typically Hancock. One week he would distract everyone by issuing an appeal for contributions to help relieve the suffering of war victims in South Carolina and Georgia. The next week he would take part in the celebrations honoring the appointment of a new president of Harvard College. Another week he would provide a public entertainment at Faneuil Hall for the leading citizens of Boston. If worse came to worse, Hancock would use his poor health as a convenient refuge.[80]

As useful as his health was as an excuse, it was also true that Hancock's physical condition was deteriorating prematurely. In June, 1782 an observer commented that although "only forty-five, he had the appearance of advanced age." Furthermore, his once graceful and erect six foot frame was now slightly stooped and he was obviously "enfeebled by disease." Nevertheless, Hancock could still present an aristocratic pose as his manners remained gracious in the "old style of dignified

complaisance," and his dress was ornate and widely imitated.[81] But as Massachusetts' economic problems intensified and Hancock's health worsened, he found it increasingly difficult to divert the public's attention away from more serious matters; and although he continued winning the governorship year after year, each time it was by a smaller margin of victory. As a final ploy, Hancock floated the rumor that he was seriously considering retirement from public life.

This threat rallied support. William Heath reported that it gave him "inexpressible pleasure and satisfaction on my journey...through Massachusetts to find your interests so warmly and well supported in every town." Heath also advised Hancock against resigning, for to do so "would be to gratify many of your opposers and grieve your friends. You have yet many of the latter, and warmly attached to your interests."[82] Still, Hancock was seriously thinking of stepping down. In a letter to his old friend and employee, James Scott, he unburdened his true feelings.

> "I have for ten years past devoted myself to the concerns of the Public. I have not the vanity to think that I have been of very extensive service in our late unhappy contest, but one thing I can truly Boast, I sat out upon honest Principles & strictly adhered to them to the close of the contest and this I defy malice itself to controvert."

Hancock also informed Scott that he was preoccupied with settling his public affairs because of his determination to resign as Governor and return to private life. "After the many fatigues I have gone thro'... I am really worn out with public business." He then inquired of Scott whether he would purchase and command a vessel for him in order that he might reestablish himself in his "old line" as a trans-Atlantic merchant.[83]

But at the last moment Hancock hesitated and then reversed his

decision. "His Excellency the Governor," complained William Gordon, "has been playing over again the childish trick of the preceeding year. He would resign....The Council was summoned to attend, to hear his big speech upon the occasion. They came, and the mouse appeared upon the green cloth. His friends had persuaded him not to resign."[84] Hancock stayed on as Governor through the 1784 election and on into the next year when on January 29th he caught everyone off guard by formally announcing his intended resignation.[85] Unlike his previous threats, this one came quickly and without warning, but his motives were no less suspect. William Gordon interpreted his actions as another "finesse for settling himself in the chair another twelve month."[85] Elbridge Gerry listed several possible explanations, among them, Hancock's health, a political ploy that backfired, a freak error in judgment, or credited it as an example of Hancock's peevishness.[87] In any case, he and Hancock's other opponents were delighted, and privately cheered to one another that "Governor Hancock has resigned. Thanks be to _____."[88]

Lieutenant Governor Thomas Cushing succeeded Hancock as Governor. Meanwhile Massachusetts braced itself for its first real election contest for Governor since the constitution was adopted in 1780. But even in retirement Hancock would continue to be a crucial issue as well as a determining factor in Massachusetts politics. Hancock's unexpectedly sudden retirement also conveniently removed him from the center stage as the state's severest post revolutionary war crisis was about to break. It is hard not to believe that Hancock's uncanny political instincts were not somehow alert to the impending crisis and helped influence his decision to step down when he did.[89]

CHAPTER XI

THE END OF AN ERA

Few contemporaries better understood or were more adept at navigating Massachusetts' complex political cross currents than was Hancock. Consequently, his unexpected resignation as Governor confounded both his friends and foes alike. But there was more good sense to his apparent illogical behavior than his opponents were capable of understanding. Elbridge Gerry, for one, completely misinterpreted Hancock's motivations. Writing to Rufus King, Gerry confidently explained that Hancock's decision was nothing more than a rash impulsive act done "in a freak, without consulting...even his most intimate friends." Furthermore, Gerry assured King, based on excellent authority, that Hancock had tried to use his threatened resignation as a ploy in order to compel the legislature to "request him to continue in the chair and pursue measures to recover his health while the duties of the office should devolve on the Lieutenant-Governor." But to Gerry's obvious delight the plan misfired as the legislature took Hancock's message seriously, and politely "encouraged" him to resign. Hancock was then, according to Gerry, so "chagrined and disgusted; but he delayed his resignation three weeks and was then under the necessity of proffering it, as all sources failed him for making retreat."[1]

Gerry's explanation was more wishful thinking than reality and completely overlooked the fact that Hancock was under no compulsion to resign unless of course he actually planned to do so all along. Besides there were several excellent reasons why Hancock wanted to step down when he did. In his address to the General Court, Hancock cited his

poor health as the basis of his decision. "Some relaxation is absolutely necessary for me," he explained, "and that I must at present give up all attention to public business and pursue the means of regaining my health."[2] In addition to his weakened physical conditon, Hancock might just as easily have mentioned his declining political health, for he was keenly aware of his eroding popularity during his last few terms in office. In his most recent election victory in 1784, his popular vote count was off almost a quarter of what it had been at its peak in 1781.[3] It was not enough for him just to be governor of Massachusetts; Hancock's pride also required that he be popular as well.

If ailing health and declining popularity were not enough reasons, then certainly the prospect of another divisive political debate convinced him that this was the optimum moment for beating a strategic retreat. For the last several years the "old radicals," personified by Sam Adams, James Warren, and Elbridge Gerry, had been hammering away at what they preceived to be signs of decaying American morality and social degeneracy. "How are we to guard against the contagion of European Manners," pondered Warren, who dreaded the "Excessive Influx of Commerce, Luxury and Inhabitants from abroad which will soon Embarass us." Fearfully he predicted that "commerce will flow with an irresistable tide. Manners and Luxury will follow of course," and it will become increasingly "difficult to draw the Line where to stop."[4] Sam Adams agreed. Writing to John Adams he described how "surpriz'd" he would be to "see the Equipage, the Furniture, and expensive Living of too many, the Pride and Vanity of Dress which pervades thro every class, confounding every Distinction between Poor and the Rich and evencing (sic) the want both

of Example and Economy."[5] This was not the image of America that initially motivated these men to revolt against the King.

These "old radicals" also genuinely believed that they were the true guardians of the old "puritan ethic," and protectors of the Revolution; they were equally sincere in portraying Hancock as their principal apostate enemy. Their hatred of him was all the greater because he was once considered to be one of them. But now his luxurious, materialistic, and aristocratic life style epitomized everything that seemed to have gone wrong with what they believed, either rightly or wrongly, to be their revolution.[6] Yet, as long as they directed their emnity solely at Hancock, their political effectiveness was insignificant. Perhaps realizing this, by the winter of 1784-85 they adopted a new approach, and in the process helped ignite a crucial statewide debate on nothing less fundamental than the very nature of American society.[7]

This debate was bound to be divisive. Beside attacking what they saw everywhere as signs of America's decline in virtue and morality, and an increase in luxury and idleness, all of which they continued to blame on Hancock's poor example as Governor, they also included several new issues which further complicated matters. For example, they opposed all attempts to increase the Continental Congress's authority at the expense of the individual states. They resisted all of Robert Morris's schemes as Superintendent of Finance as he sought to increase the central government's powers by getting the states to adopt a new national impost, securing federal control over the customs houses, and encouraging increased trade with Great Britain. Furthermore, these "old radicals" were against the return of Tory refugees and distrusted the growing in-

fluence of lawyers in Massachusetts government and politics. Meanwhile, Hancock and his supporters, particularly among the merchant community, either favored these measures or passively tolerated them.[8]

Hancock could not help but be aware that a political debate involving such basic issues as these would certainly undermine his political strength, for it would be impossible for him to reconcile all the different needs and objectives of his diverse groups of supporters. Some were bound to be slighted. Consequently, he chose to do the wise thing and that was to resign while he was still on top and still relatively popular. By removing himself from the scene he also hoped to weaken the opposition's attacks by depriving them of a convenient target.

In the long run Hancock's plan succeeded. But for the moment it appeared as if the "old radicals" had finally triumphed at Hancock's expense. His resignation opened the way for their first real chance at winning the governorship. Their candidate was James Bowdoin and they supported him by launching a fervently moralistic campaign against a "Tea Drinking Assembly" or "Sans Souci Club," which recently began meeting that winter in Boston. This club, innocuously dedicated to dancing and card playing, personified everything they disliked about Hancock, his gentry supporters and America's moral decline. Sam Adams, writing as an "Observer" in the public newspapers warned that this club was designed "to lull and enervate these minds already too much softened, poisoned and contaminated by idle pleasures and foolish gratifications."[9] "Candidus" was of like mind and warned that the "Tea Assembly" was very "dangerous and destructive" to an infant republic.[10]

In Hancock's absence, many of his previous supporters, such as Tris-

stram Dalton of Newburyport, leaped at the opportunity to succeed him as Governor. But even while out of office, Hancock's hold over the "Hancockians" remained secure as he designated Thomas Cushing as his hand picked successor. In regards to Dalton's foiled attempt, Hancock was overheard to say, "I know what he, meaning D. wants, but he never shall have it."[11] Hancock's plans failed, however, in that Bowdoin narrowly defeated Cushing by approximately five hundred votes in the state's most bitterly fought election of the decade.[12] Yet all was not lost.

As Hancock hoped, the moralistic and virtuous tones of Bowdoin's campaign quickly foundered upon the realities of statecraft. In June, following his inauguration, the new Governor idealistically issued "A Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety. Virtue. Education and Manners, and for the Suppression of Vice," much to the delight of Sam Adams.[13] Writing to his cousin John, Adams confessed that this "is what I have long wish'd for. Our new Governor has issued his Proclamation," and "with the good Example of a first Magistrate & others may perhaps restore our virtue."[14] But Governor Bowdoin was soon distracted by the more pressing concerns of factional politics, governmental administration, and the sobering effects of Shays' Rebellion. In this climate, the first casualty was the crusade for moral regeneracy.

Furthermore, although defeated by Bowdoin for the governorship, Thomas Cushing was reelected the Lieutenant-Governor of the Commonwealth. Hancock also was returned to public life by the voters of Boston who elected him to the Assembly, filling the seat conveniently vacated for this purpose by Hancock's political confidant, James Sullivan.[15] When the new Massachusetts General Court convened, however, Hancock's attempt

to become Speaker of the House was rebuffed. To assuage his hurt feelings, he was promptly appointed one of the state's representatives to the Continental Congress.[16] As Mercy Otis Warren sourly observed, "there is such a blind Attachment to this man of straw that I have little doubt he will have the opportunity of establishing himself for life - perhaps even the power of entailing an Hereditary succession."[17] On this note, Hancock began a brief two year exile from the lime-light of Massachusetts politics, all the while cagily preparing for a triumphant return.

Even in self-imposed retirement, Hancock remained a potent political force in Massachusetts as his every move and gesture alarmed his opponents. In July, he tacitly announced his challenge to Bowdoin's administration by declining the Governor's invitation to attend Harvard College's commencement exercises. He claimed that "the treatment I met at the Overseers' Meeting two years ago," when he was pressed to settle his remaining delinquent accounts as Treasurer, was the main reason for his refusal. He added that he hoped the Governor would "not impute my absence to any other motive," but it is doubtful that Hancock expected Bowdoin to take this as anything less than a personal affront.[18]

A clearer example of his capacity to evoke concern among Bowdoin's friends occurred that summer as rumors proliferated about Hancock's imminent departure for New York where the Continental Congress was meeting. It was generally believed that once there Hancock would be instantly reelected President of Congress. According to William Gordon, "politicians conjecture, he is laying out for the President's chair, that there will be all the apparatus of his coming on, and that if chosen during absence he will answer to appearances; but that if not

chosen, illness real or feigned will prevent it."[19] Hancock intentionally fueled these rumors by notifying George Partridge, a member of the Massachusetts delegation to Congress, that he was thinking "of going to N York in Novr," and inquired "about accomodations for his family," as he intended to take them along with him.[20]

Partisans of Governor Bowdoin interpreted this as a direct challenge to his administration. Elbridge Gerry informed the Governor, based on "information from Massachusetts that the election of Mr. Hancock to the chair of Congress is considered there by friends of the present administration of the Commonwealth as a measure opposed to the interest thereof," and is designed "to create jealousies between it and the delegates of the state now in Congress."[21] James Warren was more direct. He feared that for the second time, Hancock was planning to use the Presidency as a stepping stone to the governorship of Massachusetts.

> "I will still be honest and continue to despise his Caprice, Incapacity and Indolence, and do every thing I can to prevent his again having it in his Power to Disgrace this Government by an Administration of Imbicility and weakness. And if I enjoy none of the Honour and Emoluments of a Government, my vigorous Zeal and Steadiness for many years had some share in Obtaining, I will be satisfied if the Man on Beacon-Hill does not."[22]

Since the Congress frequently did not have enough members present to make a quorum, the selection of a new President was repeatedly delayed. Still, Hancock was the leading candidate, having strong support among the southern states.[23] Nevertheless, many of the delegates were eager for some assurance that he indeed wanted the position and would accept it if offered. Meanwhile, Hancock hung back, refusing to leave Boston for New York until he was convinced that the Presidency would be offered. He did not want to be placed in the embarrassing situation of arriving

at Congress only to learn that someone else was elected instead. While awaiting word from New York, a severe attack of gout temporarily incapacitated him. "Whether it is a political, or natural fit," Warren confessed he was not sure. "If the former, he may have some reason to despair of the Presidency, and may wrap up in Baze, as a preparatory to a resignation when the Court meets. If every Body loved him as I do, they would save him the trouble, and excuse without the Expense of a single piece of Baze."[24]

While recovering from his latest "attack," Hancock kept in close touch with James Sullivan. After meeting together late in October, Sullivan relayed parts of their conversation on to Rufus King, one of the state's delegates to Congress. "Our friend Hancock," he reported, "has been very sick as his Country Seat; he came into town last evening; I called upon him, he will soon be better, he has not yet given his answer respecting going to Congress, but I believe he will go." Sullivan further clarified why he was so confident that Hancock would accept the Presidency if offered.

> "I told him I thought he would be president if he went: he smiled and said that it would give him great pleasure to meet his old compatriots after the completion of all their wishes and should be glad to serve his Country where he should be most useful so far as his health would admit of - by the by I think the President's chair the Easiest in the union for an invalid and told him so...."[25]

This clinched it. On November 23, 1785, the Secretary of Congress notified all the states of Hancock's unanimous election, making him the only man twice honored in this way.[26] His ability to engineer this feat, especially while so far removed from the scene, was an extraordinary testament to his popularity and undiminished political skill. Within a

week of receiving Rufus King's confirmation of his victory, however, Hancock unabashedly replied that "the Intelligence convey'd to me in your Letter was quite unexpected."[27] On the same day he informed the Congress that he was "exceedingly honour'd" by this appointment and only wished his "abilities were more equal to the complete execution of the Duties of that office." Nevertheless, he accepted the post and promised that his abilities, "such as they are," shall "be employ'd in the service of my Country, and as soon as I can arrange my Affairs here, I will proceed to New York."[28]

In spite of repeated promises to the contrary, Hancock never made it to New York while President of Congress. Month after month, throughout 1785 and well into the next year, he offered one excuse after another, each time delaying his departure and moving his arrival further ahead to some indefinite time in the future.[29] But if he had hoped to use his election as President in order to regain the Governorship of Massachusetts that year, and that was why he stalled his departure from New York, then he was disappointed. Bowdoin was easily reelected to a second term, prompting James Warren's caustic comment that "indeed when a man is once in, it is for life."[30] Less than a month later, Hancock officially announced his resignation as President of Congress for health reasons.[31] As he previously explained to Rufus King, "I have scarcely yet Recover'd from a late very severe fit of Gout, so as to have the free use of my hands."[32]

For the remainder of the year Hancock intentionally kept a low profile. Meanwhile a crisis brewing in western Massachusetts improved his chances of making a successful political comeback. James Warren ably

explained the problem.

> "The constant drain of specie to make remittances for Baubles Imported from England is so great as to occasion an extreme scarcity. Commerce is ruined..., the husbandry and Manufactures of the country cannot be supported.., No debts can be paid, or Taxes collected. The first are severely demanded by multiplied law suits; the last are become more necessary than ever by the wants of the public...Interest is the great Object, the only Pursuit, and Riches only respected. Everything seems verging to confusion and anarchy and certainly great Wisdon and Address are necessary to prevent it."33

The effect was particularly hard on western farmers, many of them revolutionary war veterans, who in order to pay their taxes and mortgages were compelled to sell their army notes at a fraction of their face value, often as low as fifteen cents on the dollar. Most of these notes were purchased by eastern merchants and speculators who now anticipated making a killing, thanks to their friends in the Massachusetts General Court. In anticipation of Massachusetts' war debt about to come due, the Legislature levied high real estate and poll taxes, payable only in specie, in order to redeem these old notes at face value plus interest. Westerners were outraged at the prospect of losing everything they owned. When their protests and demands for reform fell on deaf ears, they marched under the leadership of ex-army officers like Daniel Shays, and closed down the court houses in five western counties to prevent the courts from seizing their property to pay off their debts.[34]

Throughout the summer and fall as the crisis intensified, Hancock maintained his self-imposed silence. Meanwhile, a large number of his fellow merchants and many former revolutionary war cohorts pressed the Governor to forcefully surpress the rebellion. Lawyers like Christopher Gore criticized the government's lethagy. "I wish it was generally be-

liev'd," he complained, "that an attack on property and a subversion of the Government was intended, for so great a languor, so little spirit I never knew."[35] Sam Adams was even more militant, insisting that "the man who dares to rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death."[36]

Under intensive pressure, Bowdoin at last responded. Supported by a voluntary subscription raised among the Boston merchant community to help defray the cost, the Governor called out 5,000 militiamen under General Benjamin Lincoln and authorized them to disperse the insurgents. Hancock refused to contribute to this campaign, which easily succeeded in scattering the poorly armed farmers and by late January 1787 restored order to western Massachusetts.[37] Undoubtedly he thought the Governor's response was too severe and, therefore, from a strictly political perspective, it was ill conceived. By temperament Hancock was a moderate, who preferred the more peaceful tactics of compromise and accommodation. Bowdoin's use of overwhelming force in order to disperse a handful of angry and wronged farmers seemed both unnecessary and foolish. But as he saw his chances of regaining the governorship greatly improved as a result of Bowdoin's intemperate decisions, he was careful to hold his tongue and not risk offending anyone. The accidental death of his only child also gave Hancock a personal reason for refraining from any overt political activity or statement.

The death of his nine year old son, John George Washington Hancock, as a result of a fatal head injury incurred while ice skating, left Hancock visibly shaken.[38] During the funeral procession, the local papers reported how Hancock and his wife followed behind their son's corpse in

a state of "great affliction," which only intensified the solemnity and sense of depression marking the ceremony. Nevertheless, the same papers applauded Hancock for "his strict observance of the regulations of the town" respecting funerals. Furthermore, "he has guarded against every unnecessary expense for himself and family." The papers went on to express the hope that in the future others would follow Hancock's wise example.[39]

Hancock's uncharacteristic insistance on moderation for his son's funeral was an indication of just how deeply distraught he was over his son's death. In a letter to General Henry Knox, written almost two months later, he apologized for "dwelling" so long "upon the Melancholy subject," but confessed that his "situation is totally deranged by the untimely Death" of his "dear and Promising Boy." Yet, however genuine his sadness was, there were other elements to it that were uniquely Hancock. For example, he bemoaned the fact that "I have no Affectionate Object to promise myself the enjoyment of what I leave." Thus having no heir, Hancock's own political ambitions were apparently rekindled as he decided "to pursue the means" of recovering his own health. To accomplish this he planned a short trip to New York and Philadelphia accompanied by Mrs. Hancock and several servants. He asked General Knox to arrange accommodations personally for them in New York for an anticipated ten day visit.[40]

His sudden interest in traveling: "journeying is much Recommended to me;" as well as his public statements about seeking to regain his health: "the Obtainment of health is now my pursuit," alerted his rivals that something new was afoot and that his lengthy silence and period

of inactivity was about to come to an end.[41] Rufus King, writing from New York, inquired of Elbridge Gerry, "What is the meaning of this movement?"[42] The answer was readily apparent. Hancock's decision to travel outside of Massachusetts coincided with Governor Bowdoin and the General Court's adoption of a series of repressive measures directed against the participants and sympathizers of Shay's Rebellion.

Following the armed suppression of these insurgents, the General Court embarked upon a campaign to permanently eradicate the Shaysites potential for causing renewed trouble. Legislation was enacted to deprive them of their political rights, including their disqualification from voting, serving on juries, and holding elective office until after May 1, 1788. A special commission was established to tour the western counties and examine the loyalty of citizens, and a special session of the supreme judicial court was called to order to speed up the prosecution of the accused. Loyalty oaths were also required of town and militia officers.[43] The Governor's supporters were pleased, but the arbitrariness of these measures turned public opinion against the government, evoking a wave of sympathy for the persecuted Shaysites that did not exist formerly. James Warren, for example, thought the court went too far, as he broke with both the administration and Sam Adams who urged even sterner penalties.[44] Hancock's principal henchman, James Sullivan, complained that the "people in this state are exceedingly soured" by the court's harshness.[45] His statements were a good clue to Hancock's position, as he let it be widely known that Hancock was seriously interested in serving as Governor again. With Hancock's long silence broken, he became something of an instant hero, particularly to moderates

and westerners who were disgusted with Bowdoin's increasingly repressive administration.

The election of 1787 once again confirmed Hancock's astute political sensitivity to the ever changing mood of Massachusetts' voters. Although it was not quite the revolution many of his supporters enthusiastically claimed it to be, Hancock was, nevertheless, overwhelmingly swept back into office, unseating the incumbent James Bowdoin.[46] In the weeks that followed, Hancock acted swiftly to satisfy his supporters expectations. First he reaffirmed his republican reputation by voluntarily cutting his own salary as Governor. Second, he demonstrated his humanity by pardoning all the remaining Shaysites still in jail who were either facing trial or execution.[47] This act of leniency was consistent with Hancock's long time domestic policies of moderation and reconciliation. Its success was readily apparent. By August, when as Governor Hancock toured the western counties of Massachusetts, he was able to report the restoration of law and order.[48] Begrudging approval even came from an unexpected source. James Warren reluctantly admitted to John Adams, that since Hancock's election, "I do not regret the change so much as I once should, tho' I am sorry for it; if I used to despise the Administration of H., I am disappointed in that of B(owdoin)." In comparison to Sam Adams, who Warren now characterized as "the most arbitrary and despotic Man in the Commonwealth," Hancock was a model of republican virtue.[49]

Hancock's reentry into public life, as well as Shays' Rebellion, coincided with the drafting of a new proposed Federal Constitution in Philadelphia. It was designed to offset the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, and its supporters pointed to Shays' Rebellion as proof

that the central government needed strengthening if anarchy and democratic excesses were to be averted and property be safeguarded. But Hancock's lopsided victory and the ease with which he restored order, without the use of force, was detrimental to the Federalists' argument. Consequently, they tried to rationalize away Hancock's election success. Benjamin Franklin interpreted Hancock's victory as solely a popularity contest between Hancock and Bowdoin, while maintaining that "a great Majority of that people approve the Measures of Government in reducing" the recent rebellion. Furthermore, Franklin insisted, "upon the whole I do not think his being chosen any Proof of General Dissatisfaction with the Measures taken to Suppress the Rebellion, or with the Constitution."[50] James Madison concurred with Franklin's reasoning, although he was more frightened of the possible consequences. Writing to Thomas Jefferson, Madison conceeded that Hancock's "general character forbids a suspicion of his patriotic principles," but since "he is an idolater of popularity, it is to be feared that he may be seduced by his foible into dishonorable compliances."[51] If Madison had known Hancock better, he would have realized that his fears were groundless.

Inspite of his long tenure as President of the Continental Congress, Hancock's political experience was largely confined to Massachusetts. His earlier ambitions to command the Continental Army were resolved long ago, and for the most part he was content with his political position as Governor. Consequently he was not an enthusiastic nationalist and had serious reservations regarding the proposed scheme to strengthen the Federal government especially as he realized the central government's powers would grow at the expense of the individual states. His widespread

popularity as well as his suspected opposition to the Constitution was what worried Madison most about Hancock's election triumph.

As an experienced and wily politician, however, Hancock was far too pragmatic and opportunistic to commit himself prematurely on the question of ratification. His reluctance was apparent to those who studied his methods and tactics most closely. Rufus King, an ardent federalist, reported that Hancock "appears to me to wish well to the constitution but doesn't care to risk anything in its favor."[52] Hancock's reasoning for this cautious approach was quite simple. He was keenly aware that some of the most powerful maritime and commercial interests in Massachusetts were avidly in favor of ratification. In the last statewide elections, it was these same forces which were most outspokenly hostile to his reelection. He knew that they would continue to rally against him unless some mutually beneficial understanding could be reached. He therefore encouraged his confidant James Sullivan to suggest that he was not completely unsympathetic to the proposed constitution. Sullivan responded by notifying King that "our people expect so much happiness from the doings of the Convention that they stand ready to adopt anything which may be offered." Furthermore, Sullivan continued, "some persons indeed who lie to support party prejudices have charged upon others a combination to oppose anything federal," but "you may consider it without foundation and disregard it."[53] This was not exactly an overt commitment of Hancock's support for ratification, but it encouraged the federalists in Massachusetts to hope that he would eventually come around.

In December, Hancock was easily elected one of Boston's twelve delegates to the state's ratifying convention. Meanwhile, his more out-

spoken ally and advocate of the constitution, James Sullivan, was defeated.[54] His loss along with the loss of several other prominent advocates of ratification deeply troubled the federalists who now realized that securing a majority would be more difficult than they first imagined. Yet from Hancock's point of view, a close convention was exactly what he wanted, for now the federalists would be even more desperate to secure his support in order to ensure the Constitution's adoption.

The Massachusetts ratifying convention finally convened on January 9, 1788. By then only five other states had so far approved the Constitution, and all eyes were on Boston where the Constitution faced its first and most critical test. Much of New England was expected to follow Massachusetts' lead and a defeat here would almost certainly prove fatal for the Constitution's ultimate chance of approval. To make the federalists even more edgy was the presence of widespread opposition to the Constitution throughout the state. Only three days earlier at a dinner hosted by former Governor Bowdoin for all of Boston's elected delegates, Sam Adams openly expressed his opposition to ratification.[55] Hancock, who also had been invited to attend, stayed away, keeping with his plan to avoid commenting on the Constitution. As one observer noted, "he had, or affected to have, the gout, and remained at home, wrapped in flannel."[56] Nevertheless, in order to avoid an immediate confrontation, it was previously decided by all factions that Hancock should be chosen President of the convention and Thomas Cushing its Vice President. Accordingly, Hancock made a brief appearance on the ninth to accept his appointment and then excused himself, returning home to bed where he remained for most of the convention. Meanwhile, the remaining delegates proceeded

with a seemingly endless series of debates on each section of the proposed Constitution.[57]

From the outset, even though the Federalists possessed a more glittering array of talented delegates and more competent speakers, the antifederalists held onto a numerical majority.[58] But, "my God what a contrast," thought Henry Jackson, as he contrasted the two groups. "The weight of respectability, integrity, property and ability," he asserted, was clearly on the side favoring ratification.[59] Jeremy Belknap shared his assessment, citing the antifederalists as "clamorous, petulant, tedious and provoking."[60] Yet, after nearly a month of contentious and often heated debate, neither side possessed the absolute majority needed to secure ratification or even close off debate. Thus the final outcome was left to a handful of still undecided moderates. Foremost among them was Hancock, who throughout the deadlocked convention, remained secluded at home, silent, and seemingly uncommitted.

