"The cradle of liberty": Faneuil Hall and the political culture of eighteenth-century Boston

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“THE CRADLE OF LIBERTY”: FANEUIL HALL AND THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BOSTON

BY

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DISSERTATION

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the Requirements for the Degree of

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in

History

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DEDICATION

In memory of

Thomas C. Binder,

A father-in-law and friend
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank the individuals and organizations whose financial support made this dissertation possible. Along with an invaluable Teaching Assistantship, the Graduate School at the University of New Hampshire provided a Dissertation Year Fellowship that enabled me to concentrate on writing and also travel grants that allowed me to present my work at professional conferences. The research phase of the project was funded through the first annual Rutman Family Dissertation Fellowship, an award that I am deeply grateful to have received from the Rutman family in conjunction with the University of New Hampshire. A generous scholarship prize from the National Huguenot Society provided additional funding.

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version of what would become the second chapter. To myself alone I attribute any remaining errors in this dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

"THE CRADLE OF LIBERTY": FANEUIL HALL
AND THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BOSTON

by

Jonathan M. Beagle

University of New Hampshire, September 2003

Built in the early 1740s as a combination marketplace and town hall, Boston’s Faneuil Hall became famous for its role in the American Revolution, earning it the affectionate nickname “The Cradle of Liberty.” This dissertation examines the building as an expression of Boston’s evolving political culture and community identity in the eighteenth century. At the time of Faneuil Hall’s construction, the seaport was struggling to reconcile its proud Puritan heritage with the demands of an imperial existence as part of the British Empire, a process that provoked controversy. Among the most explosive issues was that of a fixed and regulated marketplace, an innovation which advocates insisted would relieve Boston’s economic distress and restore virtue to the community. But critics charged that it ran contrary both to the customs of their ancestors and the interests of ordinary inhabitants. After the dispute resulted in rioting, the cosmopolitan merchant Peter Faneuil proposed a conciliatory, yet still controversial, plan for a building that offered progress while yielding to tradition.

Named in honor of its donor, Faneuil Hall helped negotiate relations both among locals and between Boston and the larger British Empire after its completion in 1742. The provincial elite attended various public entertainments in the main hall that conveyed
their status within the community, and the elegant brick building became an integral part of civil society as the home of the local town meeting and a venue for state celebrations. When the Revolutionary crisis began in the mid-1760s, Faneuil Hall meetings served as a means for the community to assert a loyal opposition and engage in civil disobedience that counteracted the radicalism of street protests.

The character of Faneuil Hall assemblies changed as the imperial crisis deepened, however, blurring the lines between civil and radical resistance to the point where critics considered these meetings the source of sedition in Boston. Royal retribution for the Tea Party in 1773 transformed Boston into a martyr for the sacred cause of liberty and made Faneuil Hall the altar for its sacrifice, after which the building became part of a new national mythology that betrayed its Bostonian origins.
“If you don’t know Funnel-Hall, you are no Boston boy!” So proclaims Job Pray, the pathetic simpleton of James Fenimore Cooper’s 1825 novel *Lionel Lincoln*. Set in Revolutionary Boston, the novel tells the story of a Boston-born British officer, Lionel Lincoln, who struggles with his personal and political identity after returning to his restive birthplace as a representative of the Crown. Having rescued poor Pray from a violently drunken band of British soldiers, Lincoln employs the boy to help navigate the seaport’s labyrinthine streets. “[A] long absence has obliterated the marks of the town from my memory,” he explains. Commencing their journey in the crowded North End, the hub of Boston’s maritime community, Pray calculates the route to take his unwitting companion past the community’s sites of memory and heritage. Pray’s name alone alludes to Boston’s religious heritage, and as he proudly points out the North Meetinghouse, where the esteemed Mathers had once preached Puritanism to the people, Lincoln’s mind flickers with faint recognition.

Soon joined by another resident, the elderly Ralph, the three head south toward the center of town and emerge from the cramped and crooked streets onto a small bridge that crosses the Town Dock, bringing them squarely before Faneuil Hall. While his young escort expounds upon “old Funnel” in a thick Yankee accent, recalling a recent town meeting held in the upstairs hall, Lincoln intently studies the moonlit building. He
could just spy the silent stalls of its ground-floor marketplace through open archways. Their stillness masked the site’s turbulent history, where, on another dark night in 1737, a crowd of commoners had pulled down a previous market to protest their economic and political plight. That act of violence had ironically given rise three years later to the elegant Georgian structure that Lincoln now looked upon with awe. He noted how its rectangular brick walls, Tuscan pilasters, arched windows, and cupola conveyed a sense of order and sophistication lacking in much of the local townscape. The affecting sight stirred Lincoln’s memory and reaffirmed his heritage. "But I do know Faneuil-Hall, and I am a Boston boy," he told Pray, "...the place begins to freshen on my memory, and I now recall the scenes of my childhood."³