By the end of January, 1788, the Federalists' prospects in Massachusetts outwardly looked dim. "The Convention proceeds slowly - an apprehension that the liberties of the people are in danger, and a distrust of men of property or education have a more powerful effect upon the minds of our opponents than any specific objection against the constitution," surmised Rufus King in his report to James Madison. "Our prospects are gloomy," he concluded, "but hope is not entirely extinguished."[61]

Federalist hope rested on a last minute strategy designed to attract moderate support for the Constitution. "We are now thinking of Amendments to be submitted not as a condition of our assent and ratification, but as the opinion of the convention subjoined to their ratification."

This scheme, predicted Rufus King, "may gain a few members" for ratification.[62] But the crucial part of this plan was to find just the right person who would actually introduce the proposed amendments to the convention. Among the federalists, everyone's obvious first choice was Hancock. It was rightly and wisely understood that only his prestige and popularity would convince the moderates, while at the same time easing the anxieties among the antifederalists. This was also the opportunity Hancock was waiting and hoping for. In a series of secret negotiations it was agreed that in return for Hancock's support of the Constitution, with amendments, that the federalists promised not to oppose his reelection as governor next spring. As an added inducement, they also hinted that if Virginia failed to ratify the Constitution, then Hancock would probably be the most likely choice for President of the new Republic.[63] Once settled, the way was prepared for Hancock's dramatic reappearance before the convention.

Only a handful of people were aware of the secret agreements reached between Hancock and the federalists. Yet, those who were privy to this information knew that it would assure ratification. In strictest confidence, Tristram Dalton informed a friend that if Hancock "may be depended on, he will give countenance to the proposed Constitution, which will carry a large majority in favor of it." In addition, Dalton continued, "Mr. S. Adams will come out in favor of the Constitution. This and the Governor on the same side will settle the matter favorably. All this is scarcely known out of our caucus, wherein we work as hard as in Convention."[64] Dalton's confidence was not as easily shared by those who knew Hancock longer and better. "If Mr. Hancock does not disappoint our

present expectations," Rufus King explained to James Madison, "our wishes will be gratified; but his character is not entirely free from a portion of caprice. This however is confidential."[65]

Nevertheless, Hancock kept his word, disappointing no one among the federalists. On January 31st, wrapped in flannels because of his recent infirmities, Hancock was "carried into the convention by several young gentlemen who were friends of the family," whereby he proceeded to "apologize for his absence, for his feebleness," and for "reading a speech which he had carefully prepared, not being well enough to make it any other manner."[66] In his address that followed, Hancock explained how "his situation had not permitted him to enter into the debates," but from what he had heard of them he was now convinced that it was necessary "to adopt the form of government proposed." Still, he was aware of "a diversity of sentiment" within the convention, and in order to ease some gentlemen's fears, he now proposed to submit "some general amendments" for their consideration which he was sure would remove their "doubts" and "quiet" their apprehensions.[67]

Hancock's nine amendments, although presumedly authored by Theophilus Parsons were specifically designed to address the moderates most serious concerns.[68] Reading from a sheet of paper, Hancock proposed that congressional power to levy direct taxes be limited, that the House of Representatives be enlarged, that more powers be reserved for the individual states, that jury trial be adopted in all civil cases, and that the jurisdiction of the national courts be limited. He also proposed, harking back to his own experiences in the "Liberty Affair," that no person "shall be tried for any crime by which he may incur an infamous

punishment or loss of life until he be first indicted by a Grand Jury."[69] The fact that so many of Hancock's proposed amendments, which were seconded by Samuel Adams, were directly related to his own immediate experiences under the pre-revolutionary British system of justice, suggests that he had a much more active role in their actual drafting than usually credited to him. But even if Hancock played no part in their actual formulation, the mere fact he introduced them as his own, as well as advocating the Constitution's immediate ratification, was enough to assure the convention's acceptance. On February 6, 1778, the Massachusetts Convention formally ratified the Constitution by the narrow margin of nineteen votes out of 355 case; and in the final analysis it was Hancock's prestige and influence which successfully decided the issue in favor of the federalists. His cooperation with Sam Adams, who also endorsed the constitution, marked the beginning of their political reconciliation, adding a new ingredient to Massachusetts' already complicated political scene.

True to their agreement, Hancock received overwhelming federalist support in his bid for reelection in 1788. Consequently, he was easily reelected, his popularity running high as a result of his "midwifeing the other amendments into the world."[70] In Boston alone, Hancock received all but ten votes cast for Governor, while statewide he ran up an impressive four fifths of all votes tallied.[71] Hancock's victory once again confirmed his unerring mastery over Massachusetts' erratic political environment. As John Quincy Adams observed, "the Revolution that has taken place in sentiments within one twelve month past must be astonishing to a person unacquainted with the weaknesses, the follies, and the vices of human nature. The very men who at the last election declared that the Commonwealth would be ruined if Mr. Hancock was chosen have now

done everything to get him in."[72]

This unnatural alliance between Hancock and the Federalists, however, did not last through the year. Their rupture came as a result of Hancock's bid to obtain national office in the new Federal Republic. "This man," reported Christopher Gore, "thinks himself equal to the first place - and it is said disdains the second."[73] Hancock's travel plans confirmed his ambitions. "He is now on a journey to New Hampshire probably with a view of rendering himself conspicuous there for the attainment of this end. It is said he projects an excursion to R. Island & Connecticut with the same view." As Gore astutely warned, "you know the man - and know such movements have ever preceeded any great appointments."[74]

The Federalists were nearly unanimous in their support for George Washington as President once Virginia ratified the Constitution. They were more divided over their choice for Vice President, but generally agreed that the man chosen would have to be a northerner. This ultimately came down to a contest between John Adams and Hancock, both from Massachusetts. In spite of his desire "to be second to no man," Hancock actively sought support for his election to either office.[75] In late 1788 or early 1789, James Sullivan visited the southern states on Hancock's behalf. No doubt he sought "to rally the friends of Hancock, and secure his selection as the second candidate on the Presidential ticket."[76] This activity on Hancock's part as well as his popularity scared some Federalists. "The eyes of wise & good men are on Washington as President & many on Hancock as Vice President - but if the latter should be run on more generally than the former," then according to Gore, Hancock "would be president tho unintentionally by most of the electors."[77]

Equally alarming to some was the perception that "Hancock and his friends really expected that he will be President."[78]

It is unlikely that a political realist like Hancock really believed he could defeat Washington for the Presidency, but for Vice President he had reasonably good expectations. What ultimately defeated him, however, was the Federalists strong dislike, distrust, and united opposition to his candidacy. The influential James Madison of Virginia thought Hancock was "weak, ambitious, a courtier of popularity given to low intrigue and lately united by a factious friendship with S. Adams."[79] John Adams's prospects were further improved when Alexander Hamilton of New York endorsed him. Hamilton saw Adams as the lesser of two evils; fearing that Hancock's popularity might make him too serious a rival to Washington as President. In addition, he thought Hancock might become a magnet for rallying anti-federalist opposition and therefore be harder to influence and control.[80] This was consistent with the Federalists objective of barring all moderates and anti-federalists from influential positions within the new government. Ironically, Hancock's very popularity was his most serious obstacle in his path to national office.

With his Presidential hopes dashed, and his Vice Presidential chances all but eliminated when his own state's legislature chose Presidential electors known to favor his rival, Hancock's uneasy alliance with the Massachusetts Federalists came to an end.[81] To prevent even worse damage, such as losing the Governor's chair in the 1789 elections, the still politically nimble Hancock prepared for the Governor's race by mending his long standing feud with Sam Adams. Nevertheless, the Massachusetts Federalists still hoped to topple him. The "Laco Letters," anonymously

authored by Stephen Higginson, a conservative Federalist with strong mercantile views, was a calculated attempt to erode Hancock's popularity by reviewing his entire career in an extremely biased and derogatory manner.[82] Although these libelous "Laco Letters" permanently damaged Hancock's reputation among later historians by implanting the idea he was merely a weak reed in the stronger hands of more capable men, this erroneous assertion was apparently far less persuasive with the Massachusetts electorate. In April 1789 Hancock was reelected Governor, while Sam Adams was chosen Lieutenant Governor.[83] Together they would continue to hold these executive offices without any serious opposition until Hancock's death in 1793.

These last years of Hancock's life lacked the drama and excitement of his youth. His health, never robust, continued to fail him. A frequent visitor observed how "he has all the marks of approaching dissolution, his face bloated, his legs swelled and etc. and etc."[84] Yet even with obviously failing health, the people of Massachusetts were happy to keep him in office, considering it proper that he and Sam Adams should both receive "honor and rewards" in the latter days of their lives which had been long spent in the service of their country.[85] James Sullivan, in defending Hancock from "Laco's" vicious onslaught, rhetorically asked to be shown one example where the Governor "has been guilty of fraud or deceit in the pursuit of popularity," and questioned whether the entire continent could have been "duped or deceived" by him.[86] On another occasion when explaining his continuous support for Hancock, Sullivan added that he thought the name Hancock was "the center of union with the people."[87] Even Christopher Gore, an ardent Federalist thought

"Laco's" attack and his "disclosures of anything relative to Mr. H.'s conduct during the convention" was not only "unjust," and "ungenerous," but also "highly impolitick."[88] Gore was even pleased with Hancock's election, believing it will "tend to the peace of Massachusetts."[89]

Compared to the major crises and events of his early career in public life, Hancock's last years as a perennial Governor of Massachusetts were relatively free of controversy. One exception to this was the greatly over blown incident concerning Hancock's intentional snubbing of President Washington on the latter's visit to Boston in October 1789. According to some, Hancock sought to use this occasion to try and compel the President to recognize the superiority of states rights over that of federal rights.[90] To accomplish this, Hancock supposedly refused to greet Washington and his party until the President first paid his compliments to the Governor. Washington, however, refused and eventually a much embarrassed Hancock, lamely using his poor health as a transparent excuse, relented and called upon Washington at his temporary lodgings in Boston. Hancock then returned home to sulk until Washington left town. It is unlikely that Hancock's rude behavior had anything to do with states rights or any other principle. Rather, it was a hostile and petty gesture, reflecting Hancock's personal frustration and jealousy of always playing second fiddle to Washington. Abigail Adams correctly stated that Hancock's "conduct was such as to belittle him...in the eyes of every person not totally blinded by his foibles."[91] But there were no lasting consequences as a result of Hancock's actions, and the people continued to return him to office with uninterrputed regularity.

Another amusing incident indicated the more peevish side of Han-

cock's mercurial personality. In August 1792 he suddenly decided to enforce some old statutes prohibiting theater productions in Boston. An audience, enraged over the Governor's decision, took his portrait down from the stage box and "trod it under foot."[92] Undaunted, Hancock ordered the Attorney General, James Sullivan, to secure a warrant for the actor's arrest. Several days later, a mob made up of Hancock's supporters "went up to the Governor's house to ask his leave to pull down the playhouse." Upon their approach, Hancock and his family were thrown into "great consternation, upon the idea that they were of the other party, and were coming to insult him." But after receiving a small delegation representing the mob, and being assured that they were indeed his own followers, Hancock "authorized them to proceed upon their riotous design."[93] A Justice of the Peace fortunately prevented them from doing much damage, nevertheless, the Federalists understood Hancock's message. They correctly interpreted the entire episode as the Governor's way of repaying them for their broken pledge to support Hancock for the presidency; for it was the Federalists of Boston who most resolutely supported the establishment of the theater through their frequent patronage.

This incident aside, Hancock's final years were filled with more than just petty vindictiveness. He willingly cooperated with the Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, in his preparation of a report on the state of America's fisheries. In addition, Hancock pushed for numerous domestic reforms, including the improvement of the state's penal system. But more important than any one of these specific acts, Hancock's tenure as Governor provided Massachusetts with much needed and appreciated peace and stability, allowing all the confusion and disorder caused by revo-

lution, war, and nation building to finally settle down. Thus even when his occasional spitefulness and vanity irritated and frustrated both his friends and foes alike, Hancock's hold upon the affections of the people of Massachusetts remained secure, rooted in their appreciation of his sacrifices and services made in their behalf. To them he remained an important figure, a living physical reminder of their past and all they had endured in their struggle for independence and freedom. They could no more hate and turn against him then hate and turn against themselves for he was indeed one of them and thus embodied all their hopes and aspirations. Furthermore, he understood them as they understood him, and were thereby less troubled by his inconsistencies and vanity. Hancock was an anchor with the past, a link that gave continuity and order to all that the people of Massachusetts had gone through in the last thirty years. His death was the passing of an era.

Hancock died on October 8, 1793 at age fifty seven. On the day prior to his death, the Independent Chronicle reported that, "he appeared more alert than for many days before, which gave his friends some flattering hopes for his recovery." But on the morning of the next day, "he suddenly felt a difficulty in breathing. His physicians were immediately sent for, who gave him some temporary relief; but the dissolution of his nature made such rapid progress that before 8 o'clock he resigned his soul into the hands of Him who gave it."[95]

Seemingly oblivious to his own failing health over the course of the last few years, Hancock died, having carelessly neglected to sign his will. Consequently, the Probate Court assumed responsibility for settling his estate, dividing it equally among his mother, his brother

Ebenezer, and his deceased sister's heirs, after first setting aside a widow's share.[96] Unfortunately for all concerned, Hancock's financial affairs were in such a dreadfully confused state that it was many years before all the claims against it were satisfactorily settled.[97] For years Hancock had apparently neglected repaying most of his bills and obligations. Following his death, a joke circulated around Boston, particularly among his creditors, that related how when two gentlemen met in the street, one observed to the other, "Governor Hancock, I see, has paid the debt of nature." The other replied, "Yes, and its the first debt he ever paid."[98] When the complicated claims against the Hancock estate were finally resolved, little of the vast fortune he inherited from his Uncle Thomas Hancock was left intact to divide among John Hancock's heirs.

Hancock's funeral was perfectly suited to his tastes while alive. Upwards of twenty thousand people flocked to Boston from all across the Commonwealth to observe and participate in this final spectacle. Beginning at his Beacon Hill residence, an escort, including all the powerful and prominent men of Massachusetts, as well as Hancock's family and friends, accompanied his body down and across the commons, down Frog Lane, past the Liberty Pole, through the Main Street, around the State House, up to Court Street to his final destination, the Old Burying Grounds, where he was interred.[99] It was one of Boston's grandest and most colorful funeral pageants as town and country militia units swelled the size of the procession, and the Judges of the Supreme Court made their last appearance in their traditional powdered wigs and black silk gowns.[100] Sam Adams accompanied Hancock's funeral bier on foot, until

fatigue forced him to retire from the processional, but the pomp and ceremony of the day's proceedings were on a scale that would have pleased the late Governor.

John Hancock's death ended his family's social, economic, and political importance in Massachusetts. Nevertheless, his place in history was firmly secured, resting mainly on the strength of his bold signature upon the Declaration of Independence. Although this was no mean achievement, ironically most if not all of his other noteworthy contributions to his state and country were soon largely ignored or forgotten. Certainly he deserved more credit and fame then he was subsequently given. But having left no political organization in place, nor any designated heir apparent, Hancock's entire reputation was left in the hands of others to mold. In time their collective judgment proved severe.

As the history of the American Revolution first came to be written, unfortunately for Hancock's reputation, his political enemies and rivals were the earliest to interpret his contributions, and their opinions have largely endured. From the Tory side, Peter Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson depicted him as a shallow, easily manipulated pawn in the more cunning and dangerous grasp of Sam Adams. Later, for their own political reasons, the Federalists, particularly Stephen Higginson, author of the "Laco Letters," echoed these sentiments. Coming as they did from both of these sources, this view was greatly strengthened, giving it a legitimacy that has survived until today.[101]

For Hancock apologists, and there have been very few, the trouble with this interpretation is that it contains a large kernel of truth that is hard to overcome. In truth, Hancock was mercurial, vain, ego-

tistical, erratic, quixotic, and occasionally vindictive. Yet, this was only one side of his complex personality; otherwise it would be impossible to explain his tremendous popularity and success while alive and politically active. Actually Hancock was and remains somewhat of an enigmatic personality. There is little doubt that he was sincerely patriotic, that he loved Massachusetts and its people, and that he fully understood them. Furthermore he was an extremely adept politician, too capable in the eyes of his rivals, and he was blatantly ambitious. These qualities were regarded as irreparable character flaws that embittered all those against him who were bested by him in the political arena.

In the twilight of his own illustrious life, John Adams frequently recalled the revolutionary war years. His memory of Hancock, with whom he had frequently battled, was surprisingly temperate if not downright respectful. "When will the character of Hancock be understood," he pondered. "Never," he concluded. "I could melt into Tears," Adams continued, "when I hear his Name. The Property he possessed when his country called him, would purchase Washington and Franklin both. If Benevolence, Charity, Generosity were ever Personified in North America, they were in John Hancock. What shall I say of his Education, his litterary Acquisitions, his Travels, his military, civil and political services? His sufferings and sacrifices?"[102] Adams' enthusiasm for Hancock's memory was perhaps excessive, but it influenced the contemporary historian William Tudor, who wrote of Hancock:

> "his talents may be estimated to have been rather useful than brilliant or profound, his habits and appearance were those of a gentleman, his feelings and principles, those of a patriot, his morality and benevolence, those of a sincere professor of Christianity."[103]

Hancock's death had none of the elements of great drama or tragedy. But it did represent the passing of an age, the era of the American Revolution. His entire political career spanned that period, beginning with the first awakening of American resistance to the Parliament and concluding with its final triumph in the establishment of the federal union. His contributions to the struggle were numerous and profound, but they lacked the drama and excitement enjoyed by others. Many of his contributions have since been forgotten or were never really understood or appreciated. John Adams and William Tudor began to understand them better but they were incapable of expressing them to a larger audience in a way that would make them seem concrete and real. Nevertheless they were real and significant. Perhaps Andrew Brown, a correspondent of the historian Jeremy Belknap expressed it best. "So the demise of John Hancock is at last announced; and might it not have been added, that he fell a sacrifice to the independence of his country? His campaigns at Congress and at the 'table' must have made him prematurely old. But you have put it beyond the power of malice to speak at his grave of the ingratitude of republics. He enjoyed the honours he had merited to the last, and something longer, I should suppose, that they sat easy on him."[104]

F O O T N O T E S

C H A P T E R 1

[1]In 1675 the population of Braintree was approximately 250, and by 1765 was estimated at 2,500. An estimate of 1500 at the time of John Hancock's boyhood is a reasonable approximation. Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790 (New York, 1932), 14, 22.

[2]The initial settlement site in Braintree was called Mount Wollaston. The name was temporarily changed to Merry Mount by Thomas Morton and his followers who established a brisk trade with the indians there, exchanging guns for furs. This practice and his generally obnoxious life style enraged his neighbors. William Bradford described Morton and his cohorts as "pouring out themselves into all profaneness. And Morton became Lord of Misrule, and maintained (as it were) a School of Atheism...They also set up a maypole, drinking and dancing about it in many days together, inviting the Indian women for their consorts, dancing and frisking together like so many fairies, or furies, rather; and worse practices." The settlement was eventually disbanded by force. Morton was arrested and dispatched back to England, and his followers scattered. William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647, ed., Samuel E. Morison (New York, 1970), 204-10; Samuel E. Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony (Cambridge, 1930), 14-18.

[3]William Cooper, The Honours of Christ demanded of the magistrate (Boston, 1740), 6-7, cited in, Richard D. Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts (Cambridge, 1970), 9; see also, Richard Hofstadter, America in 1750 (New York, 1971), 142-51; Richard L. Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee (Cambridge, 1967), 11-15; Robert A. Gross, The Minutemen and Their World (New York, 1976), 10-15; Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the 18th Century (New York, 1970). passim.

[4]This grant was first recorded on January 5, 1634/5. Cambridge Town Records (Cambridge, 1901), 10-11; Lucius R. Paige, History of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1630-1877 (Boston, 1877), xv-xvii; October 10, 1635, Proprietors Records (Cambridge, 1901), 30, 114.

[5]August 20, 1635, Cambridge Town Records, 12-13.

[6]Mary and Sarah Hancock. Cambridge Massachusetts Vital Records, I. (Cambridge, 1845), 322-24.

[7]Paige's list of Cambridge home owners in 1635 compared with a similar list for 1642 demonstrates almost a complete turn over in only seven years. Nathaniel Hancock is almost the single exception, appearing on both lists. Paige, History of Cambridge, xv-xvi, 32.

[8]There is no record that Nathaniel Hancock ever joined the Cambridge church. Furthermore, his children were apparently not members either, nor were they ever baptized. In 1667, at age thirty, Nathaniel's only surviving son was admitted as a church member. Paige, History of Cambridge; Stephen P. Sharples, Records of Church of Christ at Cambridge in New England, 1632-1830, 27, passim. Conditions for church membership, see Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints (New York, 1963), 40-47, 77-80, 87-112.

[9]In most cases common land owned by the town was distributed based on the wealth and social position of the town's inhabitants. Lockridge, A New England Town: The First Hundred Years (New York, 1970), 8-12.

[10]Nathaniel Hancock's financial need was probably intensified by the birth of additional children. His son, Nathaniel Hancock, Jr., was born in December, 1638. He sold off his property the following September, 1639. Proprietors Records, 60; Cambridge Vital Records, I, 322-24.

[11]All his children except an infant named John survived infancy. Cambridge Vital Records, I, 322-24.

[12]According to the Proprietors Records and the Town Records, Nathaniel Hancock's land holding could not have been more than a few acres, and these were further reduced by his sale of land to John Meane in 1639.

[13]December 8, 1646, Cambridge Town Records, 59.

[14]There is no recorded date of Nathaniel Hancock's death. But the Cambridge Town Records clearly indicate he was dead by April 9, 1652 when his widow was awarded her share of land in a division of the town's common lands. April 9, 1652, Cambridge Town Records, 96-98. Paige claims he was dead as early as 1648. Paige, History of Cambridge, 571. The New England Genealogical and Historical Register cites 1652 as his date of death. "Hancock Genealogy," NEGHR, IX (Boston, 1855), 352.

[15]The average allotment was eighty-seven acres. Cambridge Town Records. 96.

[16]Ibid., 97-98.

[17]There is no record of either their marriage or death. One can presume they either married and moved away or their deaths went unrecorded. Widow Hancock, however, was reported as living as late as 1663 when she was appointed administratrix of her late husband's estate. Paige, History of Cambridge, 572.

[18]His increased acreage over his father's possession is attributed to later divisions of the town commons and his inheritance of his father's claim to that land.

[19]Proprietors Records, 146, 161, 178, 187, 189.

[20]Nathaniel Hancock married Mary Prentice, March 8, 1663/4. Vital Records, II, 181. The town granted him his ten acres on February 27, 1664/5. Proprietors Records, 146. Their first child was born February 28, 1665. "Hancock Genealogy," NEGHR, IX, 572.

[21]Sharples, Records of the Church of Christ at Cambridge, 27; "Hancock Genealogy," NEGHR, IX, 352; Paige, History of Cambridge, 27.

[22]Sharples, Records of the Church of Christ at Cambridge, 27.

[23]For qualification for church membership and the effect of the Half-Way Covenant, see, Morgan, Visible Saints, 88-93, 124ff.

[24]Before the Half-Way Covenant, church membership in New England was on the decline. The Half-Way Covenant helped to correct this situation, but still, even in Nathaniel Hancock's day, church membership was a distinct social advantage.

[25]Cambridge Town Records, 185, 192, 206-7, 242, 247.

[26]Ibid., 213, 226, 233.

[27]Ibid, 305; Paige, History of Cambridge, 572; Sharples, Records of the Church of Christ at Cambridge, 35.

[28]Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, I (Boston, 1854), 183.

[29]Cambridge Town Records, 33.

[30]Margery Somers Foster, "Out of Smalle Beginnings..." (Cambridge, 1962), 4.

[31]The cost of sending a son to college included fees for tuition, damages, celler rent, sweeper, wood, candles, commencement and many other minor expenses. The total average cost for a four year education in this period of the late seventeenth century was approximately L41 or the equivalent of a small house, or the full pay for an ordinary laborer for two years. Ibid., 65-84.

[32]A brief description of his ordination as well as short biographical sketch of his career are in, John L. Sibley, Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University, In Cambridge, Massachusetts, III (Cambridge, 1885), 429-39; William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit (New York, 1866), I, 238-41; Charles Hudson, History of the Town of Lexington (Boston, 1913), 304-17; Hancock Family Papers, AAS. His Commonplace Book, begun as a student at Harvard College, is in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[33]John Hancock (1671-1752), "Commonplace Book," Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The quotation is from an

edition of the English Bishop, Robert Sanderson's, sermons. See, Norman S. Fiering, "Will and Intellect in the New England Mind," William and Mary Quarterly, XXIX, 3rd. ser. (Oct., 1972), 525.

[34] Ibid.

[35] The most frequently recurring story is "Bishop" Hancock's arbitrary but pragmatic settling of boundary disputes between local farmers. The accuracy of these stories is less important than the insight they provide as to his character and personality. Sibley, Harvard Graduates, III, 434-36; Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 239-40, Hudson, History of the Town of Lexington, 304-17.

[36] Hancock Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society (AAS).

[37] Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee, 13.

[38] John Hancock, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of Mr. John Hancock, A.M., in the North Precinct of Braintree, November 2, 1726 (Boston, 1726), 30.

[39] Perry Miller, From Colony to Province (Cambridge, 1953), 383.

[40] Clifford K. Shipton, "The New England Clergy," Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Transactions, 32 (Boston, 1938), 47-48, hereafter referred to as CSM.

[41] John Hancock, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination..., 31.

[42] The complexity of the issues involved in the Great Awakening are excellently treated in, Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee (Cambridge, 1967); Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, The Great Awakening (Indianapolis, 1967); and, Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind (Cambridge, 1966).

[43] Hudson, History of Lexington, 315; Sibley, Harvard Graduates, III, 437.

[44] Clifford K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VI (Boston, 1942), 316.

[45] Ibid.

[46] The status of the Hancock family was substantially improved over the course of three generations but financially they were not much better off than their farming neighbors. If they possessed any real monetary advantage, it was the "Bishop's" guaranteed annual salary and his residence. This can, however, be misleading as the rate of inflation and currency fluctuations as well as the shortages of specie usually hit those on fixed incomes the hardest.

[47] This form of payment was not unusual, but even to support one

student this way on a ministerial salary was difficult, to support two sons was out of the question. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VI, 316; Foster, "Out of Smalle Beginnings...," passim.

[48]Thomas Hancock was apprenticed to Samuel Gerrish from July 1, 1717 to July 1, 1724. Hancock Family Papers, AAS. This was the beginning of his spectacular career as a Boston merchant. His impact upon his nephew John Hancock was enormously decisive. For more on Thomas' apprenticeship, see, "Indenture of Thomas Hancock," Bostonian Society Publications, XII (Boston, 1919), 99-101.

[49]Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VIII, 428.

[50]"Westborough had a Town Meeting for ye Nomination of some in Order to choose one to Settle with ye in ye Ministry--I was ye first in Nomination & then Mr. Hancock....They Agreed upon a Day of Solemn fasting & Prayer for ye Direction of Heaven in ye Affair of ye choice..." "Diary of Samuel Dexter," NEGHR, XIII (October 1859), 308.

[51]"Harvard College Records," Pubs., CSM, Collections, 16 (1925), 502.

[52]Nathaniel Adams, Annals of Portsmouth (1925), 144; Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[53]Diary of Cotton Mather, II (New York, 19), 734.

[54]"Harvard College Records," Pubs., CSM, Collections, 16 (1925), 513.

[55]William Waldron to Richard Waldron, Waldron MSS, No. 80, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, hereafter referred to as MHS; Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VI, 316.

[56]William Waldron to Richard Waldron, Waldron, MSS, no. 34, MHS.

[57]"Harvard College Records," Pubs., CSM, Collections, 16 (1925), 521-522.

[58]Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VI, 317.

[59]William S. Pattee, A History of Old Braintree and Quincy (Quincy, 1878), 217.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Charles F. Adams, Three Episodes in Massachusetts History, II (Boston, 1892), 618.

[62]Pattee, History of Old Braintree, 245.

[63]Rev. John Hancock's account of the proceedings are cited in, Pattee, History of Old Braintree, 217-18.

[64]Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VI, 317.

[65]John Hancock, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of Mr. John Hancock, 31; Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[66]C.F. Adams, Three Episodes in Massachusetts History, II, 796; 2 Proceedings, MHS, VI, 487-91.

[67]C.F. Adams, Three Episodes in Massachusetts History, II, 623ff.

[68]Catherine Drinker Bowen, John Adams and the American Revolution (New York, 1949), 28.

[69]For a brief biographical sketch of the Quincys, see, Edmund Quincy, Life of Josiah Quincy (Boston, 1868), 3.

[70]John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, Works, X, 260-61.

[71]Mary Hawke Thaxter Hancock seems to have made a habit of marrying undistinguished sons of more prominent fathers. Her first husband's father was Major Samuel Thaxter, a member of the Governor's Council and Diplomatic Agent to Canada. His son, Rev. Samuel Thaxter, was born October 8, 1695 and graduated from Harvard in 1714. His achievements were negligible and never equalled his more famous father's attainments. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VI, 71. For the Hawke family genealogy, see, History of the Town of Hingham, Massachusetts (Hingham, 1893), II, 294-5, III, 232. As for John Hancock's mother, there is almost no surviving documentary evidence, other than her birth and marriages.

[72]Hancock Family Papers, AAS; NEGHR, XVIII (April, 1864), 117.

[73]Hudson, History of the Town of Lexington, I, 51-52.

[74]John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, Works, X, 259.

[75]Lockridge persuasively aruges that most New England males some how managed to learn to read and write by the time they were adults in spite of the numerous obstacles. Kenneth Lockridge, Literacy in Colonial America (New York, 1974), 13.

[76]John Hancock's will. September 16, 1751. Suffolk Probate Records 37: 166-67; 45: 375. A transcript is located in the, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[77]L.H. Butterfield, ed., The Adams Papers: Diary and Autobiography, I (Cambridge, 1961), 12-13n.

[78]Only fragmentary evidence of John's childhood has survived, but this claim is supported by an analysis of his relationship with his family and friends throughout his entire life. Like his grandfather and father he opposed divisiveness and disagreement. His need for constant external approval and unanimity is evident throughout his entire public political career. Ultimately he was an accutely insecure individual who compensated for this by seeking external affirmation to buttress his weak self image. For an excellent examination of the development and evolution of an individual's self identity, see, Erik H. Erikson, "The Life Cycle: Epigenesis of Identity," Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York, 1968), 91-141.

[79]"Died young Mr. Hancock of Lexington assistant minister to his father, had the character of a very worthy promising youth." "Diary of Paul Dudley," January 28, 1740, NEGHR, XXXV (January, 1881), 28.

[80]January 31, 1940, Boston Newsletter.

[81]Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VIII, 428.

[82]Hancock Family Papers, AAS; Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIV, 619.

[83]John Hancock, The Danger of an Unqualified Ministry, A Sermon Preached at Ashford, Connecticut, September 7, 1743 (Boston, 1743), 15-6.

[84]John Hancock, The Examiner of Gilbert Against Tennent (Boston, 1743).

[85]John Hancock, The Danger of an Unqualified Ministry, 16.

[86]Ibid., 8.

[87]John Hancock, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of Mr. John Hancock..., 18.

[88]Mary Hubbard to Mary Hancock, May 10, 1744, MHS.

[89]Ebenezer Gay, The Untimely Death of a Man of God Lamented (Boston, 1744).

[90]Rev. John Hancock's will. Suffolk Probate Records, 37: 166-67; 45: 374-77.

[91]Rev. John Hancock's Tombstone Inscription, "Quincy Inscriptions," NEGHR, IX (April, 1855), 152.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER II

[1]Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt (New York, 1964 edition), 17.

[2]Daniel West to _____, cited in, Clinton Rossiter, The First American Revolution (New York, 1953), 141.

[3]For a more clinical explanation and detailed study of the concept of an "identity crisis" see, Erik Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York, 1968), 16ff. Erikson's two pioneer studies on Luther and Gandhi credibly demonstrates the useful possibilities of his application of identity and identity crisis theories to the realm of historical analysis and interpretation. An application of his theories in the case of John Hancock, however, must be done with the utmost caution, and should be considered merely as a possibility and not a definitive explanation for John's behavior.

[4]Ibid., 16. In this particular instance, I do think the circumstantial evidence supports the conclusion that John's move from Braintree to Boston was a momentous occasion filled with enormous potential and an equal degree of difficulty. Significant personality adjustments were necessary if he was to achieve personal security and establish his own concept of self. In essence it was an obvious turning point in his life.

[5]Ibid., 22-24.

[6]Thomas Hancock's business career is well documented in the excellent study, W.T. Baxter, The House of Hancock (Cambridge, 1945). See also, Edward Edelman, "Thomas Hancock, Colonial Merchant," Journal of Economic and Business History, I (1928-1929), 77-104. Baxter's book is supposedly a study of the business practices of both Thomas and John Hancock, but it is particularly weak on the latter. His political interpretation of John is drawn mostly from James T. Adams' study and merely perpetuates his onesided analysis. It is much stronger on Thomas Hancock's career.

[7]March 4, 1725; January 4, 1728, Boston News Letter.

[8]Thomas Hutchinson, History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, 1749-1774 (London, 1828), 297.

[9]Isaiah Thomas, The History of Printing in America (Worcester, 1810), II, 422. For a more detailed sketch of Daniel Henchman's career see, W.T. Baxter, "Daniel Henchman," Essex Institute Collections, LXX (January, 1934), 1-30.

[10]Baxter, House of Hancock, 9.

[11]For additional details of Henchman and Hancock's unsuccessful efforts to establish a paper mill in Massachusetts, see, Baxter, "Daniel Henchman," 21-27; Baxter, House of Hancock, 212-15; Acts and Resolves of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, II (Boston, 1874), 518; Jeremiah Smith Boies, "Historical Reminiscences," NEGHR, VI (July, 1852), 255-56.

[12]April 29, 1736, Boston News Letter.

[13]For a brief but accurate description of the innovative methods by which eighteenth century merchants managed to conduct their business without the use of money, see, Baxter, House of Hancock, 11-39; Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth, 1607-1861 (New York, 1968), 42-73.

[14]Thomas Hancock's letterbooks and account books amply reveal the far flung extent of his growing business ventures in conjunction with a variety of business partners. These records are now in the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, afterwards referred to as HFC.

[15]Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth, 50.

[16]Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 1955), 196-97.

[17]Hancock Co. to Messrs. Jonathan Barnards & Co., November 25, 1763, HFC.

[18]Thomas Hancock to J. Maplesden, November 1739, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[19]Thomas Hancock to Kilby, September 10, 1748, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[20]Walter Kendal Watkins, "The Hancock House and Its Builder," Old Time New England, XVII (July, 1926), 3-19. Contains an excellent description of the Hancock house, its construction, grounds, and furnishings.

[21]Robert Francis Seybolt, The Town Officials of Colonial Boston, 1634-1775 (Cambridge, 1939), 172, 184, 215.

[22]Thomas Hancock to James Glin, December 20, 1736, cited in Watkins, "The Hancock House and Its Builder," 7; Hancock Letter Book, HFC.

[23]Watkins, "The Hancock House and Its Builder," 7-15. This contains some lengthy correspondence of Thomas Hancock as he sought advice and materials for the construction of his estate and its grounds. See also, Baxter, House of Hancock, 67-8; and Hancock Letter Books, HFC, particularly those dating between 1736 and 1739.

[24]Wilks Invoice, September 10, 1739, Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts. The library possesses several other pieces of correspondence related to the construction of Thomas's house.

[25]By 1739 the house was liveable, but technically still unfinished. An enormous amount of finishing worked remained to be done, particularly on the grounds and on the interior. Work was still in progress as late as 1746. Actually work on the house continued throughout both Thomas and John's lifetime. See, Donald Millar, "Notes on the Hancock House, Boston," Old Time New England, 121-124.

[26]The original house lot was 135 feet by 300 feet. Thomas continued purchasing adjacent parcels of land for the rest of his life until he owned almost all of Beacon Hill, which at the time was principally used for the grazing of animals. Watkins, "The Hancock House and Its Builder," 6; Baxter, House of Hancock, 76.

[27]Samuel A. Drake, Old Landmarks and Historic Personages (Boston, 1872), 339.

[28]Watkins, "Hancock House and Its Builder," 18.

[29]Hancock to Longman, July 4, 1737, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[30]Ruggles' Bill, November 8, 1738, HFC. Thomas paid L160 for his slave named "Cambridge."

[31]General William H. Sumner, "Reminiscences," NEGHR, VII (April, 1854), 187. This observation was based on Sumner's conversation with John Hancock's widow, Dorothy Quincy Hancock Scott.

[32]Thomas Hancock to Kilby, September 10, 1748, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[33]John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, March 31, 1761, MHS, Proceedings, 43 (December, 1909), 199.

[34]Ibid.

[35]John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, August 30, 1760, Hancock Papers, Boston Public Library.

[36]John Hancock to Lydia Hancock, cited in, A.E. Brown, John Hancock, His Book (Boston, 1898), 7.

[37]John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, Works, X, 259.

[38]Excerpts of Lovell's address and some biographical details and a sketch of his life are in, Robert F. Seybolt, "Schoolmasters of Colonial Boston," Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Publications, XXVII

(1930), 130-56; Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, XI (New York, 1933), 439-40; H.F. Jenks, Catalogue of the Boston Public Latin School (Boston, 1886), 6-7.

[39] Jenks, Catalogue, 64-65.

[40] Ibid., 7. For a similar view of the Latin School see Harrison Gray Otis' accounts of his schooling under Lovell in, Samuel E. Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, I (Boston, 1913), and Jenks, Catalogue, 35-40. A later student's experiences are recorded in, W.B. Fowle, "Schools of the Golden Time in Boston," The Common School Journal, XII (Boston, 1850), 311-12. "We studied Latin from 8 o'clock till 11, and from 1 till dark... The course of study was grammer, Esop; with a translation; Clark's Introduction to Writing Latin; Eutropius, with a translation; Corderius; Aeneid; Caesar; Cicero. In the sixth year I began Greek...."

[41] William Savage to Samuel Savage, May 2, 1803, cited in, Jenks, Catalogue, 35n.

[42] Only two of John's original classmates in Latin School completed Lovell's entire academic program. For a complete list of his schoolmates, see, Jenks, Catalogue, 64-65.

[43] A copy of the "Body of Laws of Harvard College" is in, Benjamin Peirce, A History of Harvard University (Cambridge, 1833), 125-43.

[44] Ibid., 125.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 125-43.

[47] Cliffod K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates (Boston, 1965), XIII, 378.

[48] According to Samuel E. Morison, Belcher Hancock (Harvard class of 1727), was "a stupid fellow nicknamed the Bowl." He was a tutor at Harvard for nearly a quarter of a century. Samuel E. Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard (Cambridge, 1936), 108.

[49] "Bishop" Hancock's Will, July 14, 1747, provided a fourth share of his estate divided among his deceased son's children when his wife died. John Hancock received his share after 1760 after his grandmother's death. Hancock Papers, MHS.

[50] Jenks, Catalogue, 71. Ebenezer eventually completed his education at the Latin School in six years.

[51] "The Harvard College Charter of 1650," CSM, Pubs., XXXI (1935), 5.

[52]For this period the best studies of Harvard College are, Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard; Peirce, A History of Harvard University; and Josiah Quincy, The History of Harvard University (Cambridge, 1840).

[53]Lawrence A. Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783 (New York, 1970), 221,224. Cremin charts the declining number of Harvard Graduates entering the ministry. Almost a half of all graduates in the seventeenth century entered the ministry compared with a third or less in the years John attended college.

[54]Hofstadter, America in 1750, 180-81.

[55]John Hancock to Rev. Daniel Perkins, March 2, 1761, Bostonian Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

[56]Cremin, American Education, 331.

[57]Harvard's basic texts included: Virgil; Cicero's Orations; Cicero's Offices; Ward's Mathematics; Homer; Greek Testament; Gravesand's Philosophy; Euclid's Geometry, Wallebius' Compedium of Theology, Brattle's Compendium of Logic. Under President Holyoke the following significant additions were included: Watt's Astronomy, Gordon's Geographical Grammer, Fordyce's Elements of Moral Philosophy, and Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding became the textbook of Ethics and Metaphysics. Peirce, History of Harvard University, 237; Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 89.

[58]Ibid., 68.

[59]Records of the Church in Brattle Square Boston, 1699-1872 (Boston, 1902).

[60]No biography of Winthrop exists, but for a brief biographical sketch, see, Cremin, American Education, 662, for bibliographical references.

[61]Peirce, History of Harvard University, 188.

[62]Cremin, American Education, 514.

[63]Historical Register of Harvard University, 1636-1936 (Cambridge, 1937).

[64]Peirce, History of Harvard University, 232-33; Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 57-8.

[65]Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, IV, 162-65.

[66]Harvard College Library MS, AM. 1639, cited in, Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIII, 380.

[67]The best short description of student life at Harvard in the eighteenth century is, Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 101-32.

[68]Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, IV, 162-65.

[69]Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 115.

[70]Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIII, 378.

[71]Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 110.

[72]An excellent examination of colonial life and the impact of schooling upon society and the individual is in, James Axtell, The School Upon a Hill (New Haven, 1974), 201-44.

[73]Ibid., 201-2, 224-31, 235-39; see also, Diary of Robert Treat Paine, 1745-1755, Vol. I, MHS, which contains a firsthand account of the problems of experiencing puberty while studying in the intellectually demanding environment of Harvard College in the eighteenth century. Paine's experiences are more than likely analogous to John Hancock's.

[74]For most of his adult life John Hancock suffered from an assortment of illnesses and ailments, particularly headaches and the gout. His friends and foes alike grew suspicions of some of these bouts of illness and referred to them as "political gout," claiming that John was using it as a convenient excuse from taking a stand on a controversial political issue. He also exhibited signs of hypochondria, probably in order to secure his aunt's undivided attention and concern which he translated into her love for him. His successful application of this device in domestic affairs led to its eventual political adaptation. Nevertheless, in spite of his occasional fradulent use of illness for political purposes, he genuinely suffered from the gout and it was a continuous source of great discomfort.

[75]Quincy, History of Harvard, II, 91

[76]The winter vacation break was for five weeks, and the summer break was six weeks long. John was also allowed to return home four days out of every month school was in session because he lived within ten miles of Harvard College. Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 110.

[77]They were married on June 29, 1751. Hancock Family Papers, AAS. A brief biographical sketch of Rev. Perkins is in, Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VI, 209. For his family's genealogy, see, "Perkins Genealogy," NEHGR, X (July, 1856), 212.

[78]John Hancock to Mary Hancock, May 1, 1754, transcript, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Three years later in 1757 he was awarded the Master of Arts Degree from the college. In the eighteenth century the M.A. degree was usually a pro forma exercise. All that the student did was pay a small fee and either present a brief discussion on a philosophical problem or give a sample sermon or present a prepared answer to a given question. Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 34.

[81]Douglas Adair and John A. Schutz, eds., Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion (Stanford, 1961), 40.

[82]Mercy Otis Warren, History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution (New York, 1970 reprint), I, 430. In his old age, John Adams recalled Hancock's education and mental capabilities and stated that, "He was by no means a contemtible scholar or orator. Compared with Washington, (Benjamin) Lincoln, or Knox, he was learned." John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, Works, X, 261.

[83]John Hancock to Thomas Hancock, January 14, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (1909-1910), 196.

[84]A similar personality conflict with authority figures can be observed in James Otis, Jr.'s relationship with his father, James Otis, senior. "The mutual bickerings, fears, and hostilities of these brothers (James, Jr., Joseph, and Samuel Allyn Otis) testify to their insecurity before the dominating personality of their father." His sister, Mercy Otis Warren, perceived his complex personality problem with his father, and her "portrayal of James constitutes the first psychological study of the patriot. Its very ambiguity raises the question whether Mercy perceived that the model for James' love-hate relationship with George III was her own father. After all, had not the elder Otis been both King and tyrant, father and antagonist to his own sons." John J. Waters, Jr., The Otis Family (Chapel Hill, 1968), 131, 133. This situation is somewhat analogous to John Hancock's relationship to his uncle Thomas. The nephew was completely subservient and dominated by his authoritarian uncle whom he both loved and feared. Such a deep dependence could very easily create a strong resentment and feeling of powerlessness, which in this instance John was forced to repress for fear of losing something important, namely his inheritance. While Thomas lived, John was careful not to bite the hand that fed him.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER III

[1]Stuart Bruchey, "Success and Failure Factors: American Merchants in Foreign Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Business History Review, XXXII (1958), 272-92. Bruchey tried to isolate the specific qualities that insured success among the early American merchants and generally concluded that these ingredients were important but not decisive. Nor did he feel that luck alone could be held accountable. Success he ultimately concluded could not be demarcated, "between these factors themselves, or between all of them, on the one hand, and luck on the other. The luck...of having the right relatives in a case in point...with an ear to what the poet once said about the outcome of the best laid plans, I would give luck its due, I would also give man his."

[2]John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, Works, X, 259.

[3]The full extent of Thomas Hancock's estate and commercial activities is incalcuable as his will specifically ordered, "that no inventory of my estate be given into the Probate Office but such security as the law Requires where none is given." But based on the itemized distributions of his property and effects that were recorded, it is clear that John Adams' awed impression of its extent does not do adequate justice to the true enormity of Thomas's holdings and activities. See, Thomas Hancock's Will, Suffolk County Probate: 63: 278; transcriptions are also located in, Hancock Family Papers, AAS; and the Boston Public Library Manuscript Collection.

[4]Douglas Edward Leach, Arms for Empire (New York, 1973), 341, 439-50n.

[5]John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, Works, X, 259.

[6]Thomas Hancock to Kilby, Barnard and Parker, May 21, May 23, 1760, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[7]John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, December 22, 1756, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[8]John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, October 26, 1759, Boston Public Library.

[9]John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, December 27, 1760, MHS, Proc. 43 (December 1909-1910), 194-5.

[10]Rev. Nicholas Bowes was a Garvard graduate, see Sibley's Harvard Graduates, VII, 457.

[11] Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt (New York, 1955), 77.

[12] January 9, 1756, May 1, 1756, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[13] Politically they were to disagree continually in the extreme. By the eve of the Revolutionary War, William Bowes abandoned Boston for permanent exile in England when he left during the British army's evacuation of the town in March, 1776. MHS, Proc., XVIII (December, 1880), 266.

[14] Baxter, House of Hancock, 145.

[15] James A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," WMQ, 3rd ser. XX (1965), 75-92.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Few colonial merchants were wholly self-made men. Occasionally an aritsan, such as Henry Laurens of Charles Town, South Carolina, gave up his trade as a saddler and advanced to the counting house. More often a man began as a retail shopkeeper and somehow rose to considerable affluence. But, "perhaps the signal example was Thomas Hancock of Boston, who as a son of a country clergyman, started as a bookseller's apprentice, became a stationer in the twenties, and, at his death in 1764, bequeathed a great fortune of about L100,000." Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, 71.

[18] Thomas Hancock to Kilby, June 16, 1775, August 4, 1755, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[19] Thomas Hancock to Kilby, August 4, 1755, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[20] Thomas Hancock to Kilby, November 12, 1749, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[21] On the eve of the French and Indian War, Thomas Hancock found himself still stuck with unsold goods worth L10,000 pounds sterling and uncollected debts in excess of L200,000 pounds Old Tenor left over from King George's War. Thomas Hancock to Forster, May 25, 1751; Hancock to Kilby, June 21, August 10, 1750, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[22] A good description of the importance of these contracts and the ends to which Thomas Hancock and his fellow merchants would go to secure them is well documented in, Baxter, House of Hancock, 97-103.

[23] Robert Zemsky, Merchants, Farmers and River Gods (Boston, 1971), 178-215. Zemsky's thesis regarding Thomas Hancock's political motivations clearly parallels my own contention that economic self-interest was his principal aim.

[24] For a detailed sketch of Kilby's entire career see, Charles W. Tuttle, "Christopher Kilby of Boston," NEHGR, XXVI (Boston, 1872), 43-48.

[25] Ibid., 44; John A. Schutz, William Shirley; King's Governor of Massachusetts (Chapel Hill, 1961), 70-71.

[26] Kilby's services to Hancock were as varied as they were beneficial. Writing from England, Kilby kept up a continuous correspondence filled with useful advice, strategies, and the latest political news and gossip. This made Thomas one of the best informed Boston merchants and gave him a decisive competitive edge. Furthermore, he pushed Thomas's name in whatever quarter it would do the most good. A prime example of this is apparent in Kilby's letter of July 1746. In it he informed Thomas of a pending military campaign being organized in England to sail soon for operations against the French in Canada. Although the campaign was eventually aborted, the contents of Kilby's letter was fairly typical. "I have mentioned you to most of the Staff Officers....Mr. Abercrombie, who is Muster Master General, having directions to you in his Pocket-book...will introduce you to the General...apply to him as easy as possible with the use of my name...Pray do him all the service you can, and if not inconvenient offer him a lodging in your house for a night or two...His power is great and may be useful to you." Christopher Kilby to Hancock, July 18, 1746, in Tuttle, "Christopher Kilby of Boston," NEHGR, XXVI, 47-48.

[27] Thomas Hancock to Kilby, May 17, 1740, Hancock Letterbook, HFC; Zemsky, Merchants, Farmers and River Gods, 187-88; Edward Edelson, "Thomas Hancock: Colonial Merchant," Journal of Economic and Business History, I (1928-1929), 77-104. See also, Benjamin W. Labaree, Boston Tea Party (London, 1966), 10, 268n.

[28] Schutz, William Shirley, 70-72; Baxter, House of Hancock, 95-100; Zemsky, Merchants, Farmers and River Gods, 184-85.

[29] Thomas Hancock to Kilby, April 6, 1755; Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[30] Thomas Hancock to Kilby, June 23, 1753, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[31] A very brief overview of William Shirley's various political coalitions are examined in, John J. Waters, The Otis Family, 76-109. A more detailed account is contained in Schutz's biography, particularly in his summary analysis, see, Schutz, William Shirley, 269-271.

[32] Bernard Bailyn, The Origins of American Politics (New York, 1970), 117.

[33] Schutz, William Shirley, v.

[34] Ibid., 143-44; 269. Thomas did not take Shirley's dumping of Kilby sitting down. He sought to counter the governor's opposition by gathering support for Kilby in the town of Boston. Writing to Kilby

who was then currently working on a special excise case for the town of Boston in London, he urged him to "push it with great vigor" in hopes of impressing the colony with a demonstration of his "power and interest at the Boards." Thomas's efforts, however, failed in the face of Shirley's determined opposition. See, Thomas Hancock to Kilby and Barnard, June 16, 1775, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[35]James Otis to Jasper Mauduit, October 28, 1762, Letterbook, MHS, Collections, LXXIV (1919), 76-77. It should be remembered that the concept of "party" did not mean the same thing as it does today. Rather a party was merely a loose coalition of supporters, usually gathered around one man, an issue, or a series of issues. As an entity, this "party" did not bind its adherents to any specific ideology, maintain discipline over its members, nor possess any formalized structure or officers. It was infromal, ever changing, and continually fragmenting and being reconnected. Personal individual interests were the main motivations for participation.

[36]Shirley's weakened position and eventual fall from power was the result of an intrigue against him led by his successor, Thomas Pownall, and an assortment of powerful colonial figures from other colonies out for their own interests during the war against the French in Canada. Shirley's preoccupation in this wider field of colonial union and his military role in preparing the colonies' defenses against the French left his political flanks exposed. The recent British military reversals left him even more vulnerable. Schutz, William Shirley, 225-47; Lawrence H. Gipson, The Great War for the Empire: The Years of Defeat, VI (New York, 1946); 146-47, 186-87; Bernard Bailyn, The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson (Cambridge, 1974), 40-41.

[37]Thomas Pownall was thirty five years old and a bachelor when he was appointed Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was extremely ambitious, somewhat vain and at all times ill-tempered, but he got along well with the local Massachusetts merchants. They later remembered his benevolent administration as the ideal model they always held aloft as the example they wished to return to during their later squabbles with Parliament. Pownall possessed excellent political connections, principally through his brother John Pownall, a former secretary to the Board of Trade. Personally sympathetic to the merchants, pleasfor a lax enforcement of trade regulations, Pownall was also in favor of a limited administrative reform over the entire imperial administration, and was always perceived as a defender of the merchants' cause. For biographical details, see, John A. Schutz, Thomas Pownall, British Defender of American Liberty (Glendale, Calif., 1951); Charles A.W. Pownall, Thomas Pownall, (London, 1908).

[38]Bailyn, The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson, 39.

[39]Hancock's profits soared during the French and Indian War. As an indication just how much money he was making, during Shirley's last three years as Governor, Thomas Hancock received nearly L35,000 pounds sterling in British Pay warrents which during Pownall's three years as

governor, reached L54,000 pounds sterling. Massachusetts State Archives, CXVII, 883; Baxter, House of Hancock, 139.

[40]Thomas and subsequently John's handling of Governor Pownall's account is a lengthy and complicated story, covered in part in a long running correspondence beginning in 1761 and concluding in 1769 when the account was finally settled. See, Receipt of Thomas Pownall, Hancock Family Papers, AAS; John Hancock's Account Book, Boston Public Library, Ms. Q. Am. 2084; Thomas Hancock to Pownall, September 10, 1763, Hancock Family Papers, AAS; Thomas Pownall to John Hancock, January 11, 1765, Hancock Papers, MHS; John Hancock to Thomas Pownall, March 27, 1766, in A.E. Brown, His Book, 123; Thomas Pownall to John Hancock, September 4, 1767, Boston Public LIbrary; Hutchinson, ed., Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson, I, 165-66n; Receipt of Thomas Pownall, March 23, 1769, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[41]Thomas's hopes were nevertheless unfulfilled. As the war gradually tapered off a revival of economic uncertainty set in; and his army supply contracts fell off and he found it harder to collect outstanding debts. Baxter, House of Hancock, 142-44.

[42]Considering Thomas Hancock's dependence on Parliament's supply contract system and his grandiose social aspirations, logically one might conclude he would have felt more confortable attached to the "Court Party". But this more than any other single factor demonstrates how completely pragmatic he was in outlook. Having once failed there, he easily went elsewhere for support in order to achieve his own personal ambitions. By the end of Pownall's administration, however, Thomas withdrew from politics although he sentimentally remained part of the "Popular Party" largely because of his opposition to Parliament's attempts to reform the imperial administration and enforce the trade regulations. John's political loyalties were therefore largely a matter of inheritance. But for neither of the Hancocks was their association based upon an ideological commitment; rather it was one born of economic opportunity and circumstance and habit.