Lincoln’s affirmation of his nativity before Faneuil Hall suggests that Cooper recognized its significance to the formation and expression of a Bostonian identity, both individually and collectively. Though himself a New Yorker, the author had visited Boston in preparation for writing *Lionel Lincoln*, which he projected as the first of a series of thirteen historical novels commemorating the American Revolution. By talking with the inhabitants, reading accounts of the city’s history, and touring sites of significance such as Faneuil Hall, Cooper gained a feel for the community and created a faithful portrait of it for his readers. If the book lacked the critical and commercial success of Cooper’s other works, it nonetheless proved popular in Boston and is still appreciated for its realistic account of the Battle of Bunker Hill. As scholars have noted, Cooper was responding to the contemporary mood of the country, which sought to consolidate its national character and secure its uncertain future by commemorating the fast-disappearing founders.⁴ At the same time, New Englanders had embarked on an

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imaginative restructuring of their regional identity that staked their reputation on a distinguished past. Boston’s leading role in the Revolution recommended it to both processes, as did Faneuil Hall, which served as the vital center of the patriot movement there. “This... is the spot where liberty has found so many bold advocates,” exclaims Lincoln’s aged escort Ralph.5

The intent of this dissertation is to examine how Bostonians came to “know” Faneuil Hall, a development that long predates Lionel Lincoln and even the Revolution itself, and how the edifice both embodied their values and expressed their identity as a community in the eighteenth century. It builds on the work of Benedict Anderson, Joseph Conforti, and other historians who have demonstrated the extent to which communities—be they local, regional, or national—are culturally constructed and imagined.6 From its founding in 1630 to the present, Boston has always meant something special to its inhabitants, as the city’s many nicknames attest: “The City of Puritans,” “The Cradle of American Liberty,” “The Athens of America,” and “The Hub of the Universe” among others. Just as the city itself has changed over the centuries, so too has its significance evolved in response to changing political, cultural, and economic trends.

And yet traditional beliefs and practices have historically exhibited remarkable staying power. Historians disagree about the basis of such cultural persistence in New England communities, with some, such as David Hackett Fischer, attributing it to the enduring influence of the region’s Puritan founders, while others point to a creative process of adaptation.7 As Conforti explains, “tradition remains, or, rather, becomes, tradition by a continual process of invention and reinvention.”8 The history of Faneuil Hall supports the latter interpretation.
Ironically, the building that would become so thoroughly identified with Boston was almost never built because of popular opposition to its marketplace, which some locals considered contrary to the principles and traditions of the community. As historians have shown, New Englanders in the early eighteenth century were trying to come to terms with their place in the British Empire. Generations of self-rule had strengthened their local attachments as it attenuated their transatlantic connection to metropolitan England, especially after the Restoration returned the hated Stuarts to the Crown in 1660. Inhabitants revered the region’s Puritan founders as righteous heroes for having fled Stuart oppression and pursued salvation in the American wilderness. Places such as Boston stood as visible testaments to their exceptional character and unique legacy. “But now behold the admirable Acts of Christ,” wrote Edward Johnson of Boston in the 1650s, “at this his peoples landing, the hideous Thickets in this place were such, that Wolfes and Beares nurst up their young from the eyes of all beholders, in those very places where the streets are full of Girles and Boys sporting up and downe, with a continued concourse of people.”

Beginning in the 1680s, however, New England’s Puritan monoculture and the sense of place that had sustained it were dislocated through “Anglicization,” a term historians have coined to describe the gradual integration of the American colonies into the greater English empire. This process took several forms. Politically, it involved increased metropolitan control over the structure and substance of colonial governments. In 1684, for instance, the Crown revoked Massachusetts’ founding charter, replacing it a few years later with a provincial charter that substituted royally appointed governors for elected ones and subjected colonial legislation to the king’s approval.
Anglicization in Massachusetts also involved introducing the controversial Church of England to Boston in 1688, a direct challenge to the city's Puritan heritage. As the established religion of the realm, Anglicanism counted the king as its head and had been a major source of harassment for New England's founders, who were highly critical of its practices and considered it corrupt. Firm Puritan control over Massachusetts had heretofore prevented Anglicans from obtaining a foothold in the colony, as they were forbidden from founding a church or holding elective office. But charter revocation and royal government forced religious liberty upon the recalcitrant colony and enabled not just Anglicans, but also other Protestant denominations to openly worship there. By 1740, when construction on Faneuil Hall began, Boston featured three Anglican churches scattered about the seaport, a Baptist meetinghouse near the Mill Pond in the North End, and both a small French Huguenot church and a Quaker meetinghouse close to the center of town, as well as numerous Congregational meetinghouses. As Patricia Bonomi writes, "It was not religion, in any measurable sense, that had declined and paled, but something else, something perhaps even loftier: a veritable utopia- or rather, a utopian vision, one that had shown brightest at the very moment of the Puritan exodus from Old England to New."\textsuperscript{10}