[43]Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, 281.

[44]Thomas Hancock wisely invested all his spare capital in every conceivalbe profit making enterprise available to a well connected Boston merchant. As such he was a generalist, engaging in no one single specialized aspect of trade and business. See, N.S.B. Gras, "An Old-Time Type of Merchant," Bulletin of the Business Historical Society, (May, 1928), 1-2. Gras beiefly provides an account of some of the varied financial activities frequently engaged in by colonial merchants of Hancock's stripe. His explanation of John Hancock's success and lack of commercial acumen, however, is unwarranted, nor supported by the evidence. Some of Thomas Hancock's favorite business ventures were paper manufacturing, pot ash manufacturing, and whaling. The single best study of his business career is in Baxter's House of Hancock, which descriptively charts Thomas's always changing pattern and emphasis in trade.

[45] In spite of its age , George L. Beer's, British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765 (New York, 1907), remains the best single volume study of England's commercial policies regarding the North American Colonies. See also, Charles M. Andrews, The Colonial Background of the American Revolution (New Haven, 1924), 69-118. In this climate, where British policy was formulated to ensure a steady flow of sterling from the colonies into the mother country, the American merchants were forced to remain flexible and be prepared to constantly adjust and revise their trade practices or face the prospect of financial ruin.

[46] December 30, 1754, July 10, 1755, and January 3, 1756, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC; and Baxter, House of Hancock, 129.

[47] See, Thomas Hancock's will, Suffolk County Probate:63:278, for a partial listing of some of his vast land holdings held at the time of his death.

[48] Kershaw, Kennebeck Proprietors, 31. At the time of his death, Thomas Hancock was a double share holder in the company's undivided lands. His 16/192 shares of the company were passed on to his nephew, John Hancock. Of his over 21,000 acres of land previously divided, this was divided among his six nephews who were his principal heirs. Other individuals in the same range of participation in the Kennebeck speculation were, Silvester Gardiner, Benjamin Hallowell, James Bowdoin, William Bowdoin, and James Pitts.

[49] Schutz, Thomas Pownall, 175, 197; Sawtelle, "Thomas Pownall, Colonial Governor," MHS, Proc., LXIII, 233-87.

[50] Baxter, House of Hancock, 147.

[51] Thomas Hancock to Kilby, Barnard and Parker, May 21, May 23, 1760, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[52] Ian R. Christie and Benjamin W. Labaree, Empire of Independence, 1760-1776 (New York, 1976), 1-5.

[53] Michael Kraus, The Atlantic Civilization-18th Century Origins (Cornell, 1966), 24-27.

[54] Ibid., 23-25.

[55] Thomas Hancock to John Hancock, July 5, 1760), Letterbook, HFC.

[56] John settled in for his London stay around the end of July, 1760 according to his earliest entry in his special account book that he kept while in Europe. He obviously grew preoccupied and soon lost interest in keeping it up to date and eventually discontinued making any entries in it at all. John Hancock's Account Book in London, Boston Public Library, Ms. Q. Am. 2084, hereafter referred to as J.H.'s London Account Book; see also, Baxter, House of Hancock, 147-48.

[57]John Hancock to Thomas Hancock, January 14, February 10, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December, 1909), 194-197; and Receipt of Thomas Pownall, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[58]Trecothick to Thomas Hancock, February 12, 1761, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[59]Thomas Hancock to John Hanccok, July 3, 1760, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[60]Thomas Hancock to John Hancock, March 16, 1761, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[61]Jonathan Barnard to Thomas Hancock, July 14, 1761, AAS, Proc., XII (1897-1898), 5.

[62]John Hancock to Rev. Daniel Perkins, October 29, 1760, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 194-95.

[63]Ibid.

[64]John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, December 27, 1760, MHS, Proc., 43, (December, 1909), 194-95.

[65]John Hancock to Rev. Daniel Perkins, October 29, 1760, MHS, Proc., 43 (December, 1909), 193-94.

[66]John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, March 31, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 198-99.

[67]Thomas Hancock to John Hancock, October 7, 1760, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[68]According to John's account book, he received a total of L1155 pounds sterling from Thomas during his stay in London, of which L852.10.0 was used to settle various accounts. A balance of L302.10.0 was unaccounted for and was presumably used to finance John's wardrobe, living expenses, and shopping sprees. J.H.'s London Account Book, Boston Public Library.

[69]John Hancock to Thomas Hancock, January 14, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 196.

[70]Ibid., 196-97. John strengthened his position by getting another letter from Mr. Barnard explaining his excessive expenses. Barnard wrote, "If his expenses while here, has been more than you may have expected, I am sure you'l excuse it, for I can assure you, No Young Gentleman that I know off, from any part of America has laid it out with more Propriety and frugality, always keeping up such a Charracter, as was agreable to the Connections, you were pleased to grant him.-he is a very worthy well disposed young Gentleman." Jonathan Barnard to Thomas Hancock, July 14, 1761, AAS, Proc., XII, 53.

[71] Ibid., see also, J.H.'s London Account Book, Boston Public Library. Besides recording his initial expenses, John kept record of all the favors he ran for friends and relatives from home. These included favors for his former teacher, John Winthrop, his cousin William Bowes, and another cousin Eunice Burr and many others. He also kept a detailed record of all the many presents he bought and shipped home to his uncle and aunt. These included such items as India Rhubarb, 12 Bottles of Hungary Water, Lavender Water, Jelly Glasses, a woman's satin dress, gloves, a satin cloak trimmed with lace, an ivory stick fan, a gold watchchain, and many more personal articles.

[72] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, December 27, 1760, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 194-95.

[73] John Hancock to Thomas Hancock, January 14, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 197.

[74] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, March 31, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 198.

[75] Thomas Hancock to John Hancock, June 14, July 14, 1760, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[76] Baxter refers to some of John's letters as being seized by privateers but if this happens occasionally, it is doubtful that all his letters could have been lost this way, as merchants usually sent the same duplicate letter by several different vessels. Baxter, House of Hancock. 149.

[77] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, March 31, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 198.

[78] John Hancock to Rev. Daniel Perkins, October 29, 1760, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 193.

[79] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, December 27, 1760, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 194; see also, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XII, 298-99. Mary Hancock married Dr. Richard Perkins on October 9, 1760.

[80] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, December 27, 1760, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 194.

[81] John Hancock to Rev. Daniel Perkins, March 2, 1761, Bostonian Society Ms, Bostonian Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

[82] Ibid.

[83] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, March 31, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 198-99.

[84] Jonathan Barnard to Thomas Hancock, July 14, 1761, AAS, Proc., XII (1897-1898), 53.

[85] John Hancock to Thomas Hancock, July 11, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 200. John accounted for his delays by claiming that, "unexpected Detentions have Arisen, both with Respect to want of Goods and Convoy, however can now say I am in great hopes we shall soon sail..." John sailed aboard the "Boscawen," commanded by Captain Jacobson, and convoyed by the man-of-war, "Aleide". See, Hurtubis, "First Inauguration of John Hancock," Bostonian Society Publications, 2nd ser., I (1916), 56n.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER IV

[1]As a consequence of Hancock's visit to London in 1760-61, he missed James Otis' eloquent and impassioned argument against the writs of assistance on behalf of the Boston merchant community, in February 1761. Otis' position that "an Act against the constitution is void," convinced at least one spectator, John Adams, that these writs, which legalized a search of one's private property, was "against the fundamental principles of law." In his old age, Adams perhaps exaggerated the importance and immediate impact of Otis' argument, but the episode clearly demonstrated a widening rift between colonial and English perceptions of law, constitutionality, legitimate authority, and liberty. For additional related information, see, Waters, The Otis Family, 121-25; and Adams, ed., Works, II, 521, which contains John Adams' original notes taken during Otis' speech. Some fifty years later, Adams tried to recreate Otis' argument from memory in a series of letters to William Tudor, who was collecting materials for his proposed biography of Otis. Adams, ed., Works, X, 295-375. Meanwhile in London, Hancock was serenely unaware of the emerging conflict or the tangled points of law upon which the dispute was based. His overriding concern remained focused on the forthcoming coronation of King George III.

[2]Considering how much credit the merchant community is usually given for fostering the American Revolution, it is interesting to note how frequently the term"merchant" is misunderstood and misapplied. For example, in Arthur M. Schlesinger's detailed account of the "merchant's" role in the revolution, he asserts that the revolution split the merchant community apart but the survivors, successfully formed the vanguard of a "conservative counter revolution" after the war, leading to the eventual adoption of the Federal Constitution. But nowhere does he clearly define who these "merchants" are, other than cite a few well known examples such as, the Amorys and Faneuils, the Hancocks and Boylstons of Boston." Robert A. East, in his examination of the business community during the revolutionary era claims that the loyalist element among the "merchants" played an insignificant role in the revolution. Yet, he too fails to be any more specific than Schlesinger as to whom he is referring to as the "merchants". See, Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution (New York, 1968 reprint), 27-9, 605-06; Robert A. East, Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era (New York, 1938), 219.

[3]J. Stow, A Survey of London (1958), cited by, Perez Zagorin, The Court and the Country, The Beginning of the English Revolution (New York, 1971), 122.

[4]Daniel Defoe defined a merchant as one "who carried on foreign correspondences, importing the goods and growth of other countries and exporting the growth and manufacture of (the country) to other countries."

Daniel Defoe, The Complete English Tradesman, I (Oxford, 1841), 2, cited in, Virginia D. Harrington, The New York Merchant on the Eve of the Revolution (New York), 19.

[5]Bernard and Lotte Baily, Massachusetts Shipping, 1697-1714 (Cambridge, 1959), 57-8.

[6]The 148 merchants and their associates who formed this society on April 14, 1763, represented only six and a half percent of Boston's population but were among the town's most wealthy and respected citizens. James A. Henretta, "Economic Development in Colonial Boston," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. ser., XXII (1965), 75-92; Charles M. Andrews, "The Boston Merchants and the Non-Importation Movement," Publications, Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XIX (Boston, 1918), 159-159; Ezekiel Price MS, MHS, Boston, Mass.

[7]Ezekiel Price, MS, MHS, 22-4.

[8]As Bernard Bailyn correctly demonstrated, the late seventeenth century Massachusetts merchants consisted only of a broadly defined occupational group, lacking a unified political, economic and social outlook. Therefore, he concluded, unlike their English contemporaries, the American colonial merchants did not constitute a distinct social class. But Bailyn's assessment does not hold up during the later mid to late eighteenth century when the emergence of a more rigid social class structure and heightened class consciousness resulted in the development of a truly distinct social entity, consisting of these colonial "merchants". For clarity, it should be noted that in the decade prior to the revolutionary war, the term merchant was frequently synonymous, or descriptive of the Boston ruling class. See, Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 1955), 194.

[9]Ezekiel Price, MS, MHS, 22-4.

[10]A dual usage of the term merchant was also still in existence. On one hand it represented a broad occupational grouping of individuals engaged in some commercial activity; a holdover from the English tradition established in the colonies in the late seventeenth century. On the other hand, it was increasingly used as a term of respect that only the most successful and prominent (i.e. the richest), members of the trading community were entitled. It is this dual usage which is responsible for much of the confusion when historians have carelessly combined both groups without differentiating the members.

[11]March 18, August 2, 1763, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[12]Thomas Hancock to Messrs Jonathan Barnard and Co., January 1, 1763, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC; and, Francis Hurtubis, Jr., "First Inauguration of John Hancock," Bostonian Society Publications, 2nd ser., I (1916), 43.

[13]Thomas Hancock to Messrs. Devonshire and Reeves, December 28,

1762, cited in, A.E. Brown, His Book (Boston, 1898) 13.

[14]Hancock and Harrison's friendship,begun in London, sustained itself by a lengthy trans-atlantic correspondence. Their feelings of intimacy was frequently demonstrated by the exchange of numerous presents and requests for personal shopping favors. For example, in November 1763 Thomas wrote on John's behalf, "please get made & sent him 1 neatt Bag wig and 1 neatt Bob wig. Fashionable & of light colour, the size of Mr. Barnard's will nearly suit the Tie wig Mr. Birch made which J.H. Brought with him fitted very well." Next year John requested, "a dozen pairs of very neat shoes," followed shortly by an order of "six pair black silk hose." See, November 14, 1763; December 9, 1764; May 21, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[15]In the colonies, spermaceti, the waxy substance found in the head cavity of the sperm whale, was long known as a beneficial source of light since it was capable of being processed into fine candles. Benjamin Crabb initially petitioned the Massachusetts General Court in 1750, for "the sole previlege of making Candles of Coarse Sperma Caeti Oyle." He was gratned this "sole previlege" for fourteen years but his secret soon became widely known among colonial merchants eager to invest their spare capital in this new manufacturing enterprise. As the number of candle makers quickly multiplied, so did the demand for more whale oil increase. James B. Hedges, The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Colonial Years (Province, 1968), 9-10, 235; W.B. Weedon, Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789, II (New York, 1899), 654-55; Massachusetts Archives, LIX, folio 369-70, Boston, Massachusetts.

[16]Baxter, House of Hancock, 48, 50.

[17]Elmo P. Hohman, The American Whaleman (New York, 1928), 21; Beer, British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765 (New York, 1907), 218.

[18]Military considerations were also taken into account. It was believed that a domestic whaling industry would serve as a nursery for English seamen, capable of filling the ranks of the Royal Navy in time of war. Beer, British Colonial Policy, 218-19.

[19]At this time there was no real distinction between a northern and southern whale fishery. But one did evolve as American whalers began extending their search for whales into the southern waters as they began to concentrate primarily on the more profitable sperm whale. The common right whale was most frequently caught in the waters adjacent to Greenland and Spitzbergen. These waters became commonly known as the northern fishery. The southern whale fishery, dominated by Americans was initially associated with the area off the southern tip of the Davis Strait and the mouth of Baffin Bay. But as the Americans broadened their search, the concept of southern whale fishery grew alongside, extending to the Gulf of St. Lawrence by 1761. Two years later it reached the coast of Guiana, followed by the coast of Brazil in 1774, and the Falkland Islands by the end of the decade. By the early

1790's it extended into the Pacific Ocean. Edouard A. Stackpole, The Sea Hunters (Philadelphia, 1953), 25.

[20]There is insufficient data available to ascertain why the Dutch were more successful than the English whalers during the 1740's but they were. By 1750, England conceded the struggle to the Dutch and turned her attention towards the encouragement of a more competitive American whaling industry. J.T. Jenkins, A History of the Whale Fishery (London, 1921), 307; and Hohman, The American Whalemen, 31.

[21]In 1761, ten vessels from Massachusetts Bay entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence in search of whales, next year there were fifty and by 1763, the number increased to eighty. Massachusetts Archives, LXVI, folio, 243; George F. Dow, Whale Ships and Whaling (Salem, 1925), 27n.

[22]John Hancock to Thomas Hancock, January 14, 1761, MHS, Proc., 43 (December 1909), 195.

[23]The price of whale oil in London steadily rose during the middle part of the eighteenth century. Beginning in 1730, a ton of oil sold for seven pounds sterling, by 1748 it was up to fourteen pounds. After the French and Indian War the price jumped to eighteen pounds in 1768 and substantially higher in the 1770's. These prices were also subject to seasonal fluctuations, and Hancock often sold his oil for twenty to twenty-three pounds sterling per ton. For more on pricing, see, Barnard to Hancock, October 20, 1761, Hancock Letterbook, HFC; Baxter, House of Hancock, 169; Zaceheus Macy, MHS, Collections, III, 161; and Commerce of Rhode Island, I (Boston, 1914), 173, 258, 359, 493.

[24]Thomas Hancock informed his English partners about his new vessel, the "Boston Packett," and that she is "a prime-going ship, handsome and to carry well, plain but neat," See, Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, June 7, 14; August 2, 17; November 7, 26; December 19, 1763, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[25]No actual partnership agreement survives, if there ever really was a formally written document. But a general understanding undoubtedly existed which recognized the Hancock's right to charge five percent factor's fee for purchasing the oil and a shipping fee, while Barnard and Harrison were entitled to two and a half percent commission for arranging the final sale. Baxter, House of Hancock, 170.

[26]For fluctuations in the price of oil, see, October 1765 to April 1774, Commerce of Rhode Island, I.

[27]"The Schooner from Nantucket, sailing to your place with oyle, was very unlucky, more especially as it fetched so great a price, as it maybe a means of their continuing that method, besides keeping up the price of oyle here. Capt. Folger did all he could to prevent her sailing but they were Determined upon it." Thomas Hancock and Co. to Messrs. Jonathan Barnard and Co., April 13, 1763, in A.E. Brown, John Hancock, His Book, 39

[28]Henry Cruger, Jr., to Aaron Lopez, March 9, 1768, Commerce of Rhode Island, I, 227.

[29]Barnard to Hancock, December 30, 1763, Hancock Letterbook, HFC; see Baxter, House of Hancock, 171-72.

[30]Barnard reported a net profit of approximately L800 pounds sterling divided among the three partners. Hancock also received a percentage for his oil purchases. June 5, 1765, Barnard's Account Current, HFC.

[31]The "Boston Packet" sailed on June 27th, less than fully loaded in order to beat Rotch to London. The brigantine "Lydia" was slated to follow in six to eight days. "Oil is extremely high," Hancock reported, but "We have been so very lucky in purchasing a cargo oil, for this vessel & think we have Gained a Great Point, when Mr. Rotch's vessel lays waiting for oil." Thomas Hancock & Co. to Barnard and Harrison, July 9, 1764, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[32]Thomas Hancock & Co. to Barnard and Harrison, June 23, 1764, Hancock Letterbook, NFC.

[33]Folger to Hancock, June 16, 1764, Hancock Papers, Boston Public Library.

[34]Barnard to Hancock, August 13, 17, 1764, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC; see also, Baxter, House of Hancock, 182-83. Baxter reproduces copies of the invoices for Hancock's purchase and eventual sale of a typical oil transaction from start to finish. It clearly demonstrates how his exorbitant bidding for oil, the commission charges and costs combined to eat up any profits. In this case the cargo of the "Lydia" either breaks even or he absorbs a slight loss. For another illustration of exactly the same predicament, see, N.S.B. Gras and Henretta M. Larson, Casebook in American Business History (New York, 1939), 68-9. This example of a later oil venture again shows Hancock either losing money or barely breaking even.

[35]"He...was one of the most noted merchants in New England. His remains are to be interred this afternoon at half-past four o'clock." Boston Gazette, August 6, 1764; "Boyle's Journal of Occurances," NEGHR, 84 (Boston, 1930), 166.

[36]Estimates of Hancock's inheritance vary but the range is generally agreed to fall between eighty and a hundred thousand pounds. Baxter, House of Hancock, 224; Herbert S. Allan, John Hancock; Patriot in Purple (New York, 1948), 80, 377n; Thomas Hancock's Will, Suffolk County Probate: 63: 278.

[37]Thomas Hancock was extremely generous in his bequests. Each of his nephews were given between 266.13.4 and 666.13.4 pounds as well as several thousands of acres of land in the Kennebeck River region of Maine.

His nieces did less well, receiving only 100 pounds each. In addition to his gift to Harvard College, he left L1,000 pounds to the Society for Propagating Christain Knowledge Among the Indians of North America; 600 pounds to the town of Boston to erect a house for those "deprieved of their reason;" 100 pounds to the Brattle Street Church to aid the poor; and many generous gifts of cash to his sisters, and numerous friends, servants, and slaves. Suffolk County Probate: 63: 278.

[38] Lydia Henchman Hancock's Transfer of Ownership, August 10, 1764, Boston Public Library. According to her husband's will she was left the entire mansion house and environs on Beacon Hill, all the plate, household goods and furniture, carriages, horses, and slaves as well as L10,000 pounds sterling in cash. Everything but the cash she transferred over to John, ten days after Thomas's death.

[39] John Hancock to Josiah Barker and Barnell, August 17, 1764, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[40] "Donations to the College, to Repair the Loss of its Library and Philosophical Apparatus by the Fire Which Consumed Harvard Hall in 1764," in, Josiah Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 484.

[41] John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, August 17, 1764, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[41(a)] John Hancock to Josiah Barker and John Barnell, August 17, 1764, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[42] William Tudor, Life of James Otis of Massachusetts; Containing Also Notices of Some Contemporary Characters and Events from the Year 1760 to 1775 (Boston, 1823), 262. Tudor's account of Hancock's behavior was primarily based on numerous written interviews and correspondences with men familiar with that period. His estimate of Hancock was probably heavily influenced by John Adams's recollection.

[43] John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 14, 1764, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[44] John Hancock to Hooker, January 23, 1783, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[45] John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 17, 1764; January 2, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[46] Ibid.

[47] "Boyle's Journal," NEHGR, 84 (Boston, 1930), 167; John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 25, 1764, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[48] John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, June 27, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[49]Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 56-7; For a brief account of colonial American wartime trade with the French, see, Lawrence H. Gipson, The Great War for the Empire: The Culmination, 1760-1763, VIII (New York, 1953), 78-9; and Neil R. Stout, The Royal Navy in America, 1760-1775 (Annapolis, 1973), 13-24.

[50]John Hancock to Devonshire and Reeves, December 7, 1764, cited in, A.E. Brown, John Hancock, His Book, 57.

[51]John Hancock to -------, January 21, 1765, cited in, Brown, His Book, 61; see also, January 20, 21, 1765, Letters and Diary of John Rowe, Anne R. Cunningham, ed. (Boston, 1903), 74; "was much out of order today occasioned by the Distress of the Town is in, occasioned principally by the failure of Mr. Wheelwright....A General Consternation in Town, occasioned by these Repeated Bankruptcies."

[52]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, February 1, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[53]Hancock wrote to his London partners in October, expressing his surprise "that Champion and Haley," a rival oil seller, "should get for the Oyl...L 29, & ours but L 27." The next month he was equally curious that "there should be such a difference in the Price of whale oyl between your house and Mr. Lane's. Mr. Rowe of the Place owner of Capt. Hunter, ship'd some whale oyl at the same time of Hunter, and has an account of Sales of it, at L23.15/. and yours only L 21, the difference is a handsome profit." John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 10, November 23, 1764, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC. As he later found out, some of Hancock's cargoes of oil turned out to be either inferior grades or spoiled.

[54]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 23, 1764, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[55]Accounts of his shipping invoices for the Fall of 1764 are variously scattered about among his surviving papers. On August 15, 1764, he dispatched L 3,562.18.10 pounds worth of oil and bone, Boston Public Library, Ch.M. 3.5, 179; October 18, 1764, another L 3,779.8.8 pounds worth, Boston Public Library, Ch.M. 3.5, 188; and on December 19, 1764, he dispatched L 4,009.18.10 pounds more. Hancock Papers, MHS. See also, John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, September 29, 1764 to April 18, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[56]Throughout the Fall of 1764, Hancock continued shipping his oil cargoes consigned in thirds to Folger, Barnard and Harrison, and himself. But Folger's contributions amounted to very little and determined John's plan to eliminate him from the partnership. John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, December 6, 1764, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[57]Lawrence H. Gipson, The Triumphant Empire, 1763-1766, X (New York, 1961), 200, 223-24.

[58]Oliver M. Dickerson, The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution (Philadelphia, 1951), 172-75, 179-84. Dickerson clearly reviews the basic alterations brought about by the Sugar Act's enactment. And specifically the important forty-first section which provided that "all cases involving violation of the trade, navigation, customs, or revenue laws were to be tried in the admiralty courts. Thus offenses against imperial laws were to be tried in an independent system of imperial courts." See also, Gipson, The Triumphant Empire, X, 225-29; Beer, British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765, 277-84; Jack M. Sosin, Agents and Merchants (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965), 41; and Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis (Chapel Hill, 1953), 36-58.

[59]"State of the Trade," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Transactions, XIX (1916-1917), 382-90.

[60]Temple to Whately, October 3, 1764, "The Bowdoin and Temple Papers," MHS, Collections, IX (Boston, 1897), 30; and Jack M. Sosin, Agents and Merchants, 47-9.

[61]Dickerson, The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution, 179.

[62]The merchants club's membership reads like a who's who in Boston's commercial and political elite, but with a greater proportion of its members inclined towards whig/popular party political inclination. Ezekiel Price, MS, MHS; and C.M. Andrews, "The Boston Merchants and the Non-Importation Movement," Publication of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Transactions, XIX (1916-1917), 164.

[63]There is no biography of Cushing as almost all of his private papers were destroyed during the Revolutionary War. For a brief biographical sketch, see, Clifford K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XI, 377-95. No study of his business career exists but his activity as a cloth merchant was restricted to only a few short years and thereafter his business withered away from inattention. His primary source of income came from his public offices and rental income from his real estate in Boston.

[64]James Otis, Jr., to Robert Treat Paine, August 14, 1766, R.T. Paine Papers, MHS; for more on Otis, see, Waters, The Otis Family, 135-6, 140-43; Tudor, The Life of James Otis of Massachusetts; Ellen Brennan; "James Otis, Recreant and Patriot," New England Quarterly, XII (1939), 691-725; and Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XI (Boston, 1960).

[65]November 22, 1764, January 24, 1765, Rowe's Diary, 69,75.

[66]Hancock joined Joshua Henshaw, Joseph Jackson, Benjamin Austin, Samuel Sewell, Nathaniel Thwing, and John Ruddock as a selectman. March 11, 1765, Boston Town Records, Record Commissioners Report, XVI (Boston 1886), 130; and Robert F. Seybolt, Town Officials of Colonial Boston, 312.

[67]John Hancock to James Otis, March 11, 1765, Ch.M.1.10., 152, Boston Public Library.

[68]March 12, 1765, Boston Town Records, Record Commissioners Report, XVI, 135.

[69]Kenshaw, Kennebeck Proprietors, 197n.

[70]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 17, 1764, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[71]Thomas Pownall to John Hancock, January 11, 1765, Hancock Papers, MHS.

[72]Weedon, Economic and Social History of New England, II, 746; Commerce of Rhode Island, I, 168n; Gipson, The Triumphant Empire, X, 224; Beer, British Colonial Policy, 218-21; Dow, Whale Ships, 27; Harold A. Innis, The Cod Fisheries (New Haven, 1940), 191; and Alexander Starbuck, History of the American Whale Fishery, I (New York, 1964), 40-1.

[73]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, February 7, 1765, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[74]For more on the exact nature of the tax, see, Edmund S. Morgan, ed., Prologue to Revolution: Sources and Documents on the Stamp Act Crisis, 1764-1766 (Chapel Hill, 1959), 35-43.

[75]John Hancock to Thomas Pownall, July 6, 1765, Hancock Papers, MHS.

[76]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, April 5, 1765, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[77]Ibid.

[78]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, April 1765, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[79]Ibid.

[80]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, August 16, 1765, Hancock Letterbook, HFC; and Baxter, House of Hancock, 231.

[81]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 23, 1764, April 5, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[82]As Hancock explained his predicament, "out of all my debts & many dependencies to a large amount I can collect no money." John Hancock to Barnard Harrison, April 18, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[83]John Hancock to _____, (May/June?), 1765, cited in, Brown, His Book, 73-4.

[84]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, May 21, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[85]Baxter, House of Hancock, 235-36.

[86]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, April, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[87]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, May 13, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[88]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 21, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[89]Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis, 139.

[90]John Hancock to Thomas Pownall, July 6, 1765, Hancock Papers, MHS.

[91]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, May 21, June 27, July 6, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[92]William Palfrey was originally hired by Hancock in October 1764, to replace the spot vacated by Ebenezer Hancock who decided to go into the hardware business on his own. Palfrey accepted the position as Hancock's chief clerk, on the condition he "be allowed liberty to do his own business" on the side. He became one of Hancock's most trusted intimates and remained as his clerk up until the outbreak of hostilities, except for a brief period in 1766-67 when he went into business on his own. Like his employer, he became a "patriot" and served as secretary for the Boston Sons of Liberty. For more on Palfrey, see, John G. Palfrey, Life of Palfrey," Library of American Biography, Jared Sparks, ed., 2nd ser. (Boston, 1848), and, MHS, Proceedings, 1st, ser., XVI (February 1878), 69n.

[93]John Hancock to Thomas Pownall, July 6, 1765, Hancock Papers, MHS.

[94]John Hancock to Mathew Woodford, January 16, 1766, Hancock Papers, MHS, it explains Hancock's commitment to the Nova Scotia contract inherited from Thomas. At the same time, Hancock was being sued in court by a fellow member of the Kennebeck Proprietor's Standing Committee, Silvester Gardiner. He claimed that two of Hancock's tenants (Henry Layer and Fredick Jacquere) of Pownalborough in Maine were actually on his land. Hancock's cousin, Jonathan Bowman, conducted Hancock's defense. Kenshaw, Kennebeck Proprietors, 197n.

[95]A political club, known as the Loyal Nine, originally a secret group organized to protest the implementation of the Stamp Act later evolved into the more visible, but still secret Sons of Liberty. The members of the Loyal Nine were, John Avery, Thomas Crafts, John Smith, Henry Welles, Thomas Chase, Stephen Cleverly, Henry Bass, Benjamin Edes, and George Trott. See, Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis, 160.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER V

[1]The establishment of the Land Bank represented an inflationary attempt to issue paper money, backed by privately held land, in order to relieve the pressures caused by a severe money shortage in Massachusetts. This program was primarily advocated by the farmers and middle class artisans, while the merchant class countered with their own alternative, a silver bank, which sought to counter this inflationary move. Parliament eventually intervened and ruled both banking schemes illegal under the "Bubble Act," which they ruled applied to the colonies as well as Great Britain. The directors of the Land Bank were ordered to redeem all their currency at full face value, a ruinous situation for many subscribers. This caused Samuel Adams' father enormous financial embarrassment and reputedly alerted Adams to the danger to Liberty that Parliament posed. Others would claim it merely embittered him. John C. Miller, Sam Adams: Pioneer in Propaganda (Stanford, 1936), 10-15; Robert E. Brown, Middle - Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691-1780 (Cornell, 1955), 128-32; Schutz, William Shirley, 37-41, 51-53; and Andrew H. Ward, "Notes on Anti-Revolutionary Currency and Politics," NEHGR, XIV (July, 1860), 261.

[2]Miller, Sam Adams, 8, 38-9.

[3]Ibid., 152. This impression of Sam Adams dies hard. For a more recent but similar perspective, see, Hiller B. Zobel, The Boston Massacre (Boston, 1970), 57. According to Zobel, following the repeal of the Stamp Act, "Samuel Adams faced, for neither the first nor the last time, the problem of percolating public dissatisfaction with the established order." There is, however, a growing revisionist viewpoint which depreciates Adams's singular importance as well as discounts his individual control over the Boston mobs. This perspective is well presented by, Richard D. Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, passim. Brown's penetrating examination of the Boston Committee of Correspondence is almost an institutional look at the revolution, focusing on the complexities of political organization, communications, and the decision making process. The importance of accident, circumstance, and their relationship to group planning tends to diminish the central importance of any one individual. Pauline Maier affirms Brown's interpretation, but adds that Sam Adams's importance stems mainly from the introduction of his revolutionary personality type which is remarkably similar to the Puritan revolutionary discovered by Michael Walzer in his, Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics (Cambridge, Mass., 1965). See. Pauline Maier, "Coming to Terms with Sam Adams," The American Historical Review, 81 (February, 1976), 12-37.

[4]Ralph V. Harlow, Samuel Adams: Promoter of the American Revolution (New York, 1923), 10-11, 38-9, 64-5. Harlow's psychological interpretation of Adams is generally unconvincing. Especially as he tries to

prove he was "not entirely normal," but was "a neurotic," or at a minimun, "he was nervously unstable." This is an entirely subjective view and impossible to prove. Furthermore, Harlow claims, "he was the victim of an inferiority complex." He also explains his political devotion as the result of his emotionalism. For as Harlow explains, "it is the emotional person who goes to extremes, who will devote a lifetime to some sort of crusade. Adams turned to politics because in that kind of activity he found relief from his troublesome mental activity." In spite of the difficulty in accepting these conclusions, Harlow did offer some other important insights into Adams' personality make up. He correctly recognized Adams's enormous ambition for public recognition and office, as well as the total obscurity he dwelled in before the Stamp Act provided him an opportunity to turn public displeasure with this tax to his own advantage.

[5]William Tudor, Life of James Otis, 274.

[6]James Otis, "The Preface," A Vindication of the Conduct of the House, iv, cited in, Waters, The Otis Family, 148.

[7]For an excellent and detailed account of the partisan nature of the political struggle in Massachusetts before the Revolution, see, Leslie J. Thomas, "Partisan Politics in Massachusetts During Governor Bernard's Administration, 1760-1770," Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Wisconsin, 1959).

[8]Adams, ed., John Adams, Life and Works, II, 150; Diary, August 15, 1765.

[9]Ibid.; see also, Ellen E. Brennan, Plural Office-Holding in Massachusetts, 1760-1780 (Chapel Hill, 1945), 31-34, 179-80.

[10]Thomas Hutchinson to Israel Williams, January 21, 1761, Williams Papers, II, 155, MHS.

[11]Considering Otis's later mental difficulties, it is always difficult to determine which of his actions were motivated by sheer political insight and opportunity and those which were the result of his mental instability. For a description of some of his erratic behavior, see, Waters, The Otis Family, 153-54.

[12]John Adams claimed that his cousin Sam Adams actually cultivated his political proteges by making it "his constant rule to watch the rise of every brilliant genius, to seek his acquaintance, to court his friendship, to cultivate his natural feelings in favor of his native country, to warn him against the hostile designs of Great Britain and to fix his affections and reflection on the side of his native country." This tends to deny the real likelihood that men like Hancock used Adams for their own purposes as well. But Adams was writing with the advantage of hindsight, and in that light all subsequent events seem preordained. Adams, ed., Works, X, 364.

[13]Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis, 162-69; Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 89-90; William Tudor, ed., Deacon Tudor's Diary (Boston, 1896), 17-8; Francis Bernard to Lord Halifax, August 15, 1765; The American Revolution: A Bicentennial Collection, Richard B. Morris, ed., (New York, 1970), 73-5.

[14]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, January 25, 1766, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Some of this secrecy has been unraveled. See, Pauline Maier, From Resistance to Revolution (New York, 1972), 57-60. Nevertheless, the exact role and influence of specific individuals, particularly Hancock, Adams, and Otis, remains undiscovered and probably will remain so.

[17]Ibid., 58. Maier claims that the papers were believed to be a "set of recent depositions about smuggling."

[18]William Gordon, The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America (London, 1788), I, 180.

[19]Kershaw, Kennebeck Proprietors, 197n. On August 15, 1765, a day after the riot against Andrew Oliver, Hancock attended a meeting of the Kennebeck Company's standing committee. And since May of that year his activity with the Company remained very high.

[20]John Hancock to _____, August 22, 1765, cited in, Brown, His Book, 81.

[21]This comment was credited to Hancock by his friend and occasional attorney, John Adams. Butterfield, ed., December 29, 1765, "Diary," The Adams Papers, I, 280.

[22]Following the May 15, 1765 Boston Town Meeting, in which James Otis, Oxenbridge Thacher, Royal Tyler, and Thomas Cushing were elected to represent the town in the General Court, Samuel Adams was appointed to a committee to draft a set of instruction on behalf of Boston to its newly elected representatives. This was his first appearance in colony wide politics. Boston Town Records, XVI, 113, 116, 119-22; Leslie J. Thomas, "Partisan Politics," 165n.

[23]Boston Town Records, XVI (Boston, 1886), 157-58.

[24]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, September 11, 1765, in, Brown, His Book, 82; Boston Gazette, September 16, 1765.

[25]"The Declarations of the Stamp Act Congress," cited in, Prologue to Revolution: Sources and Documents on the Stamp Act Crisis, 1764-1766, ed., Edmund S. Morgan (Chapel Hill, 1959), 63.

[26]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 14, 1765, in, Brown, His Book, 87.

[27]Only a few days after the first stamp act riot Hancock directed one of his vessels diverted from South Carolina to London because of the unexpected arrival of a shipment of oil. And since his other principal vessel, the "Lydia," was already loaded this vessel was loaded for London, as he "thought it best to ship some early by which means am in hopes to obtain a tolerable price." John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, August 16, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[28]Boston Town Records, XVI, 155-6.

[29]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 14, 1765, in, Brown, His Book, 87.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., 88; see also, John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 21, 1765. "I hope Marshall will arrive before the 1st of November, otherwise he cannot return to you."

[32]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 14, 21, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[33]This is exactly what happened. The reduction of imports allowed the overstocked American market to absorb the excessive large stockpile of previously imported goods. See, Baxter, House of Hancock, 237-39.

[34]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 28, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[35]John Hancock to Devonshire and Reeves, November 4, 1765, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[36]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, December 21, 1765. In mid-December the popular party staged another of its public ceremonies, and on this occasion they again compelled Andrew Oliver publicly to repeat his resignation as official stamp distributor for Boston. Morgan, Stamp Act Crisis, 180-81.

[37]Boston Post Boy, December 9, 16, 23, 1765; John Hancock to Devonshire and Reeves, December 21, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[38]For a more thorough examination of the intricate campaign to discredit the country party faction, see, Leslie J. Thomas, "Partisan Politics," 243ff.

[39]Boston Town Records, XVI, 158-59.

[40]Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz, eds., Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View (Stanford, 1961), 445.

[41]William Gordon to John Adams, October 19, 1780, in, "Letters of the Reverend William Gordon," MHS, Proc., 63 (1931), 445.

[42]"Reminiscences," NEHGR, VIII, 191; Boston Gazette, November 18, 1765; Thomas Hutchinson to Benjamin Franklin, November 18, 1765, Massachusetts Archives, XXVI, 174.

[43]John Hancock to Thomas Longman, October 28, 1765, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[44]"Harvarddinum Restauratum," Boston Gazette, April 7, 1766.

"One, whose beneficence and pious care
Confer'd the means, by which the Sacred Page
In the original, by Harvard's sons
Might be explor'd, rose far above the rest
In noble purposes to this fam'd seat.
Tho' death prevented, by a sudden shaft,
His hand from off'ring what his heart design'd,
His nephew, who inherits with his wealth,
His gen'rous spirit, gave the purpos'd sum."

[45]Adams, ed., Works, X, 260; Charles W. Akers, "Religion and the American Revolution: Samuel Cooper and the Brattle Street Church," William and Mary Quarterly, XXXV, 3rd ser. (July, 1978), 484.

[46]Hancock's London correspondents kept him informed of their activities to hasten the repeal of the Stamp Act. Harrison and Barnard explained how the merchants of London, who traded with North America, proceeded in a body from the Kings Arms Tavern in Cornhill to the House of Lords to attend his Majesty who has "given his Royal assent to the bill for Repealing the Stamp Act....We most heartly congratulate you and we hope that a lasting union will result." Harrison and Barnard to John Hancock, March 18, 1766, Boston Public Library.

[47]"Boston, Friday 11 o'clock, This Instant arrived here the Brig "Harrison," belonging to John Hancock, Esq; captain Shubael Coffin, in 6 weeks and 2 days from London, with Important News, as follows. From the London Gazette, Westminster, March 18, 1766...the King went to the House of Peers to give the Royal Assent," to the Stamp Act's repeal. Handbill, MHS.

[48]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, February 26, 1766, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[49]Leslie J. Thomas, "Partisan Politics," 274-76, 302, 305-7.

[50]Boston Town Records, XVI, 162, 177. As the town's newest elected representative, Hancock received the lowest vote total, only 437 votes compared to Otis's 642, Cushing's 676, and Sam Adams's 691.

[51]Gordon, The History of the Rise, Progress..., I, 207.

[52]John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, ed., Works, X, 260; Tudor, Life of James Otis, 262n.

[53]John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, Adams, ed., Works, X, 260.

[54]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, May 16, 1766, Hancock Papers, MHS.

[55]John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, May 27, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[56]Samuel Drake, Drake's History of Boston, 721,722.

[57]Wells, Samuel Adams, I, 115.

[58]Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, May 19, 1766, 95-96.

[59]John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, May 27, 1766, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[60]Adams, ed., Works, II, 202.

[61]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, January 18, 1766, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[62]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, January 22, 1766, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[63]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, January 22, February 26, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[64]Ibid.

[65]"Out of all my connections and debts I can't raise cash enough for a load of Oyle without drawing my own Bills." John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, July 28, October 15, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[66]Baxter, House of Hancock, 244.

[67]Barnard and Harrison to John Hancock, March 18, 1766, Boston Public Library.

[68]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, March 27, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[69]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, June 6, 1766, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[70]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 8, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[71]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, April 17, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[72]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 8, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[73]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 10, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[74]Baxter, House of Hancock, 240.

[75]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, January 18, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[76]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, May, December 3, 1766, October 19, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[77]Some of Bant's accounts are in the Caleb Davis Papers, MHS. See, March, 1778; November 1779; December 2, 1780; February 17, July 23, 1781. In a final settlement of Bant's accounts with Hancock, Caleb Davis, who married Bant's widow, assumed her financial obligations and settled with Hancock for L 1,700 pounds. See, Baxter, House of Hancock, 241, 242n.

[78]Thomas Hancock to Kilby, May 4, 1753, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC; and for a detailed account of the Hancock's involvement with potash, see, Baxter, House of Hancock, 162-66.

[79]T.J. Kreps, "American Potash Industry," Journal of Economic and Business History, Vol. III, 638.

[80]For Hancock's continuous role on the Assembly's committee for encouraging the manufacturing of potash, see, Massachusetts, Journal of the House of Representatives, May 30, June 18, 23, 24, 1766; January 28, June 9, 1767; June 6, 1768.

[81]Journal of the House, May 28 - June 28, 1766.

[82]Journal of the House, June 13, 1766.

[83]Journal of the House, June 27, 1766.

[84]Journal of the House, June 20, 1766.

[85]John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, May 21, 1765, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[86]At least one historian, Lorenzo Johnston Greene, The Negro in Colonial New England (New York, 1942), 58-9n, claims that Hancock was a participant in the African slave trade. His evidence, however is less than thin, it is non-existent. Yet, according to Greene, "John Hancock was a partner of James (?) Rowe who traded in Negroes. It is possible

therefore that John Hancock, one of Boston's most prominent merchants and one of the leaders of the American Revolution was at least indirectly connected with the slave trade." But for proof, the best Greene can do is cite from, Abram E. Brown, John Hancock: His Book, 55n, where Brown reprints one of Rowe's advertisements from the Boston Post Boy, of December 19, 1763, offering to sell, "a few likely negro boys and two negro men." The truth of the matter is that Hancock and Rowe were not partners and that there is nothing in the Hancock business records to indicate they were ever involved in this sordid traffic. At worst, Hancock could be accused of knowing men involved in the slave trade, but aside from transporting a handful of indentured servants from England to America, Hancock never dealt in human cargoes.

[87] John Hancock to Henry Knox, March 14, 1787, Knox Papers, XX, 21, MHS.

[88] John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, July 28, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[89] Ibid.

[90] John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, October 10, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[91] John Hancock to Barnard and Harrison, November 10, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[92] The firm of Barnard and Harrison recently underwent a reorganization which saw Harrison become the senior member and Barnard's son entered as the junior partner. Hancock ordered his accounts settled and transferred to the new firm.

[93] John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, October 21, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[94] John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, December 3, 17, 1766, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[95] Cunningham, ed., John Rowe's Diary, February 4, 1767.

[96] John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, January 12, April 22, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC; Baxter, House of Hancock, 244-45.

[97] John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, July 29, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[98] Hancock to Harrison, September 2, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[99] Hancock opposed their suggestions as only an extra unnecessary expense, see, John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, May 19, June 22, September 18, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[100] John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, July 29, August 25, 26, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[101] John Hancock to Harrison and Barnard, October 15, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid. This concluded Hancock's relationship with the firm, which within a year went bankrupt. Baxter suggests, and probably correctly, that Hancock was in large part responsible as his transfer of business away from them while still heavily in debt may have erroded public confidence in the firm. Baxter, House of Hancock, 250-51.

[104] Pauline Maier, From Resistance to Revolution, 162-69; George Rude, Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763-1774 (Oxford, 1960), 17-56.

[105] John Hancock to George Hayley, October 16, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[106] From then on Hancock returned to very conservative business practices, basically exporting raw materials like potash and whale oil in limited amounts in order to offset the cost of his imports. The British manufactured goods' were then either sold at retail in his own Boston store or sold in wholesale bulk to Hancock's inland and coastal retailers and traders. He maintained his extensive navigation with the help of Hayley, who managed to secure cargoes of freight for his ship's homeward voyages. This static trade combined with his earnings from real estate and wharfage rental space as well as the interest he earned from his money out on loan was enough to keep Hancock in comfort until his death.

[107] Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, 281-83. Bridenbaugh briefly examines the trend which saw many established merchants leaving their business careers in order to pursue new careers in the Crown's service or in politics.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER VI

[1]John Hancock to George Hayler, October 30, 1767, in A.E. Brown, John Hancock, His Book (Boston, 1898), 147.

[2]"The Lowell Pedigree," NEHGR, LIV (July, 1900), 316-17.

[3]Boston Town Records, XVI (Boston, 1886), 211; Cunningham, ed., John Rowe's Diary, 130-31.

[4]For more on the "Malcolm Incident," which was a forerunner to Hancock's later momentous collison with officers of the Customs House, see, Lawrence H. Gipson, The British Empire Before the American Revolution: The Triumpaht Empire, XI (New York, 1965), 35-38; Hiller B. Zobel, The Boston Massacre (New York, 1970), 51-54, 55-57, 60; Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 111-12; George G. Wolkins, "Daniel Malcolm and Write of Assistance," MHS, Proc., 58 (1924-1925), 5-84; and Commissioners of the Customs to the Lords of the Treasury, February 12, 1768, MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-1922), 264.

[5]John Hancock to Hill, Lamar, and Bissett, November 12, 1767, Hancock Letterbook, HFC.

[6]Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 116-117.

[7]Boston Town Records, XVI, 241.

[8]Borwn, His Book, 93, 138.

[9]John C. Miller, Sam Adams: Pioneer in Propaganda (Stanford, 1936), 101.

[10]Boston Town Records, XVI, 241.

[11]Ibid., 242-43.

[12]"List of Subscribers Toward Sam Adams' Debt," NEHGR, XIV (July, 1860), 262.

[13]Boston Town Records, XVI, 271-72.

[14]Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz, eds., Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion (Stanford, 1961), 41.

[15]Anonymous paper, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[16]These extremely harsh and onesided interpretations of Hancock's political skills and his subordinate relationship to Sam Adams

have been enduring themes. In the twentiety century they were widely popularized by James Truslow Adams's critical article, "Portrait of an Empty Barrel," Harper's Magazine, CLXI (New York, 1930), 425-434. Adams' obviously biased interpretation, however, was never seriously challenged until recently. See, Donald J. Proctor's "New Soundings on an Old Barrel," The Journal of American History, LXIV (December 1977), 652-677.

[17]Sosin, Agents and Merchants, 101-107; Dickerson, The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution, 195-202.

[18]7 Geo. III, c. 46.

[19]7 Geo. III, c. 41. Within a year, Parliament also supplemented the American Vice-Admiralty Courts by establishing new seats in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston.

[20]Thomas Cushing to Dennys De Berdt, May 9, 1767, "Letters of Thomas Cushing from 1767-1775," MHS, Coll., 4th ser., IV, 348-49.

[21]Francis Bernard to Shelburne, October 30, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts, 249-50.

[22]John Hancock to William Reeves, September 1767, Brown, His Book, 141.

[23]Francis Bernard to Shelburne, July 27, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI,222.

[24]Francis Bernard to Shelburne, August 31, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI, 236-37.

[25]Francis Bernard to Richard Jackson, August 30, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI, 43; Thomas, "Partisan Politics in Massachusetts...," 386-88.

[26]For evidence of the opposition to a renewed trade boycott, see, "A Trader," in the Boston Evening Post, October 12, 1767. The author argued that a boycott would only work if it was voluntarily agreed upon, but if force and coercion were implemented, then everyone's natural and civil liberties would be lost. He further accused the leaders of preferring anarchy and confusion than their country's welfare. See, Thomas, "Partisan Politics in Massachusetts...," 392.

[27]Francis Bernard to Shelburne, October 8, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI, 246.

[28]Boston Town Records, XVI, 221-24.

[29]Francis Bernard to Shelburne, October 30, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI, 249.

[30]John Hancock to George Hayley, November 2, 1767, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[31]Francis Bernard to Shelburne, November 14, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI 252-53.

[32]Francis Bernard to Shelburne, November 21, 1767, Bernard Papers, VI, 254-55.

[33]To some extent, however, the threats of violence did have an effect in that the Customs Commissioners grew fearful for their personal safety. Consequently their reports to the Lords of the Treasury stressed the urgent need for military protection if they were successfully to enforce the laws of trade in the face of an unruly civilian population stirred up by agitators. Commissioners of the Customs to Lords of the Treasury, February 12, 1768, in George G. Wolkins, "The Seizure of John Hancock's Sloop 'Liberty'," MHS, Proc., LV (1921-22), 267.

[34]"Massachusetts Circular Letter," February 11, 1768, The Writings of Samuel Adams, Harry A. Cushing, ed., I (1904-1908), 184-88; Journal of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, February 4, 1768, 148, 157. The popular party's first attempt to get the House of Representatives to adopt the "Circular Letter" was thwarted by supporters of the Government. It was successfully pushed through the next month when many governmental supporters returned home believing the issue was settled. See, Thomas, "Partisan Politics in Massachusetts...," 431-32.

[35]P.L. Ford, ed., "The Writings of John Dickinson," Historical Society of Pennsylvania, XIV (Philadelphia, 1895).

[36]Memorial of the Commissioners of the Customs to Treasury Board in London, May 12, 1768, Public Records Office, Treasury Papers, I, Bundle, 465; O.M. Dickerson, "John Hancock: Nororious Smuggler of Near Victim of British Revenue Racketeers?." Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXII (1946), 527-28.

[37]Commissioners of the Customs to Lords of the Treasury, March 28, 1768, in Wolkins, "The Seizure of John Hancock's Sloop 'Liberty'" MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-22), 269-71.

[38]Cunningham, ed., John Rowe's Diary, March 1 to March 11, 1768, 152-55. For the Commissioners report on these events, see, Commissioners to Lords of the Treasury, March 28, 1768, MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-22), 269-71. Hancock had his own reasons for encouraging this policy beyond the political benefits. In a letter to William Reeves, Hancock explained, "our trade is under such Embarrassments & Impositions that we have come to a Resolution not to Import any more goods for some time unless we are Relieved and these Acts Repealed....Our trade is not worth a man's pursuit...for my own part it is not worth my attention to procure trade at present." John Hancock to William Reeves, April 13, 1768, Hancock Letterbooks, HFC.

[39]Boston Town Records, XVI, 232.

[40]Memorial of the Customs Commissioners, May 12, 1768, and David Lisle to Secretary of Treasury Board, May 14, 1768, both cited in O.M. Dickerson, "John Hancock: Notorious Smuggler...?," Miss. Val. Hist. Rev., 528, 529.

[41]The "Lydia Incident" was an important prelude to Hancock's subsequent involvement in the "Liberty Affair". See, O.M. Dickerson, "John Hancock: Notorious Smuggler...?." Mississippe Valley Historical Review, 517-33; Thomas C. Barrow, Trade and Empire: The British Customs Service in Colonial America, 1660-1775 (Cambridge, 1767), 228-29; Baxter, House of Hancock, 260-62; Memorial of the Customs Commissioners to Treasury Board in London, May 12, 1768, PRO.

[42]Ibid., "Opinion of Attorney General Jonathan Sewall in the Case of the Lydia, Given to the Commissioners of Customs at Boston, April 28, 1768," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., IV (1947), 501-502.

[43]Carol Berkin, Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist (New York, 1974), 50. See also, Samuel Venner to Jonathan Sewall, April 15, 1768, Jonathan Sewall Papers, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

[44]"Opinion of Attorney General Jonathan Sewall...," WMQ 3rd. ser., IV (1947), 501-504.

[45]Zobel, The Boston Massacre, 72.

[46]Boston's four Representatives were all reelected. Cunningham, ed., John Rowe's Diary, 161-62.

[47]Samuel Hood to Captain John Corner, May 2, 1768, MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-22), 271-72.

[48]Oliver M. Dickerson persuasively argues that the Customs Commissioners were out to get Hancock. The question remains, however, whether it was for solely personal profit or for political reasons.

[49]John Hancock to Hill, Lamar and Bissett, January 20, 1768, MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-22), 262. The "Liberty's" cargo contained twenty five pipes, or 3,150 gallons of wine as reported on May 10, 1768 to the Customs House, where a duty of L 7 pounds per ton was paid. L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, eds., The Adams Papers: Legal Papers of John Adams, II (Cambridge, 1965), 174, 196n.

[50]"Boyle's Journal...," NEHGR. 84 (Boston, 1930), 254.

[51]Thomas Hutchinson to Richard Jackson, June 16, 1768, Massachusetts Archives, XXVI, 331.

[52]Journal of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, XLV, 6-7, 25-26.

[53]Joseph Harrison to Lord Rockingham, June 17, 1768, in, D.H. Watson, "Joseph Harrison and the 'Liberty' Incident," WMQ, 3rd. ser., XX, (1963), 587-95.

[54]Thomas Hutchinson reported a mob of "2 or 3000 chiefly sturdy boys and negroes," while Governor Bernard estimated its size at "about 500 some say 1000." Hutchinson to Richard Jackson, June 16, 1768, MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-1922), 273, Bernard to Hillsborough, June 11, 1768, Bernard Papers, VI, 313.

[55]Sworn statement of Richard Silvester to Thomas Hutchinson, MHS, Proc., LV, 254n.

[56]For a more detailed account of this evening's activities, see, Bernard to Hillsborough, June 11, 1768, Bernard Papers, VI, 313; Thomas Hutchinson to Richard Jackson, June 16, 1768, Mass Archives, XXVI, 310-12; "Boyle's Occurances..., NEHGR, 83 (1930), 255.

[57]John Cary, Joseph Warren: Physician, Politician, Patriot (Urbana, 1961), 74-79.

[58]Joseph Harrison to Rockingham, June 17, 1768, in, D.H. Watson, "Joseph Harrison and the 'Liberty' Incident," WMQ, 3rd. ser., (19), 592.

[59]Although Hancock was always an enigma to the colony's upper and elite classes, in practice he was strangely consistent in his identification with middle and working class aspirations. For example, as early as 1762, before any trace of his later political ambitions were apparent, Hancock joined the Freemasons lodge at St. Andrews located in Boston's southend. In composition, this lodge was far less aristocratic than its rival St. Johns. And Hancock's membership was sponsored by Thomas Crafts, one of the original founders of the Sons of Liberty. In spite of his upbringing, education, and training, Hancock retained strong personal ties with the colony's middle class, sharing their values and even preferring their company. And perhaps along with the inheritance of his uncle's consciousness. Sidney Morse, Freemasony in the American Revolution (Washington, 1924), 41; Ms. St. Andrews Lodge, Records, I, cited in, Cary, Joseph Warren, 56.

[60]Wroth and Zobel, eds., Legal Papers of John Adams, II, 176; Dickerson, "John Hancock: Notorious Smuggler...?" Miss. Val. Hist. Rev. XXXII (1946), 515-540.

[61]William De Grey, July 25, 1768, cited in, Wolkins, "Hancock's Sloop 'Liberty'," MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-22), 275.

[62]Joshua Henshaw Jr., to William Henshaw, June 15, 1768, NEHGR,

XXII (October 1868), 402-403; Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 165-66.

[63]Deposition of Thomas Kirk, June 10, 1768, PRO, Treas., I: 465, folio 72; Wroth and Zobel, eds., Legal Papers of John Adams, II, 174-76.

[64]Bill, James Otis to John Hancock, "To Council for & Attendance About Sloop Liberty," Chamberlain Collection, Boston Public Library.

[65]There is some historical confusion over the exact charges as well as the basis of Hancock's conviction in this first legal court case resulting from "Liberty's" seizure. Oliver Dickerson claimed Hancock was convicted on a mere technicality; for storing whale oil and tar on board one of his vessels without posting bond. And as a result, both his ship and cargo were confiscated, on a law never before enforced. But a more recent examination of this case contradicts Dickerson's conclusions and reveals that only the ship was seized for illegally unloading without making proper entry at the Customs House. Dickerson, The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution, 237-38; Wroth and Zobel, eds., Legal Papers of John Adams, II, 177-79; David Lovejoy, "Rights Imply Equality; The Case Against Admiralty Jurisdiction, 1764-1766" WMQ, 3rd ser., XVI (1959), 459, 478; "Opinion of William De Grey," July 25, 1768, MHS, Proc., 55 (1921-1922), 276.

[66]Journal of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, XLV, 89.

[67]Ibid., 94

[68]Boston Merchants Non-Importation Agreement, July 28, 1768, Ezekiel Price Papers, MHS.

[69]The list of those merchants in attendance indicates their less than whole hearted support for the non-importation agreement. Very few prominent merchants other than Hancock and Rowe were there, and the majority of those present were either sea captains, leaders of the Sons of Liberty, or small volume shopkeepers and traders. Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 171-72.

[70]Hancock's ties to Wilkes were strengthened when Hancock's clerk, William Palfrey opened a lengthy correspondence with the famous English radical. Pauline Maier, From Resistance to Revolution, 161-78; George M. Elsey, ed., "John Wilkes and William Palfrey," CSM, Pubs., XXXIV (1937-1942), 411-28.

[71]Joseph Harrison to Rockingham, June 17, 1768, in Watson, "Joseph Harrison and the 'Liberty' Incident," WMQ, 3rd. ser., (1963), 489.

[72]Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 172.

[73]Proceedings of the Council, September 19, 1768, MHS, Coll.,

59 (1893), 101. Two additional British regiments were slated to arrive later.

[74] Boston Town Records, XVI, 263-64.

[75] John Hancock to George Hayley, August 24, September 6, 1768, in, Brown, His Book, 163, 166.

[76] Miller, Sam Adams, 154.

[77] Thomas, "Partisan Politics in Massachusetts...," 554-585.

[78] Miller, Sam Adams, 155.

[79] John Hancock to George Hayley, cited in, Brown, His Book, 158.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Thomas Gage to Hillsborough, March 5, 1769, Correspondence of General Thomas Gage, Clarence E. Carter, ed., I, 220.

[82] Oliver M. Dickerson, ed., Boston Under Military Rule, 1768-1769: As Revealed in a "Journal of the Times" (Boston, 1936), 3.

[83] John Hancock to Messrs. Edes and Gill, November 12, 1768, Brown, His Book, 162.

[84] "This morning Mr. Arodi Thayer, Marshall of the Court of Admirality for the provinces, with a hanger at his side, came to the house of John Hancock, Esq.' to serve him with a precept for L 9000 sterling and having arrested his person, demanded bail for L 3000 sterling. Mr. Hancock offered him divers estates to the value thereof, which were absolutely refused; he then made him an offer of L 3000 in money, and afterwards of L 9000, which were also refused; Mr. Thayer alledging that such were his directions. Mr. Hancock however having heard of the orders - prudently determined to give bail, as did five other gentlemen arrested for the same sum, and on the same account from like prudent motives." Dickerson, ed., Boston Under Military Rule, 18; Wroth and Zobel, eds. Legal Papers of John Adams, II, 180-81

[85] Ibid.; and Oliver Dickerson, The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution, 241-42.

[86] For a corresponding analysis of the Commissioners' motivations, see, Berkin, Jonathan Sewall, 55, 68-70.

[87] Hancock's decision to change his defense counsel from James Otis to John Adams probably resulted from his and Otis's disagreement over the aims and purposes of the Massachusetts Convention. He was probably also influenced by Otis's losing the first case resulting from the Liberty's seizure.

[88] Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, III (Cambridge, 1961), 306.

[89] Berkin, Jonathan Sewall, 69-70; and Dickerson, The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution, 242-45.

[90] Dickerson, ed., Boston Under Military Rule, 46.

[91] For John Adams' records of his defense of Hancock, see, Wroth and Zobel, eds., "Sewall v. Hancock, 1768-1769", Legal Papers of John Adams, II, 173-210.

[92] John Wilkes to William Palfrey, July 24, 1769, "John Wilkes and William Palfrey ", CSM, Pubs., XXXIV, 414.

[93] During 1768, Hancock imported L, 8,200 pounds sterling worth of British goods from George Hayley in spite of his acknowledged pledge to honor the non-importation agreement slated to begin on the first of January, 1769. Hayley Account, December 31, 1768, Hancock Ms.; Baxter, House of Hancock, 268.

[94] Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIV, 620.

[95] The actual date of Samuel Adams' commitment to the complete separation and independence of America from Great Britain remains controversial. But most Adams biographers acknowledged that 1768 and the landing of the British troops in Boston as a significant turning point. See, Pauline Maier, "Coming to Terms with Samuel Adams," Amer. Hist. Rev., 81 (February 1976), 18-19; John Adams to Benjamin Rush, May 1 and 21, in Works of John Adams, Adams, ed., IX, 591, 596.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER VII

[1]William Palfrey to John Wilkes, cited in, Elsey, ed., "Wilkes and Palfrey," CSM, 34 (1937-1942), 419.

[2]Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz, eds., Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion (Stanford, 1961), 40-41; Boston Chronicle, September 4, 7, 14, October 26, 1769. The radicals were more circumspect in their criticism as they were in greater need of Hancock's support; but this was the beginning of their growing subsequent suspicions of him.

[3]Robert F. Seybolt, The Town Officials of Colonial Boston, 1634-1775 (Cambridge, 1939); Stephen E. Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts (Madison, 1973), 29; and James A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. ser., XXII (1965), 79-92.

[4]John Hancock to George Hayley, December 27, 1770, cited in, Brown, His Book, 169.

[5]Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 190; and Boston Chronicle, July 27, 1769.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Joseph Lesile, "Partisan Politics in Massachusetts...," 756-57.

[8]Boston Town Records, XVI (Boston, 1886), 278.

[9]Journal of the Massachusetts House, XLV, 118-21, 122, 129-56, and 159-197.

[10]Ibid., 120-22.

[11]Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 186, 190.

[12]Ibid., 191; and see, An Alphabetical List of Sons of Liberty who dined at Liberty Tree, Dorchester, August 14, 1769, MHS, (Boston, 1869), 140-42.

[13]Receipt of Thomas Pownall, March 23, 1769, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[14]John Hancock to Harrison, June 29, 1770, in Brown, His Book, 168.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Three of Hancock's ships, the "Last Attempt," the "Lydia," and the "Paoli" were all accused of carrying cargoes in violation of the non-importation agreement. Boston Chronicle, August 17, 1769.

[17] Mein demanded that, "Mr. Hancock being now returned to town, it would seem a piece of Justice to him to inform the public of the names of the importers of the 75 Barrels of Gunpowder in the manifest of the "Last Attempt". Boston Chronicle, September 4, 1769.

[18] John C. Alden, "John Mein: Scourge of the Patriots," CSM, 34 (1937-1942), 471-599; C.M. Andrews, "Boston Merchants and the Non-Importation Movement, CSM, Trans., 19 (1917), 227-30; and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776 (New York, 1957), 103-108.

[19] Boston Chronicle, October 26, 1769.

[20] Ibid.

[21] John Mein, State of the Importation (Boston 1769); A.M. Schlesinger, "Propaganda and the Boston Newspapers Press, 1767-1770", CSM, Pubs., 34 (1936), 413-14; and C.M. Andrews, "Boston Merchants and Non-importation Movement," CSM, Trans., 19 (1917), 208n.

[22] Newport Mercury, September 4, 1769.

[23] Baxter, House of Hancock, 269-270.

[24] Ibid.

[25] John Hancock to George Hayler, July 26, November 21, 1769, Hancock Letterbooks; and Baxter, "A Colonial Bankrupt: Ebenezer Hancock, 1741-1819," Bulletin of History Society of Business, XXV (1951), 115-124. Hancock personally settled his brother's debts with Hayley, but all of his brother's remaining creditors were obliged to settle for a percentage of the firm's limited assets.

[26] For a more complete record of Hancock's vessels that were reported carrying freight from England, see the Boston Chronicle, September 21, 25; October 9; December 7, 1769; January 4; and February 26, 1770.

[27] John Hancock to George Hayley, August 24, 1768, in Brown, His Book, 163.

[28] John Hancock to George Hayley, November 4, 1769, Ibid., 166-67.

[29] The Boston Gazette and County Journal, August 21, 1769;

and NEHGR, XXXVII, 404.

[30]William Palfrey to _____, October 21, 1769, MHS, Proc., 47 (January, 1914), 212.

[31]The Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Newsletter, October 26, 1769.

[32]Members of the committee included John Rowe, John Ruddock, William Dennie, William Phillips, Isaac Smith, Timothy Fitch, and Hancock. Boston Town Records, XVIII (Boston, 1887), 13.

[33]John Hancock to Hayley and Hopkins, May 18, 1770, Hancock Letterbook.

[34]H.A. Cushing, ed., The Writings of Sam Adams, II (New York, 1904-1908), 65, 307; and Miller, Sam Adams, 225.

[35]Ibid.

[36]John Hancock to George Hayley, December 27, 1770, cited in, Brown, His Book, 169.

[37]Thomas Longman to John Hancock, July 22, 1769, Hancock Papers, MHS.

[38]John Hancock to Thomas Longman, May 18, 1770, cited in Brown, His Book, 94.

[39]John Hancock to Thomas Longman, April 1771, Ibid., 96.

[40]John Hancock to George Hayley, December 27, 1770, Ibid., 169.

[41]Sam Adams to John Hancock, May 11, 1770, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., II, 9. Hancock even toyed with the idea of leaving Massachusetts for a brief visit to England but eventually gave the plan up. John Hancock to Hayley and Hopkins, October 11, 1771, in Brown, His Book, 170.

[42]Boston Town Records, XVIII (Boston, 1887), 2-3, 8-9; and Miller, Sam Adams, 180-82.

[43]Sally Jackson was the daughter of Joseph Jackson, a prominent Boston Merchant, and with Hancock a member of the Brattle Street Church and occasionally a selectman of Boston. "Boyle's Journal...," NEHGR, 84 (Boston, 1930), 262.

[44]John Adams to William Tudor, Works, Adams, ed., X, 260.

[45]Samuel Salisbury to Stephen Salisbury, March 19, 1771, Charles L. Nichols, "Samuel Salisbury - A Boston Merchant in the Revolution,"

American Anti-Quarian Society, Proc., n.s., XXXV (1926), 51.

[46] John Adams to William Tudor, Works, 260.

[47] R. Perkins to Ebenezer Hancock, August 31, 1771, Hancock Papers, cited in, Allan, Patriot in Purple (New York, 1948), 159.

[48] Boston Town Records, XVIII (Boston, 1887), 51.

[49] John Andrews to _____, February 24, 1772, "Correspondence of John Andrews," MHS, Proc., VIII (1864-1865), 322.

[50] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, January 11, 1771, Hancock Papers, Boston Public Library; Shipton, ed., Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIV, 620; Brown, His Book, 171; and Baxter, "A Colonial Bankrupt," 123.

[51] John Hancock to William Palfrey, cited in, Palfrey, Life of Palfrey, 372-373.

[52] Miller, Sam Adams, 248.

[53] Thomas Hutchinson to Israel Williams, April 1, 1771, Israel Williams Papers, HMS.

[54] Thomas Hutchinson, "Original Draft of his History of Massachusetts Bay," transcribed, 311-12, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut; and Boston Town Records, XVIII (Boston, 1887), 69.

[55] Thomas Hutchinson to John Pownall, May 30, 1771, Documents of the American Revolution, I (C.O. Series), 337.

[56] Hutchinson to _____, June 5, 1771, in Wells, Life of Sam Adams, I (Boston, 1865), 398.

[57] Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 72.

[58] Hutchinson, History of Massachusetts Bay, III, 346, 347; and Hutchinson, "Original Draft of his History of Massachusetts Bay," III, 103, Connecticut Historical Society.

[59] John Hancock to Hayley and Hopkins, November 14, 1771, in, Brown, His Book, 172.

[60] Boston Town Records, XVIII (Boston, 1887), 47, 53; and Acts and Resolves, XVIII, 628-29.

[61] "Diary of John Adams," February 14, 1771, The Adams Papers, II, 5.

[62] Sam Adams to James Warren, March 25, 1771, Warren-Adams Letters, MHS, Coll., 72 (1917), 9.

[63] J. Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 156.

[64] Thomas Hutchinson to Bernard, January 29, 1772, Massachusetts Archives, XXVII, 286.

[65] "Diary of John Adams," December 24, 1772, The Adams Papers, II, 72; and The Legal Papers of John Adams, I, lxii-lxiii.

[66] John Hancock to Jonathan Sewall, November 2, 1772, Jonathan Sewall MSS, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, cited in, Berkin, Jonathan Sewall, 76.

[67] Thomas Hutchinson to Pownall, October 17, 1771, in Wells, Life of Sam Adams, I, 438.

[68] Hutchinson to Bernard, January 29, 1772, Massachusetts Archives, XXVII, 286.

[69] Andrew Oliver to Admiral James Gambier, Oliver Letter Book, MHS, transcripts, II, 83; Shipton, ed., Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIII, 424.

[70] "Boyle's Journal," April 1, 1771, NEHGR, 84 (Boston, 1930), 358.

[71] Sam Adams to Arthur Lee, April 22, 1773, Cushing, ed., Writings of Sam Adams, III, 36-27.

[72] Boston Gazette, May 12, 1772.

[73] Cunningham, ed., Rowe's Diary, 227.

[74] Journal of the House, April 8, 1772; Hutchinson, History of Massachusetts, III, 348; and Wells, Life of Sam Adams, I, 465.

[75] Hutchinson to _____, April 1772, cited in Wells, Life of Sam Adams, I, 466.

[76] Sam Adams to James Warren, Warren-Adams Letters, MHS, Coll., 72 (1917), 10.

[77] Hutchinson to _____, April 28, 1772, in Wells, Life of Sam Adams, I, 469; Boston Town Records, XVIII, 78.

[78] The votes for Representative were: Cushing 699; Hancock 690; Phillips 668; and Adams 505, Boston Town Records, XVIII, 78; and Andrew Oliver to Gambier, May 8, 1772, Oliver Letter Book, II, 82-83, MHS.

[79] Hutchinson to _____, April 28, 1772, Wells, Life of Adams, I, 469.

[80] Hutchinson to Pownall, June 15, 1772, Ibid., 472.

[81] Hutchinson to Pownall, May 30, 1772, Documents of the American Revolution (C.O. Series), Davis, ed., I, 337.

[82] Hutchinson to Bernard, May 29, 1772, in Wells, Life of Adams, I, 474.

[83] Cunninghan, ed., Rowe's Diary, 228.

[84] Hutchinson to Pownall, June 15, 1772, in Wells, Life of Sam Adams, I, 475.

[85] Boston Town Records, XVIII (Boston, 1887), 88.

[86] J. Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 523.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER VIII

[1]John Hancock to George Hayley, July 7, 1772, Brown, His Book, 172.

[2]"The town is so full of goods," Hancock informed Henry Cruger of Briston, England, "that they are sold to loss." John Hancock to Henry Cruger, July 7, 1772, Brown, His Book, 175.

[3]Richard D. Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, 49.

[4]For a more detailed and interesting discussion regarding Sam Adams's plans and hopes for the Committee of Correspondence as an instrument of political expression, communication, and power, see, Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, 38-48; and Wells, Life of Samuel Adams, I, 496-97.

[5]Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 93; Wells, Life of Samuel Adams, I, 497; and Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, 60-61.

[6]Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 232; and, Anne C. Boardman, "Robert Calef and Some of His Descendants," Essex Institute, History Collections, 74 (1938), 390.

[7]Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 88, 93, and 128; and, Acts and Resolves, February 3, 1773, XVIII, 680.

[8]Hancock actually endorsed the Boston Committee of Correspondence indirectly. After the Town Meeting voted to endorse the Resolves, it also voted that the Moderator, Selectmen, and Representatives should be responsible for distributing a specific number of copies of the Resolves to their most important and influential private contacts. Ironically, because of Hancock's numerous public offices, he was ultimately responsible for delivering more copies than anyone else and was thus tacitly compelled to endorse the Committee's work. Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 94; and Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, 66-67.

[9]In a letter to James Warren, Sam Adams referred to some of the Whigs who without mentioning names, refused to serve on the Committee of Correspondence. But he was now ready to forgive them, claiming that they were "then unaware of the evil Tendency of their conduct." Sam Adams to James Warren, December 9, 1772, Warren-Adams Letters, MHS, Coll., 72 (1919), 14-15.

[10]Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Cushing, December 2, 1772, cited in Cecil B. Currey, Road to Revolution: Benjamin Franklin in England, 1765-1775 (New York, 1968), 309.

[11]Butterfield, ed., Diary of John Adams, April 24, 1773, Adams Papers, II, 81.

[12]Thomas Hutchinson to Josepy Hayley, March 18, 1773, Emmet Collection, New York Public Library; "Diary of Thomas Newell, May 7, 1773, MHS, Proc., XV, 1st series, (October 1877), 338; and, William Palfrey to Harrison and Ansley, May 17, 1773), in, Brown, His Book, 177.

[13]Hutchinson later claimed that Hancock "lived very politely... in a family way all the time he was at Hartford," and that he also "professed his obligation and desire and intention to live in personal friendship with the Governor. Considering Hancock's subsequent conduct as well as his intimate knowledge of Hutchinson's letters, it is obvious that Hancock was perfectly capable of maintaining a charade for lengthy periods of time. Hutchinson, Draft of his History of Massachusetts Bay, 347, Conn. Hist. Soc., Hartford, Conn; and, Adair and Schutz, eds., Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress..., 96.

[14]William Palfrey to John Hancock, February 14, 1771, in, Palfrey, Life of William Palfrey, 374; Currey, Road to Revolution, 309; and, Bernard Bailyn, Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson, 223.

[15]Cunninghan, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 244; Massachusetts Commissioners to New York Commissioners, May 16, 1773, Emmet Collection, NYPL. Hancock apparently took little part in the actual negotiations and the bulk of the credit belongs to Governor Hutchinson. He was more successful in keeping his original promise, watching the Governor's movements.

[16]Thomas Hutchinson, Copy of Letters Sent to Great Britain... (Boston, 1773), 22-3, 29, 31; and, Bailyn, Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson, 227-28.

[17]Sam Adams to Arthur Lee, May 17, 1773, in Cushing, ed., Writings of Samuel Adams, III, 39-40.

[18]Sam Adams to Arthur Lee, April 12, 1773, Wells, Life of Samuel Adams, I, 470.

[19]Both portraits are presently housed in the Boston Fine Arts Museum, Boston, Massachusetts. See, Wells, Life of Samuel Adams, I, 475-477.

[20]Butterfield, ed., Diary of John Adams, May 24, 1773, Adams Papers, III, 82-83.

[21]Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 129.

[22]Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 245; and Wells, Life of Samuel Adams, II, 70-71.

[23]Thomas Hutchinson, Original Draft of his History of Massachusetts Bay, II, 143, Conn. Hist. Soc.

[24]"Journal of Massachusetts Committee of Correspondence," MHS, Proc., 2nd series, 24 (Boston, 1889), 82-90; and Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, 143.

[25]"Journal of Massachusetts Committee of Correspondence," MHS, Proc., 2nd series, 24 (Boston, 1889), 84-86.

[26]Miller, Sam Adams, 279-80.

[27]Massachusetts Archives, XXVII, Hutchinson Correspondence, II, 509; and Currey, Road to Revolution, 319-20.

[28]Journal of the House of Representatives (Boston, 1773-74), 41, 44; Lawrence H. Gipson, The Triumphant Empire: Britain Sails into the Storm, 1770-1776, XII (New York, 1965), 60-61.

[29]Ibid., 55-56, 58-81; and Sam Adams to Arthur Lee, June 16, 1773, in Writings of Samuel Adams, III, 40-41.

[30]Bailyn, Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson, 240-45.

[31]J. Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 159.

[32]Kershaw, Kennebec Proprietors, 275.

[33]Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 246, 250.

[34]For a more detailed examination of the Tea Party, see, Benjamin Woods Labaree, The Boston Tea Party (New York, 1966); and "Destruction of the Tea in Boston Harbor of Boston, December 16, 1773," MHS, Coll., 4th series, IV (Boston, 1858); and Francis S. Drake, ed., Tea Leaves (Boston, 1884).

[35]See, Labaree, The Boston Tea Party, 66-73, 87-89, for more specific details of the Tea Act.

[36]Ibid., 77; Griswald, The Night the Revolution Began, 14.

[37]Labaree, The Boston Tea Party, 76-79, 91-103, for American reaction to the Tea Act.

[38]Miller, Sam Adams, 288.

[39]On the evening of November 2nd, the Sons of Liberty dispatched messengers to rouse the tea consignees from their beds and ordered them to appear at the Liberty Tree next morning in order to publicly resign their appointments. Instead of appearing, however, they gathered at Richard Clarke's warehouse where a mob gathered and laid seige to the

building. Eventually the crowd dispersed, but the consignees refused to give in to intimidation. John Cary, Joseph Warren, 130; and, Richard Clarke and Sons to Abraham Dupuis, November 1773, cited in Drake, ed., Tea Leaves, 282-83.

[40] Boston Town Meeting, 18 (Boston, 1887), 141.

[41] Ibid., 142-46; and Cary, Joseph Warren, 131.

[42] "The Tradesmen Protest" attacked the merchants' motives for opposing the Tea Act and warned tradesmen to remember the ill consequences of the merchant inspired non-importation scheme. "Avoid the trap," it warned, claiming that the merchants were only a selfish interest group worried about its own financial well being. And that it was against the Tea Act only because it would lower tea prices and cut into their profits. The pamphlet circulated throughout Boston for several days prior to the town meeting but caused a stir when copies of it appeared inside the meeting house. Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 141-43; "Tradesmen Protest Against the Proceedings of the Merchants," Copley-Pelham Letters, MHS, 203; and Labaree, The Boston Tea Party, 110-12.

[43] Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 142-46; Earl of Dartmouth to Attorney and Soliciter General, February 5, 1774, Documents of the American Revolution, ed., Davies, III, 38; and Cary, Joseph Warren, 131.

[44] Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston 1887), 142-46.

[45] Ibid., 146.

[46] Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 254; and Boston Gazette, November 15, 1773.

[47] Thomas Hutchinson to _____, December 3, 1773, Massachusetts Archives, XVIII, 581-82.

[48] Ibid.

[49] As Hutchinson's departure for England neared, he grew increasingly desperate in his desire to punish Hancock and the other radicals for causing him so much trouble. Yet by July 1774, the notes he made from a private audience with the King regarding Hancock were surprisingly benign. Peter Orlando Hutchinson, ed., Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson, I, 165-67.

[50] For a more detailed account of the differences between a town meeting and a meeting of the "body," see, Pauline Maier, From Resistance to Revolution, 35-36, 87-89, 118, 136, and particularly 277.

[51] Labaree, The Boston Tea Party, 126-27, 292n.

[52]"Information of Francis Rotch to Privy Council," Documents of the American Revolution, ed., Davies, VIII, 52.

[53]Labaree, The Boston Tea Party, 144-45.

[54]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution (New York, 1968), 283, 287, and 288n.

[55]The town initiated a campaign to explain and justify its recent actions. Hancock along with several other representatives from the town addressed a letter to the colony's agent stressing how responsible the townspeople were in trying to the tea inspite of their opposition to its introduction into the colony. Gipson, The Triumphant Empire, XII, 83.

[56]Butterfield, ed., Diary of John Adams, Adams Papers, II, 85-86.

[57]John Hancock to Hayley and Hopkins, December 21, 1773, in Brown, His Book, 178.

[58]B.B. Thatcher, "Memoir of George R.T. Hewes," cited in, Essex Institute History Collections, XII (January 1874), 229.

[59]Admiral John Montague, Commander of the North American Naval Squadron, directly accused Hancock and Adams of formenting the destruction of the tea, in his letter to Admiralty, which eventually reached Lord Dartmouth. Montague to Admiralty, December 17, 1773, Calendar of Home Office Papers, IV, 175, cited in, Stout, Royal Navy in America, 1760-1775 (Annapolis, 1973), 160-61.

[60]Charles Thomson strongly argued for continued reasonableness and moderation, stressing the enormous "advantages of a close union with Great Britain," as the foundation of a mighty Empire. Hancock agreed with him as well as with the claim that all their recent troubles were the fault of the "ministry" who meant to "change the government of their own country after breaking the spirit of the colonies." But Thomson's plea that continued "petitions and remonstrances" aimed to win the British public to their side, so that during an anticipated "foreign war will give America an opportunity to insist on redress," fell on deaf ears. Charles Thomson to Sam Adams and John Hancock, December 19, 1773, Sam Adams Papers, NYPL.

[61]Butterfield, ed., Diary of John Adams, December 18, 1773, Adams Papers, II, 87.

[62]John Hancock to Hayley and Hopkins, December 21, 1773, in, Brown, His Book, 178.

[63]Hutchinson to Dartmouth, December 21, 1773, Dartmouth Papers, I, ii, 901, cited in, Labaree, Boston Tea Party, 152.

[64]Charles W. Akers, "Religion and the American Revolution: Samuel Cooper and the Brattle Street Church," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., XXXV (July, 1978), 478.

[65]Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 264; and Wells, Life of Samuel Adams, II, 138.

[66]William Palfrey to Hayley and Hopkins, June 10, 1774, in Brown, His Book, 182; Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 150.

[67]Alden T. Vaughan, ed., Chronicles of the American Revolution (New York, 1965), 76-8.

[68]Paul K. Conkin, Self-Evident Truths (Bloomington, 1974), 111.

[69]Vaughan, ed., Chronicles of the American Revolution, 76.

[70]Ibid., 79-80.

[71]Ibid., 80.

[72]The authorship of Hancock's spirited March 5th oration was never questioned until after his death when various claims emerged that either Sam Adams, the Reverend Samuel Cooper, Joseph Warren, Benjamin Church, or a collective effort of Boston radicals were responsible for the entire text. To read it now, the strikingly different literary styles suggests vividly that more than one contributor was responsible. As for the motivations inducing Hancock to deliver it, some suggest it was mainly an attempt to firm up his "wavering character" and get him committed "beyond the hope of pardon," and that the "oration did it completely." But these assertions and incriminations all emerged years after the fact and reflect more the post revolutionary state of Massachusetts politics than they did the winter of 1774 following the Tea Party. And finally, the real strength of Hancock's oration was not the text, which one viewer at least noted that "any man who ever heard Hancock address a public assembly, as I have, could not for a moment doubt his ability to write such an oration," but the delivery, for therein laid its power as well as in who delivered it. In any analysis, the important fact is not who wrote it, but that it was presented. Ebenezer Smith Thomas, Reminiscences of the Last Sixty Five Years (1840), II, 169, cited in, MHS, Proc., 43 (November, 1909), 156n; Butterfield, ed., Autobiography of John Adams, The Adams Papers, III, 384; Wells, Life of Sam Adams, II, 138; Noah Webster to Ebenezer Smith Thomas, July 29, 1840, MHS, Proc., 43 (November, 1909), 155; and Philip Davidson, Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783 (Chapel Hill, 1941), 197.

[73]Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 264; Letters of John Andrews, April 14, 1774, MHS, Proc., 1st ser., VIII (July, 1865), 327.

[74]Butterfield, ed., Diary of John Adams, March 5, 1774, The Adams Papers, II, 89-90.

[75]Sam Adams to John Dickinson, April 21, 1774, Cushing ed., Writings of Sam Adams, 104-05.

[76]Lorenzo Sears, John Hancock: The Picturesque Patriot (Boston, 1912), 145; and Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 150-151, 166.

[77]Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 162.

[78]Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 264-65; and George P. Anderson, "Note on Ebenezer Mackintos," Pub, CSM, Trans., 26 (1926), 350.

[79]Thomas Hutchinson to Elisha Hutchinson, March 7, 1774, Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson, Hutchinson, ed., I, 130.

[80]Adair and Schutz, eds., Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress, 112.

[81]"It maybe depended on that a sloop of war from Plymouth 14 days since for Boston, with orders to bring to England in irons, Messrs Hancock, Rowe, Adams and McIntosh." Massachusetts Spy, May 19, 1774. A curious related incident involved the strange tale of Samuel Dyer, a Boston seaman. Supposedly he was kidnapped, put in irons, and sent to England by the British "in the ship that carried Admiral Montague." His affadavit caused a great deal of speculation in Boston, "wherein he declares that Colonel Maddison...promised him rewards...to say that Colonel Hancock and Maddison reportedly discussed the matter, "and that the latter has fully satisfied the former that what the fellow has alledged is absolutely false." For more on this incident, see, "Letters of John Andrews," MHS, Proc., VIII (Boston, 1864-65), 377; Diary of Ezra Stiles, October 10, 1774, I, 462; and Lt. General Gage to Earl of Dartmouth, October 30, 1774, Documents of the American Revolution, Davies, ed., VIII, 221-22.

[82]For complete texts of the "Coercive Acts," and the "Quebec Act," see, Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 4th series (Washington, D.C., 1837-46), I, 61-66, 104-12, 129-32, 170 and 216-20. For a more detailed study of the "Coercive Acts" and the American reaction, see, David Ammerman, In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774 (New York, 1975).

[83]Joseph Reed to John Hancock, May 22, 1774, NEHGR, XXX (July, 1876), 305.

[84]Gipson, The Triumphant Empire, XII, 148-52.

[85]"Letter from John Andrews," August 17, 1774, MHS, Proc., 1st series, VIII (July, 1864-65), 343. Hancock claimed he could not "recollect that he ever did, and is sure he never meant to...other than his ill state of health would not admit of his personally paying his compliments to him when he came to the chair."

[86]"Boyles Journal...," NEHGR, (Boston, 1830), 378; and "Letters from John Andrews," August 16, 1774, MHS, Proc., VIII, 342.

[87]Gipson, The Triumphant Empire, XII, 160

[88]The Solemn League and Covenant called upon all citizens to suspend all commercial intercourse with Great Britain as well as a secondary boycott of all those who refused to comply. "Boston Committee of Correspondence Minutes," NYPL; Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, 191-92; and Gipson, The Triumphant Empire, XII, 150-51.

[89]Henderson, Political Parties in the Continental Congress, 25-26.

[90]Sam Adams to Charles Thomson, May 30, 1774, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., III, 124.

[91]Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 176.

[92]Ibid., 176-78.

[93]Ibid.; Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, 198.

[94]John Rowe, a moderate, claimed "this affair will cause much evil one against the other. I wish for peace in this Town. I fear the consequences." Cunningham, ed., Diary of John Rowe, 276-77.

[95]A check of the town meeting minutes during this time reveals Hancock's name only once, appearing only when he was elected to a safe committee assignment to consider the state of the town's lands. Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston, 1887), 169.

[96]Ibid., 183, 185.

[97]For a similar interpretation, see, Patterson, "A History of Political Parties...Revolutionary Massachusetts", Thesis, University of Wisconsin,(1973),300-301.

[98]Daniel Perkins to Ebenezer Hancock, September 7, 1774, Bost. Pub. Lib.

[99]Boston Evening Post, September 19, 1774; and "Royalist Handbill," MHS, Proc., XXXVI (March, 1902), 92.

[100]"Letters of John Andrews," MHS, Proc., 1st series, VIII 1964-65), 368.

[101]Representing the Committee of Safety, Hancock held another interview with Governor Gage, seeking some redress regarding the British blockade of provision from entering the town on the ferry. Samuel Swift

to Thomas Cushing, October 2, 1774, MHS, Coll., sixth series, IV (1891), 57.

[102] Essex Gazette, October 6, 1774; The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775 (Boston, 1838), 5-6.

[103] Hancock was also appointed to the Committee on the State of the Province which recommended most of the important policies during the first session of the Provincial Congress. Force, ed., American Archives, 4th series, I, 829-30, 834.

[104] Journal of the Provincial Congress, 19, 38-40; and Force, ed., American Archives, 4th ser., I, 845.

[105] Ibid., 852.

[106] Ibid., 1366-70.

[107] Hancock MSS, Hayley Account, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts; and Baxter, House of Hancock, 285.

[108] Harrison Accounts, 1774, Hayley Accounts, Hall and Hyde Letters of 1783, Letterbook, November 14, 1783, Baker Library; Baxter, House of Hancock, 287.

[109] Samuel Eliot Morison, "Property of Harrison Gray," CSM, Pubs., XIV (1913), 338-48. Hancock's moral obligation to Gray was never paid in either man's lifetime. See, Henry Pelham to Copley, July 17, 1774, MHS, Coll., LXXI (1914), 232; and Bowes Account, H. MSS, April 16, 1775, cited in, Baxter, House of Hancock, 287.

[110] For a more detailed analysis of the Continental Association, see, Ammerman, In the Common Cause, 83-87; and Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution, 441-442.

[111] Boston Town Records, 18 (Boston 1887), 205-207.

[112] Journals of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, 55; and Force, ed., American Archives, 4th ser., II, 1820-21.

[113] For a typical Tory view of Hancock, see "Letter from Boston," March 1, 1775, in Willard, ed., Letters of the American Revolution (Boston 1925), 56.

[114] Force, ed., American Archives, 4th ser., I, 1008; and Willard, ed., Letters of the American Revolution, 35.

[115] John Hancock to Dorothy Quincy, March 25, 1775, Bost. Pub. Lib.

[116] Samuel Langdon to John Hancock, January 27, 1775, cited in Shipton, ed., Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIII, 429.

[117] J.H. MSS, Harvard University Archives, April 11, 1775, cited in Shipton, ed., Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIII, 429.

[118] Force, ed., American Archives, 4th ser., I, 1202, 1224; II, 211; Clark, ed., Naval Documents of the American Revolution, I, 407, 408; "Memoir of Dr. Thomas Young," Pubs, CSM, Trans, XI (1910), 29; and "Tory View of Boston Whigs," London, April 18, 1775, MHS, Boston Massachusetts.

[119] An example of the danger is well illustrated in the near riot that occurred at the conclusion of Joseph Warren's March 5th, 1775, oration commemorating the Boston Massacre. After Warren finished his impassioned address, "John Hancock stood up and made a short speech in the same strain, at the end of which some of the Officers cried out, fie! fie! which being mistaken for the cry of fire an alarm immediately ensued, which filled the people with such consternation that they were getting out as fast as they cou'd by the doors and windows." "A British Officer in Boston in 1775," Atlantic Monthly, XXXIX (April, 1877), 397.

[120] Force, ed., American Archives, 4th ser., II, 336.

[121] John Hancock to Governor Trumbull (Connecticut), April 10, 1775, MHS, Coll., fifth series, X (1888), 283-84.

[122] Paul Revere to Dr. Jeremy Belknap, MHS, Coll., first series, I, 105ff; see also, Arthur B. Tourtellot, Lexington and Concord, (New York, 1963), 78, 94.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER IX

[1]James S. Loring, Hundred Boston Orators (Boston, 1852), 85.

[2]"Reminiscences of Gen. Wm. H. Sumner," NEHGR, VIII (April, 1854), 187-188; "Incidents in the Life of John Hancock: As Related by Dorothy Quincy Scott," Magazine of American History, XIX (1888), 504-06.

[3]Caesar Rodney to Thomas Rodney, May 11, 1775, Letters to and From Caesar Rodney, George H. Ryden, ed. (Philadelphia, 1933), 58.

[4]Arthur B. Tourtellot, Lexington and Concord (New York, 1959), 111.

[5]"Incidents in the Life of John Hancock," Mag. of Amer. Hist., 505.

[6]Ibid., 505-06.

[7]Ibid.; Allan, John Hancock: Patriot in Purple, 183; and John Hancock to Massachusetts Committee of Safety, April 24, 1775, Massachusetts Archives, CXXXIX, 107-09.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]John Hancock to Massachusetts Committee of Safety, April 25, 26, 1775, American Archives, Force, ed., 4th ser., II, 390-91, 401; John Hancock to Massachusetts Committee of Safety, April 26, 1775, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[11]William Bant to John Hancock, March 25, 1776, Boston Public Library.

[12]"Extracts of a Letter from a Gentleman in Pittsfield to an Officer at Cambridge, May 4, 1775," New England Chronicle, May 12, 1775, cited in, Clark, ed., Naval Documents of the American Revolution, I, 278.

[13]John Hancock to Dorothy Quincy, May 7, 1775, NEHGR, XIX (April, 1865), 135.

[14]Samuel Curwen, The Journal of Samuel Curwen, Loyalist, Andrew Oliver, ed., (Cambridge, 1972), I, 8.

[15]John Hancock to Dorothy Quincy, May 7, 1775, NEHGR, XIX, 135-136.

[16] Journals of the Continental Congress, ed., by Worthington Chauncey Ford. (Washington, D.C., 1904-1922), II, 24-25.

[17] Edmund Cody Burnett, The Continental Congress (New York, 1941), 64-66.

[18] H. James Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress (New York, 1974), 11-18.

[19] Ibid., 49-50.

[20] Elihu Hewes to Joseph Hewes, June 10, 1775, MHS, Proc., 53 (November, 1919), 26.

[21] "Proclamation by General Gage," June 12, 1775, in American Archives, Force, ed., 4th ser., II, 969. Gage's decree proved counter productive. Hancock and Adams merely became a more visible symbol of resistance and patriotism, even as far away as the West Indies. See, W. Fletcher to Sam Adams, August 20, 1775, Sam Adams Papers, NYPL; and Boston Gazette, June 24, 1775.

[22] Actually, Henry Middleton of South Carolina, who once before substituted in Randolph's absence was offered the Presidency out of politeness. When he declined because of poor health, Hancock was unanimously elected. Journals of the Cont. Cong., Ford, ed., May 24, 1775, II, 58-59; "Diary of Samuel Ward," May 24, 1775, Mag. of Amer. Hist., I, 504; and Burnett, Continental Congress, 70.

[23] Jennings B. Sanders, The Presidency of the Continental Congress: A Study in American Institutional History (Gloucester, 1971 reprint), 33-34.

[24] John Adams to James Warren, September 19, 1775, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 112. When news of this dispute reached the English, they were delighted and tended to magnify its significance. "There has been a dispute amongst the Delegates whether Hancock or Randolph shall be President." Capt. George Vandeput to Vice Admiral Samuel Graves, October 9, 1775, Naval Documents of the American Revolution, Clark, ed., II, 379. Hancock's bitter foe, Reverend William Gordon, loved to tell the story and in his story and history wrote that the "claims of Presidency made him deaf to private advances of his colleagues." William Gordon, History of the United States, (New York, 1801), 20-21.

[25] Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, September 5, 1777, Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, E.C. Burnett, ed. (Washington, D.C., 1921-1928), II, 477.

[26] Thomas Burke to Richard Coswell, March 11, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, Burnett, ed., II, 294

[27]John Hancock to Joseph Warren, June 18, 1775, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 57.

[28]Journals of Cont. Cong., Ford, ed. II, 64-66.

[29]John Adams to Abigail Adams, June 10, 1775, Adams Family Correspondence, Butterfield, ed., II, 213; John Adams to Moses Gill, June 10, 1775, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 118.

[30]John Adams, "Autobiography of John Adams," Adams Papers, Butterfield, ed., III, 317.

[31]Benjamin Harrison to George Washington, July 21, 1775, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 170.

[32]Journals of the Cont. Cong., Ford, ed., II, 76-78.

[33]Ibid., 83-83.

[34]Ibid., 84-91.

[35]John Adams, "Autobiography of John Adams," The Adams Papers, Butterfield, ed., III, 321-322.

[36]Ibid., 323.

[37]Ibid., 324. Adams also recorded that Hancock, "according to his variable feelings," occasionally "overreacted his part in professing his regard and respect to me."

[38]John Hancock to Joseph Warren, June 18, 1775, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 57; John Hancock to Elbridge Gerry, June 18, 1775, American Archives, Force, ed., 4th ser., II, 1019.

[39]Henderson, Political Parties in the Cont. Cong., 51.

[40]Edmund Quincy to Dolly Quincy, July 22, 1775, NEHGR, XII (April, 1857), 166.

[41]Washington turned down Hancock's request to serve in the army by appealing to Hancock's vanity, claiming that he had no appointment to offer "equal to Colonel Hancock's merits." George Washington to John Hancock, July 21, 1775, Writings of George Washington, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. (Washington, 19), III, 353. The general consensus was that Hancock's services were best employed in the Congress where his reputation for patriotism increased that body's prestige. See William Williams' letter to Connecticut Delegates; "have heard Col. Hancock is impatient to get into the Army, I rather think his Duty calls him to abide where he is at present." William Williams to Connecticut Delegates, June 20, 1775, Naval Documents of the Amer. Rev., Clark, ed., I, 728.

[42]John Hancock to John Bradford, July 25, 1776, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 26.

[43]Sanders, The Presidency of the Continental Congress, 34-35.

[44]John Hancock to Dorothy Quincy, June 10, 1775, His Book, 202-203. For letters of a similar content see, John Hancock to Dorothy Quincy, June 11, 12, 1775, in Ellen C.D.Q. Woodbury, Dorothy Quincy, Wife of John Hancock, With Events of Her Time (Washington 1901), 83-84.

[45]Thaddeus Burr to Topping Reeve, May 15, 1775, cited in, Allan, John Hancock, 192.

[46]"Incidents in the Life of John Hancock," Mag. of Amer. Hist., XIX, 506.

[47]John Hancock to Dorothy Quincy, June 21, 1775, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[48]Edmund Quincy to Mrs. Lydia Boyle, September 29, 1775, MHS, Boston.

[49]John Hancock to George Washington, May 16, 1776, His Book, 210.

[50]Sanders, Presidency of the Cont. Cong., 37. For more specific examples of Hancock's ceremonial functions see, Richard Smith "Diary", December 16, 1775, Letters of Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 277-278, and American Archives, Force, ed., 4th ser., VI, 1701.

[51]Richard Smith, "Diary," March 7, 1776, Letters of Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 381-82.

[52]John Adams to Abigail Adams, November 4, 1775, Letters of Delegates to Congress, Paul H. Smith, ed., (Washington, 1976), II, 296.

[53]"Incidents in the Life of John Hancock," Mag. of Amer. Hist., XIX, 506.

[54]John Hancock to William Palfrey, September 25, 1775, Letters of Delegates, II, 57.

[55]John Adams to James Warren, September 17, 1775, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 110.

[56]John Hancock to R. Montgomery, November 30, 1775, Naval Documents of the Amer. Rev., II, 1207.

[57]Richard Smith, "Diary," December 22, 1775, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 284.

[58]John Hancock to George Washington, December 20, 1774, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 296.

[59]Stephen E. Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts (Madison, 1973), 128-29.

[60]John Adams to James Otis, November 23, 1775, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 258; Massachusetts Archives, CXCIV, 158; and American Archives, Force, ed., 4th ser., III, 1653-1654.

[61]John Hancock and Thomas Cushing to Massachusetts Council, November 24, 1775, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 258-259.

[62]John Hancock and Thomas Cushing to Massachusetts Council, November 29, 1775, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 262-263.

[63]John Adams to Joseph Hawley, November 25, 1775; Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 259-260; Adams, ed., Works, IX, 366.

[64]Sam Adams to John Adams, December 22, 1775, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., I, 284.

[65]James Warren to John Adams, December 3, 1775, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 190.

[66]Warren-Adams Letters, II, 430.

[67]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, January 17, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (January, 1927), 98.

[68]Ibid., 100.

[69]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, February 13, 1776, MHS, Proc. 60 (January, 1927), 102.

[70]On December 14, 1775, the Congress formed a Marine Committee consisting of one representative from each delegation. Hancock's background in trade and shipping made him Massachusetts's logical candidate. The committee agreed to construct a fleet of thirteen vessels and two of them, the "Hancock" and "Boston" were authorized to be built in Massachusetts, where Hancock and Cushing supervised their construction. Sanders, Evolution of the Executive Departments of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789 (Chapel Hill, 1935), 19-24; Richard Smith, "Diary," American Historical Review, I, 293-294; and Thomas Cushing to John Hancock, January 16, 1776, Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, X (1886), 355-356.

[71]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, March 7, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 107.

[72]John Adams to Benjamin Rush, February 21, 1813, Spur of Fame, Schutz and Adair, eds. 274.

[73]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, February 16, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 105.

[74]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, January 17, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 100.

[75]James Warren to Samuel Adams, February 14, 1776, Warren- Adams Letters, II, 435-436.

[76]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, March 7, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 107.

[77]New Jersey Gazette, January 14, 1776, cited in, Wells, Life of Sam Adams, II, 384.

[78]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, February 1, March 7, April 3, October 24, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 101, 107, 108, 115; and John Hancock to William Cooper, July 6, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 112-113.

[79]John Hancock to George Washington, January 16, 1776, United States Continental Congress Papers, Letterbook of John Hancock, National Archives, Washington, DC.

[80]George Washington to John Hancock, February 9, 1776, Naval Documents of the American Revolution, Clark, ed., III, 1181.

[81]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, February 13, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 103.

[82]John Adams, "Autobiography of John Adams," Adams Papers, Butterfield, ed., III, 370-371.

[83]John Hancock to George Washington, March 25, 1776, His Book, 207.

[84]Edmund Quincy to John Hancock, March 25, 1776, MHS, Proc., 1st ser., IV (April, 1858), 30, 32; and Edmund Quincy to John Hancock, January 29, 1776, Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[85]John Hancock to Thomas Cushing, June 12, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60 (1927), 110-111.

[86]John Hancock to George Washington, July 6, 1776, United States Continental Congress Papers. Letterbook of John Hancock, National Archives Washington, D.C.

[87]John Hancock to William Cooper, July 6, 1776, MHS, Proc., 60, (1927), 113.

[88] John Hancock to Maryland Convention, September 3, 1776, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 67-68.

[89] John Hancock to Horatio Gates, July 8, 1776, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 3.

[90] American Archives, Force, ed., 4th ser., V, 996, 1139, 1191; John Hancock to Winthrop, April 30, 1776, U.S. Cont. Cong. Papers, Letterbook of John Hancock, National Archives. Warren resigned as Paymaster General because he wanted to remain in Massachusetts rather than follow Washington and his army to New York after the British evacuation of Boston in March 1776. John Adams, Sam Adams, and Elbridge Gerry, although puzzled by Warren's decision, eventually conceeded that his thinking was probably right, fearing in his absence that Hancock and his friends would strengthen their position. Meanwhile, Warren was vexed by Hancock's hurried acceptance of his letter of resignation. See, John Adams to James Warren, April 16, and May 8, 1776, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 222, 240.

[91] John Hancock to Ebenezer Hancock, June 13, 1776, U.S. Cont. Cong. Papers, Letterbook of John Hancock, National Archives.

[92] Josaih Bartlett to John Langdon, October 7, 1776, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 117.

[93] William Bant to John Hancock, January 23, 1776, Bost. Pub. Lib.

[94] John Hancock to George Washington, March 23, 1776, His Book, 207; Isaac Cazeneau to John Hancock, April 4, 1776, Bost. Pub. Lib.; and Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776, Adams Family Correspondence, Butterfield, ed., I, 369.

[95] See, Bant's estimate of damage done to Hancock's Boston property, February 26, 1777, Boston Public Library.

[96] Sibley's Harvard Graduates, Shipton, ed., XIII, 437; and J. Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 515.

[97] Sibley's Harvard Graduates, Shipton, ed., XIII, 437.

[98] John Hancock, February 15, 1777, Harvard University Archives cited in Sibley's Harvard Graduates, Shipton, ed., XIII, 437-438.

[99] J. Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 196-197, 207.

[100] Robert Morris to John Hancock, December 16, 1776, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 201.

[101] John Hancock to George Washington, January 1, 1777, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 201.

[102] John Hancock to Robert Morris, January 14, 1777, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 215.

[103] John Hancock to Committee in Philadelphia, January 18, 1777, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 223.

[104] John Hancock to Robert Morris, January 19, 1777, MSS, New York Historical Society, New York, NY.

[105] John Adams, "Diary," The Adams Papers, Butterfield, ed., II, 259-260; See also, John Hancock to Robert Morris, February 26, 1777, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 282. In this note, Hancock writes, "Send us good news and let us go on to Philadelphia and Dispatch what Business we have on hand, that I may have leave to Return to Boston the last week in April."

[106] John Adams, "Diary," The Adams Papers, Butterfield, ed., II, 259-260.

[107] Edmund Quincy to William Bant, January 13, 1777, Quincy Letterbook, 1776-1782, MHS, Boston.

[108] Massachusetts Acts and Resolves, XIX, 816.

[109] John Hancock to Dolly, March lo, 11, 1776, His Book, 216-217.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Alexander Hamilton to John Hancock, September 18, 1777, Works of Alexander Hamilton, Henry C. Lodge, ed. (NEw York, 1904), III, 520; and Bernard Knollenberg, Washington and the Revolution (New York, 1940), 223.

[113] Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, September 25, 1777, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 502.

[114] John Hancock to Dolly, October 18, 1777, NEHGR, XIV, 106.

[115] Letter cited in, William Gordon, History of the American Revolution, III, 21.

[116] John Hancock to George Washington, October 17, 1777, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., II, 523-524.

[117] George Washington to John Hancock, October 22, 1777, Writings of George Washington, Fitzpatrick, ed., IX, 414.

[118] Sam Adams to James Warren, October 30, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 377.

[119] Journals of the Continental Congress, Ford, ed., IX, 853-854; and Sanders, Presidency of the Continental Congress, 13-14.

[120] Sam Adams to James Warren, October 30, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 377.

[121] Journals of the Continental Congress, Ford, ed., IX, 853-854; Sanders, Presidency of the Cont. Cong., 13-14.

[122] Ibid.; James Warren to Sam Adams, November 4, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 378.

[123] Henry Laurens to John Hancock, November 3, 1777, U.S. Cont. Cong. Papers, Letterbook of Henry Laurens, National Archives.

[124] John Hancock to John Hanson, May 6, 1782, Boston Pub. Library.

[125] Benjamin Rush, Autobiography of Benjamin Rush, George W. Corner, ed., cited by, David F. Hawke, Benjamin Rush (New York, 19), 165.

[126] William Gordon, The History of the American Revolution, III, 20.

[127] William Tudor, Life of James Otis, 267-268.

[128] Diary of Ezra Stiles, December 9, 1777, II, 234.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER X

[1]John Adams to James Warren, July 7, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 339-340. This attitude was consistent with one Adams expressed a year earlier. See, J. Adams to J. Warren, May 12, 1776, ibid., I, 243.

[2]Independent Chronicle, November 21, 1777.

[3]Ibid., December 4, 1777; Sam Adams to John Adams, December 8, 1777, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., III, 416-417.

[4]Sam Adams to John Adams, December 8, 1777, ibid.

[5]Lydia Henchman Hancock died in Fairfield, Connecticut in April, 1776 at the home of Thaddeus Burr, but prior to Hancock's return to Boston in November, 1778 he had no opportunity for settling her estate.

[6]Lydia Henchman Hancock's will, Suffolk County Probate, v. 76, 612.

[7]Inventory of the estate of John Hancock, Suffolk County Probate, v. 93.

[8]Francis S. Drake, The Town of Roxbury (Boston, 1905), 426.

[9]John Adams to James Warren, July 7, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 339-340.

[10]"I am very sorry," John Adams observed, of the "Appearance of Dissentions between...the Eastern and Western Part of our Commonwealth." John Adams to James Warren, June 19, 1777, ibid., I, 332-333.

[11]The economic program adopted by the General Court in its winter and fall session of 1777-1778 consisted of the abolition of Massachusetts paper currency; the commencement of a new taxation program; the repeal of price regulations; and the raising of fees for civil officers. Taxation was set high and intentionally deflationary, and the paper money used by Massachusetts was funded at six per cent in order to service the state's sizeable debt. The plan was vigorously but ineffectually opposed by western agrarians. House Journals, September and October, 1777; Acts and Resolves, 5 (1886), 734-37, 740-58; Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 171-179.

[12]Ibid., 185.

[13]Shipton, ed., Sibley's Harvard Graduates, XIII, 434; and William Gordon to George Washington, January 12, 1778, MHS, Proc., 63 (June 1930), 371-72.

[14]William L. Stone, Letters of Brunswick and Hessian Officers (Albany, 1891), 158.

[15]Independent Chronicle, January 29, 1778.

[16]Edward Oliver Fitch, The Diary of William Pynchon and Salem (Boston, 1890), 54-55.

[17]Acts and Resolves, XX, 215-216; and Boston Town Records, 26 (1895), 1,3,7,13 and 16-20.

[18]J. Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 523. Originally the college requested Hancock's protrait in June, 1772, but it was not completed until the eve of the Revolution at which time Hancock took possession of it. The college now sought either the original one or permission to commission a new one, hoping this would appease Hancock's vanity.

[19]Robert J. Taylor, ed., Massachusetts, Colony to Commonwealth, 1775-1780 (Chapel Hill, 1961), 48-49. Theophilus Parsons, author of the "Essex Result," argued that the proposed Constitution should better represent both elements of Massachusetts society, the "aristocracy" and the "democracy." Theophilus Parsons, Jr., Memoir of Theophilus Parsons (Boston, 1859), 359-402.

[20]Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 187.

[21]James Warren to Sam Adams, August 18, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 42.

[22]Edmund Quincy to Dorothy Hancock, August 10, 1778, NEHGR, XXXV, 41.

[23]James Warren to Sam Adams, May 31, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 13-14.

[24]James Warren to John Adams, June 7, 1778, ibid., II, 20.

[25]James Warren to Sam Adams, May 31, 1778, ibid, II, 13-14.

[26]Hancock Family Papers, AAS.

[27]Sam Adams to James Warren, May 25, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 11-13.

[28]Boston Town Records, 26 (1895), 18.

[29]William Gordon to Horatio Gates, April 28, 1778, "Letters of William Gordon," MHS, Proc., 63 (1931), 401; and Independent Chronicle, April 2, 9, 16, 30, 1778, provides a sample of Gordon's criticism of the Constitution, the General Court, and Hancock and his friends.

[30]Abigail Adams to John Adams, May 26, 1778, Adams Family

Correspondence, Butterfield, ed., III, 26.

[31]James Warren to John Adams, June 7, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 20-21.

[32]"Journal of Samuel Holton, M.D.," Essex Institute, Coll., 55 (July 1919), 163.

[33]Journals of the Continental Congress, Ford, ed., XI, 657-58, 677; "Diary of William Ellery," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XI (1887), 477-478.

[34]"Mr. H. has just obtained the Leave of Absence and is going home on Account of his ill state of Health & the Circumstances of his Family. He tells me his wife is dangerously ill." Sam Adams to Mrs. Adams, July 9, 1778, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 41. See also, Abigail Adams to John Adams, July 23, 1778, Adams Family Correspondence, Butterfield, ed., III, 65.

[35]John Hancock to Dolly Hancock, June 23, 1778, cited in, Brown, His Book, 226.

[36]Warren described to Sam Adams how Hancock managed to secure his military appointment on the Rhode Island Expedition. "I am told he solicited the council to be ordered on this business, which after some opposition obtained." James Warren to Sam Adams, August 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 42.

[37]John Hancock to Jeremiah Powell, August 22, 23, 1778, NYPL.

[38]James Warren to Sam Adams, May 10, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 9.

[39]John Hancock to Jeremiah Powell, August 22, 1778, NYPL.

[40]Edmund Quincy to John Hancock, August 24, 1778, NEGHR, XIV (January, 1860), 22.

[41]For a more detailed account of the Rhode Island Expedition, see, "The Heath Papers," MHS, Coll., 64 (1904), 244-49, 268-71; The Letters and Papers of Major General John Sullivan (Concord, NH, 1930-1939), and The Diary of Frederick Mackenzie (Cambridge, 1930).

[42]Major General Greene to George Washington, August 28, 1778, Correspondence of the American Revolution, Jared Sparks, ed., II, 189.

[43]Lafayette to Estaing, August 24, 1778, cited by, Louis Gottschalk, Lafayette Joins the American Army, 256-257.

[44]Ibid.

[45]James Warren to Sam Adams, September 30, 1778, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., III, 457n.

[46]Major General Greene to George Washington, September 16, 1778, Correspondence of the American Revolution, Sparks, ed., II, 202.

[47]"Probate Report to Sartins," November 5, 1778, cited in D.S. Freeman, George Washington, V, 70n.

[48]Sam Adams to Samuel Phillips Savage, September 14, 1778, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 61.

[49]James Warren to Sam Adams, September 30, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress , Burnett, ed., III, 457n. Sam Adams, however could not go that far, and in his private report to John Adams on recent events, he claimed that he was "happy to be informed that the Count and his officers, and indeed every French gentleman is treated there with the highest Marks of Respect and Friendship." But not one word of appreciation or recognition of Hancock's part was included. Sam Adams to John Adams, October 28, 1778, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 80.

[50]James Warren to Sam Adams, September 30, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 48, 51-52; Boston Town Records, 26 (Boston, 1895), 28, 32-35, 306; and Ricard D. Brown, "The Confiscation and Disposition of Loyalists' Estates in Suffolk County, Massachusetts," WMQ, 3rd ser., XXI (1964), 534-550; Andrew M. Davis, "The Confiscation Laws of Massachusetts," CSM, Pubs., VIII (1906), 50-72; Justin Winsor, Memorial History of Boston (Boston, 1880) II, 563; and John Hassam, "Confiscated Estates of Boston Loyalists," MHS, Proc., X (Bost., 1895), 162-185.

[51]James Warren to Sam Adams, September 30, October 7, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 48, 51; Sam Adams to James Warren, October 17, 1778, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 75-76.

[52]Massachusetts House Journal, October 10, 1779, 72-73; William Gordon to Horatio Gates, June 18, 1779, MHS, Proc., ,(June, 1930), 413. "The Hancock party weaken apace. the head had a severe basting in the House by two able speakers for not going, nor declining; and one of his friends had no other way of getting off but by desiring that the matter in hand be waved."

[53]"He is now Speaker of the House, and a sinecure delegate to Congress. The last serves as a feather among others in his cap to decorate an Illustrious Speaker." James Warren to John Adams, June 13, 1779, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 106.

[54]William Gordon to Horatio Gates, June 3, 1779, MHS, Proc., 63 (1930), 412.

[55]S.P. Savage to Sam Adams, October 1778, MHS, Proc., 43 (1910), 335.

[56]Sam Adams to Mrs. Adams, October 20, 1778, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 77-78; Sam Adams to James Warren, March 23, 1779

ibid., IV, 139-140.

[57]Boston Town Records, 26 (Boston, 1895), 63; and Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Mass., 212-214.

[58]Page Smith, John Adams (New York, 1962), I, 438-444; Robert J. Taylor, ed., Massachusetts, Colony to Commonwealth, 112-115; Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Mass., 218-226; John Adams to Dr. Rush, April 12, 1809, MHS, Proc., V, 1st ser. (November, 1860), 90. "Upon my return from France in 1779, I found myself elected...a member of the Convention for Forming a Constitution for the state of Massachusetts... Lieutenant Governor Cushing was avowedly for a single Assembly...Samuel Adams was of the same mind. Mr. Hancock kept aloof, in order to be Governor."

[59]Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Mass., 244-46; Samuel E. Morison, "The Struggle over the Adoption of the Constitution of Massachusetts, 1780." MHS, Proc., 50 (1917), 353-411; and Oscar and Mary Handlin, eds., The Popular Sources of Political Authority: Documents on the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 (Cambridge, 1966), 475-930.

[60]James Warren to John Adams, July 11, 1780, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 135.

[61]William Gordon to John Adams, July 22, 1780, MHS, Proc., 60 (1930), 436-7.

[62]Abigail Adams to John Adams, July 5, 1780, Adams Family Correspondence, Butterfield, ed., III, 372.

[63]Abstracts of Votes for the Election of Governor and Lieutenant Governor, Office of the Secretary, Boston, Massachusetts. Hancock carried every county in the state. See also, Francis Hurtubis, Jr., "First Inauguration of John Hancock," Boston Society Publications (Boston, 1916), 61-62, 65-67.

[64]James Warren to John Adams, October 12, 1780, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 141.

[65]Sam Adams to Mrs. Adams, October 12, 1780, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 210; and Boston Town Records, 26 (1895), 150.

[66]Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Mass., 246.

[67]To follow Hancocks consistent efforts to avoid taking a position on the question of a National Impost, see, E.M. Bacon, ed., Supplemental to the Acts and Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Boston, 1896), 96-97, and for his similar evasion of the question of a state excise and impost, see, ibid., 145-146; and Van Beck Hall, Politics Without Parties: Massachusetts, 1780-1791 (Pittsburgh, 1972), 131-134, 150-156.

[68]Francis Hurtubis, Jr., "First Inauguration of John Hancock," The Boston Society Publications, 70-75.

[69]V.B. Hall, Politics Without Parties, 52.

[70]"It bodes very ill to Government when Men are exalted to places of high trust through their own Sollicitations," commented Sam Adams of Hancock's use of appointments to help himself politically, because he "will in time become a dangerous Party Man." Sam Adams to John Pitt, January 17, 1781, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 242.

[71]J. Durand, New Materials on the History of the American Revolution, 18-19.

[72]James Warren to Sam Adams, November 2, 22, 1780, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 144-45, 150.

[73]Sam Adams to James Warren, November 20, 1780, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 222-23; Sam Adams to John Scollay, December 30, 1780, ibid., IV, 236-37; Sam Adams to Mrs. Adams, February 1, 1781, ibid., 247; and Sam Adams to Elbridge Gerry, November 27, 1780, ibid., 228-29.

[74]Amory, Life of Sullivan, I, 110.

[75]Bowdoin's son-in-law was John Temple, a former member of the British-American Board of Customs Commissioners. Under Hancock's direction, Sullivan initiated a campaign against Temple, accusing him of being a British spy. Temple tried to defend himself with the help of his father-in-law and his associates. Hancock and Sullivan, however, were never really serious and used the entire incident merely for good political advantage. The entire controversy lasted for the better part of two years. Sam Adams to John Adams, December 18, 1781, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 268; and, Hall, Politics Without Parties, 134n.

[76]Hancock was never defeated for Governor as long as he continued to want the position. Hall, Politics Without Parties, 133; Books of Votes for Governor and Lt. Governor for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1780, 1781, 1782, and 1785 in Massachusetts State Archives. For 1783 and 1784 only the totals are available in Journal of the House, 4: 14, 5:9.

[77]George Washington to John Hancock, July 8, August 3, 1781; G. Washington to Benjamin Lincoln, August 6, 1781; Washington to Wm. Health, July 8, 1781, Washington to George Clinton, July 30, 1781, and Washington to President of Congress, August 2, 1781, Writings of George Washington, Fitzpatrick, ed., XXII, 337, 340-41, 447, 454-5, 468-69, and 470-71.

[78]Margaret B. Macmillan, The War Governors in the American Revolution (New York, 1943), 156; John Hancock to Col. Willet, August 3, 1781, Public Papers of George Clinton, Hugh Hasting, ed. (Albany, 1899-1914), VII, 171-72; John Hancock to General Brooks, August 20, 1781, The History

Magazine, VII (New York, 1863), 261.

[79]Samuel E. Morison, Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860 (Cambridge, 1949), 30-37; Robert J. Taylor, Western Massachusetts in the Revolution, 103-127; and William M. Fowler, Jr., "The Massachusetts Election of 1785: A Triumph of Virtue," Essex Institute, 294.

[80]"Governor's Approval for Raising Relief Funds," November 15, 1781, cited in MHS, Proc., 29 (October, 1814), 171; J. Quincy, History of Harvard University, II, 244; and Boston Town Records, 25 (1895), 236.

[81]Francis S. Drake, The Town of Roxbury (Boston, 1905), 426-427. Hancock's poor health prevented his attending the opening session of the General Court in January 1783. John Hancock Papers, January 30, 1783, NYPL.

[82]William Heath to John Hancock, April 18, 1783, MHS, Coll., 65 (1905), 388-389. Hancock was very pleased with Heath's report and suggested that they might soon meet and discuss the revolution and explore the "consequences of your and our exertions." John Hancock to Heath, May 2, 1783, ibid., 390-391.

[83]John Hancock to James Scott, November 14, 1783, in Brown, His Book, 233-235.

[84]William Gordon to Elbridge Gerry, December 24, 1783, MHS, Proc., 63 (1930), 500-501.

[85]John Hancock to Senate and House of Massachusetts, January 29, 1785, Hancock Family Papers, AAS; James Warren to John Adams, January 29, 1785, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 249, J.H. to General Court, January 28, 1785, cited in, Boston Herald, June 11, 1890.

[86]William Gordon to John Adams, April 8, 1785, MHS, Proc., 63 (1930), 513.

[87]Elbridge Gerry to Rufus King, March 28, 1785, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 75-76.

[88]Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, February 14, 1785, Letters of the Cont. Cong., Burnett, ed., VIII, 38n.

F O O T N O T E S

CHAPTER XI

[1]Elbridge Gerry to Rufus King, May 27, 1785, cited in C.R. King, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 100; see also, Christopher Gore to Rufus King, March 20, 1785, ibid, I, 81.

[2]Hancock's message to the General Court, January 29, 1785, cited in Allen, John Hancock, Patriot in Purple, 315.

[3]Book of Votes, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Massachusetts.

[4]James Warren to John Adams, June 24, 1783, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 219.

[5]Sam Adams to John Adams, July 2, 1785, Writings of Sam Adams, Cushing, ed., IV, 215-216.

[6]Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. ser., 24 (1967), 3-43.

[7]Gordon Wood, Creation of the American Republic (Chapel Hill, 1969), 422.

[8]Charles Warren, "Sam Adams and Sans Souci," MHS, Proc., 60 (May, 1927), 339.

[9]Ibid., 322-23, and for similar invective against the 'Sans Souci' see, Salem Gazette, January 18, 25, 1785; Continental Journal, January 20, 1785; Massachusetts Centinel, February 9, 16, 1785; Independent Chronicle, February 17, March 10, 1785; American Herald, January 31, February 7, 14, 1785 and Wood, Creation of the American Republic, 421-23.

[10]Warren, "Sam Adams and Sans Souci," 328.

[11]Elbridge Gerry to Rufus King, March 28, 1785, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 76.

[12]Book of Votes, Massachusetts State Archives. Actually neither candidate won the necessary majority required by law, consequently the Massachusetts Senate ultimately decided in Bowdoin's favor. James Warren to John Adams, September 4, 1785, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 262.

[13]James Bowdoin, A Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety, Virtue, Education and Manners, and for the Suppression of Vice..., June 8, 1785 (Boston, 1785).

[14]San Adams to John Adams, July 2, 1785, Writings of Sam Adams, IV, 316.

[15]Boston Town Records, 31 (Boston, 1903), 69; and Amory, Life of Sullivan, I, 148.

[16]Elbridge Gerry to Rufus King, May 27, June 16, 1785, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 100, 109.

[17]Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, April 27, 1785, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 253.

[18]John Hancock to James Bowdoin, July 1785, MHS, Proc., 2nd ser., VIII, 63-64.

[19]William Gordon to John Adams, August 13, 1785, MHS, Proc., 63 (June, 1930), 515; John Quincy Adams to his sister, ibid., 515n, "Mr. Hancock, being too infirm to act as Governor of Massachusetts, is chosen as member of Congress for the next year, and will probably take his seat in the President's seat next November. This is escaping Scylla to fall into Charybdis." See also, James Warren to John Adams, September 4, 1785, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 263.

[20]George Partridge to S. Holten, September 20, 1785, Haverford College, Roberts Collection, cited in, Letters of the Continental Congress, ed., Burnett, VIII, 220.

[21]Elbridge Gerry to James Bowdoin, December 6, 1785, MHS, Coll., Seventh ser., VI, 83, cited in Letters of the Continental Congress, ed., Burnett, VIII, 269n.

[22]James Warren to John Adams, September 4, 1785, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 263.

[23]"Mr. Hancock is talked of by the Southern States for President." William Grayson to James Madison, November 8, 1785, Madison Papers, Library of Congress, cited in, Letters of the Continental Congress, ed., Burnett, VIII, 252.

[24]James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, October 4, 1785, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 265.

[25]James Sullivan to Rufus King, October 25, 1785, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 111-12.

[26]Secretary of Congress to the Several States, November 23, 1785, Secretary's Letterbook, Library of Congress, cited in, Letters of the Continental Congress, ed., Burnett, VIII, 259.

[27]John Hancock to Rufus King, November 30, 1785, King Papers, New York Historical Society.

[28]John Hancock to Secretary of Congress, November 30, 1785, Letters of the Continental Congress, ed., Burnett, VIII, 264.

[29]Charles Thompson to John Mifflin, December 8, 1785; James Monroe to James Madison, December 19, 1785; Nathan Dane to James Bowdoin, January 10, 1786; Rufus King to Elbridge Gerry, March 25, 1786, Letters of the Continental Congress, ed., Burnett, VIII, 273, 276, 283, 564; and Nathan Gorham to James Warren, March 6, 1786, Warren-Adams Letters, II.

[30]James Warren to John Adams, April 30, 1786, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 272-273.

[31]Rufus King to Elbridge Gerry, June 4, 1786, Letters of the Continental Congress, ed., Burnett, VIII, 382-383.

[32]John Hancock to Rufus King, November 30, 1785, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 114.

[33]James Warren to John Adams, April 30, 1786, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 272-273.

[34]Taylor, Western Massachusetts in the Revolution, 149ff; Helen R. Pinkney, Christopher Gore: Federalist of Massachusetts, 1758-1827 (Waltham, Massachusetts, 1909), 19-20; and Hall, Politics Without Parties, 190-220.

[35]Christopher Gore to Rufus King, November 26, 1786, King Papers, New York Historical Society.

[36]Miller, Sam Adams, 376.

[37]For the subscription list to this loan, see Massachusetts Archives, CLXXXIX, 66-67. In February, 1787, the General Court approved a special loan for L 40,000 to meet the additional costs of supressing the rebellion and to repay the voluntary subscription raised the previous month. Again, Hancock denied subscribing to this second loan. Acts and Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1780-1797, volume IV (Boston, 1850-1897), February 4, 5, 6, 1787, 423-28, 430. See also, Hall, Politics Without Parties, 209.

[38]Hancock Family Papers, AAS; Independent Chronicle, February 1, 1787; and The Historical Magazine, III (New York, 1859), 336.

[39]Independent Chronicle, February 1, 1787.

[40]John Hancock to Henry Knox, March 14, 1787, Knox Papers, MHS, Boston, Massachusetts. "I take the Liberty my friend, to request of you to be so obliging as to engage such Lodgings in any place, as you shall judge will be suitable for Mrs. Hancock and myself and three servants, I

wish for a decent front room, or two parlours, an handsome well furnished cham. for us, and decent rooms for my servants, for they Lodge and eat at home as well as I do myself."

[41] Ibid.

[42] Rufus King to Elbridge Gerry, March 25, 1787, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 217.

[43] Acts and Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1780-1797 (Boston, 1890-1897), February 8, 16, 26, March 8, 1787, IV, 177-80, 431-35, 479 and 554; and Hall, Politics Without Parties, 229-31.

[44] "Our old Friend Mr. A....seems to have foresaken all his old principles and professions and to have become the most arbitrary and despotic Man in the Commonwealth." James Warren to John Adams, May 18, 1787, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 293.

[45] James Sullivan to Rufus King, February 25, 1787, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 214-215.

[46] Hall, Politics Without Parties, 237-47. Contains a detailed and accurate analysis of Hancock's election victory.

[47] Massachusetts Archives, CLXXXIX, 422-24; Taylor, Western Massachusetts in the Revolution, 164-65; Hall, Politics Without Parties, 251; Massachusetts Archives, House Documents, No. 2539; and James Sullivan to Rufus King, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 222-23.

[48] Worcester Magazine, August 1787, 237.

[49] James Warren to John Adams, May 18, 1787, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 292-23.

[50] Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Jefferson, April 19, 1787, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, XI, 201.

[51] James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 23, 1787, ibid., 307.

[52] Rufus King to General Knox, January 27, 1788, cited in, Stone, "Constitutional Convention of 1788", Essex Institute, Collections, XXXV (1899), 93.

[53] James Sullivan to Rufus King, September 23, 1787, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 259.

[54] Boston Town Records, RCR, 31 (Boston, 1903), 159.

[55] Christopher Gore to Rufus King, January 6, 1788, King Papers, NYHS. Sam Adams had previously expressed his opposition in private, Sam Adams to Richard Henry Lee, December 3, 1787, Writings of Sam Adams, IV, 324-25.

[56]Report of Colonel May, cited in, Wells, Life of Sam Adams, III, 258; see also, Christopher Gore to Rufus King, January 6, 1788, King Papers, NYHS.

[57]For the best descriptions of the Massachusetts Convention see, W.E.A. Bernhard, Fisher Ames, Federalist and Statesman 1758-1808 (Chapel Hill, 1965), 55-66, Jackson T. Main, The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788 (Chapel Hill, 1961), 201-10, Forrest McDonald, We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution (Chicago, 1958), 182-202; and for an older account, Samuel B. Harding, The Contest Over the Ratification of the Federal Constitution in the State of Massachusetts (New York, 1896). See also, Hall, Politics Without Parties, 256-93.

[58]Hall. Politics Without Parties, 273-79.

[59]Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, January 20, 1788, Knox Papers, MHS.

[60]Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, January 20, 1788, "Correspondence Between Jeremy Belknap and Ebenezer Hazard," MHS, Collections (Boston, 1877), 5th series, III, 6.

[61]Rufus King to James Madison, January 20, 23, 1788, King Papers, NYHS.

[62]Rufus King to James Madison, January 29, 1788, King Papers, NYHS.

[63]Rufus King to James Madison, January 30, 1799, and King to General Knox, February 1, 1788, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 317-18, and 319; Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, February 3, 1788, Belknap Papers, MHS, Collections, 43 (Boston, 1877), II, 15; Christopher Gore to George Thatcher, February 3, 1788, "The Thatcher Papers", The Historical Magazine, 2nd series, VI (November 1869), 269; and Jackson Turner Main, The Anti-Federalists, 205-6, 206n.

[64]Tristram Dalton to Hodge, January 30, 1788, cited in, Stone, "Constitutional Convention of 1788," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, XXXV (1899), 94.

[65]Rufus King to James Madison, January 30, 1788, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 317-18.

[66]This account of Hancock's entrance and speech was recorded by Colonel Joseph May and cited in, Wells, Life of Sam Adams, III, 259. Colonel May was married to Mrs. Hancock's neice, Dorothy Sewell and was not entirely sympathetic towards the Governor.

[67]Massachusetts Convention, 1788 (Boston, 1856), 225; see also, George H. Haynes, American Antiquarian Society, Proc., 29 (1919), 302-3

[68]The actual author of the amendments is not entirely clear.

The evidence remains contradicotry, but they were most probably the result of a series of compromises made during the negotiations that secured Hancock's support for ratification. Apparently the paper Hancock finally read before the convention was in Theophilus Parson's handwriting, but the contents strongly suggest Hancock's and his friends' contribution. See Joseph May's Journal, cited in Wells, Life of Sam Adams, III, 259. Amory, however, contends that Hancock and his political ally Sullivan were primarily responsible for formulating the amendments and that Parson merely acted as the draftsman. Amory, Life of Sullivan, II, 222-23.

[69] Hancock's Proposed Amendments to the Constitution, February 6, 1788, Documentary History of the Constitution, 1786-1870 (Washington, 1894), II, 95. According to some, Hancock's proposals were the crucial first step that ultimately culminated in the adoption of the Bill of Rights to the Federal Constitution, see Dickerson, Navigation Acts, 263n85.

[70] "Hurra, Hurra! the great Question was put this afternoon at 5 o'clock, by yeas and nays, and it was determined in favor of the Constitution, by a majority of 19....Great Credit is due to Gov. Hancock...and others!" Jackson to Knox, February 6, 1788, cited in Stone, "Constitutional Convention of 1788," Essex Institute, Hist. Coll., XXXV (1899), 95.

[71] Abstract of Votes for Governor, Office of the Secretary, Boston, Mass.; Boston Town Records, 31 (Boston, 1903), 169; and Rufus King to James Madison, May 25, 1788, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 329.

[72] Diary of John Quincy Adams, April 7, 1788, MHS, Proc., 36 (November, 1902), 404.

[73] Christopher Gore to T. Sedgwick, August 16, 1788, Sedgwick Papers, MHS, Boston, Massachusetts.

[74] Ibid.

[75] S.A. Otis to Sedgwick, October 13, 1788, Sedgwick Papers, MHS.

[76] Amory, Life of Sullivan, I, 249.

[77] C. Gore to T. Sedgwick, August 16, 1788, Sedgwick Papers, MHS.

[78] C. Gore to R. King, September 14, 1788, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 244.

[79] James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, October 17, 1788, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, XIV, 17.

[80] Alexander Hamilton to T. Sedgwick, November 9, 1788, Hamilton Papers, V, 231.

[81] Alexander Hamilton, to James Madison, November 23, 1788, Hamilton Papers, V, 235.

[82]"The Letters of Laco," Massachusetts Centinel, February, March, 1789; and The Writings of Laco (Boston, 1789).

[83]Hall, Politics Without Parties, 318-20; and Boston Town Records, 31 (Boston, 1903), 194. In Boston, Hancock and Adams bested Bowdoin and Lincoln by two to one.

[84]C. Gore to R. King, October 23, 1790, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 394.

[85]C. Gore to R. King, June 7, 1789, ibid., 361

[86]For Sullivan's defense of Hancock, see, Amory, Life of Sullivan, I, 244-48.

[87]James Sullivan to Elbridge Gerry, April 13, 1789, Sullivan Papers, MHS.

[88]C. Gore to R. King, March 27, 1789, Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, I, 360.

[89]C. Gore to R. King, June 7, 1789, ibid., 361.

[90]Allan, Patriot in Purple, 344-49; John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-99 (Boston, 1925), V, 30-36.

[91]Abigail Adams to Cotton Tufts, January 18, 1790, Misc. Ms, NYHS.

[92]Wells, Life of Sam Adams, III, 291.

[93]John Quincy Adams to John Adams, December 8, 13, 16, 1792, Writings of John Quincy Adams, ed., Ford, I, 120-23.

[94]Papers of Thomas Jefferson, October 25, 1790, XIX, 172; and Acts and Laws of the Commonwealth, January 31, 1793, 694.

[95]Independent Chronicle, October 10, 1793.

[96]Suffolk County Probate Records, Vol. 92, 5, and 20; Vol. 93, 11-25, and 647-50.

[97]For a partial list of the claims against Hancock, see, Suffolk County Probate Records, Vol. 97, 613-14. As of October, 1799, the Probate Records listed over $20,000 worth of unsettled debts claimed against Hancock's estate. Eventually all of these were satisfactorily settled.

[98]Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap, October 30, 1793, "Belknap Papers," MHS, Coll., 43 (Boston, 1872), II, 341.

[99]"Order of the Procession for the Funeral of the late Governor Hancock," Bostonian Society, Publications, IV (Boston, 1907), 132-37.

[100] S.A. Drake, Landmarks of Boston, 296-97.

[101] The contemporary view of Hancock was basically shaped by James Truslow Adams in his article, "Portrait of an Empty Barrel," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CLXI (September, 1930), 425-34. For a current rebuttle to Adams's onesided depiction, see, Donald J. Proctor, "John Hancock; New Soundings on an Old Barrel," The Journal of American History, LXIV (December, 1977), 652-77.

[102] John Adams to Richard Rush, July 31, 1812, Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 60 (Philadelphia, 1936), 435.

[103] William Tudor, Life of James Otis, 269.

[104] Andrew Brown to Jeremy Belknap, October 28, 1793, MHS, Coll., 6th ser., (1891), 561.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Hancock's surviving public and private correspondence, business records and family papers are as widely scattered today as are the thousands of autograph collectors who have sought his famous signature ever since he just penned it to the Declaration of Independence over two hundred years ago. The result is that there is no one collected body of Hancock material sufficient in scope to complete a study of his life and career. No doubt this helps explain the paucity of works about Hancock in the collected literature of the American Revolutionary Era as well as the numerous inadequate interpretations existing for such a small body of work.

To overcome the meagerness of Hancock materials currently housed in historical societies and libraries, hundreds of individual pieces of information had to be collected from widely dispersed locations before a reasonably complete picture of his life could be constructed. This search also confirmed that much of Hancock's correspondence was irretrievably lost. Nevertheless, these gaps could be adequately bridged by the extensive use of manuscript collections of Hancock's contemporaries. But because of the numerous sources gathered, checked and consulted, as well as the meager bits of information gleaned from each one, it would be foolish and even counter productive to include each source consulted here in the bibliography. Instead, the helpful but minor sources can be found and traced through the numerous endnotes compiled for each chapter. Therefore, only the most useful collections, newspapers, printed sources, and secondary sources are included in the following selected bibliography.

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