A sense of religious decline was also felt from the growing consumer culture and commercial capitalism that imperial integration encouraged. New England had long thrived on maritime trade, transforming Boston into the largest community in English America at the beginning of the eighteenth century. "[T]his Town is the very Mart of the Land," observed Edward Johnson, "French, Portugalls and Dutch come hither for Traffique."\textsuperscript{11} As Boston's commerce prospered, its merchant ranks grew in size and
power until they dominated local government by the close of the seventeenth century. Many of these individuals, as Stephen Foster has shown, had close ties to the town’s clergy, whose Puritan religious convictions helped curb the excesses of capital accumulation and steer it toward communal ends. But the fragmentation of Puritan control after the 1680s, combined with lucrative trade opportunities with metropolitan England, put new pressures on their relationship. Many merchants increasingly gravitated toward the social circles of the royal governor and even the Anglican Church in an effort to enhance their personal prestige and power.

They also became attracted to the culture of gentility that already characterized their counterparts in England. As Richard Bushman has shown, this culture had its origins in the court culture of European monarchs, where it operated to regulate access to the sovereign, but urban elites and rural aristocrats had also embraced it by the seventeenth century. It began to take hold in Boston and other colonial seaports after the 1680s, introduced through the courtesy books that merchants imported from England. Gentility emphasized the refinement of manners and materials as evidence of a worthy character, and in so doing introduced new social divisions and reconfigured the landscape. Ladies and gentlemen were distinguished from their plainer neighbors by the fashion of their clothes and houses, the style of their conversation, the places they patronized, and the company they kept. In the new environment of provincial Boston, gentility acted as an avenue of social and political influence, spreading rapidly through the seaport as a result. Its influence was evident in everything from the luxury items on store shelves to the orderly architecture of such buildings as Faneuil Hall- all of which reflected metropolitan England’s growing influence over the provincial seaport.
In this atmosphere of profound change, New Englanders imaginatively exploited the ambiguities of both the new culture and their own customs, effectively reinventing themselves to sustain the spirit of their Puritan ancestors. Politically they adopted elements of the English constitution that reinforced their republican principles and enhanced their appreciation of both traditions. Such adaptation often proved an effective means of preserving New England’s Puritan legacy. Christine Heyrman has found that the inhabitants of Marblehead and Gloucester, Massachusetts, successfully adjusted to the demands of commercialization without sacrificing their heritage. “Rather than being at odds with the ideals of Puritanism or the ends of communitarianism, commercial capitalism coexisted with and was molded by the cultural patterns of the past,” she concludes.14 Similarly, Richard Bushman contends that New England’s religious and republican impulses could coexist with gentility despite its seemingly contrary values. “[I]nstead of leading to competition for dominance, as might be expected, in most instances the result of the interplay was mutual exchange and compromise,” he writes.15 Mark Peterson draws on Bushman’s work for his study of New England communion silver, which suggests that Puritanism and gentility similarly valued material objects as external signs of inner grace— an affinity that may help explain how the region “became a major producer and exporter of both evangelical Protestantism and consumer culture.”16

But as Chapter One of the dissertation demonstrates, resistance also played a role in recasting tradition in provincial Boston. Anglicization was a contested process, and those who opposed the changes overtaking their community had several avenues of recourse. They could, and did, take their protests to the press, contributing to the changing nature of that medium in the eighteenth century. Once the province of the
government and the clergy, the printed word in the form of newspapers was beginning to emerge as a distinct forum for public debate in eighteenth-century America. Boston claimed the first colonial American newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*, in 1704 and produced several others thereafter. The proliferation of print in the community partly reflected the increasingly factious character of provincial politics in Massachusetts, which created an outpouring of pamphlets and articles on such issues as currency and market reform. Gentility played its part in the process as well since print was one of its primary avenues of transmission, and a number of pieces both for and against polite culture appeared in Boston-based newspapers.

Law and government could also be used to conserve custom. As historians have shown, the predominant trend in eighteenth-century law was toward Anglicization. “Beginning with the establishment of the Dominion of New England in 1686, English law invaded Massachusetts and engaged its wilderness cousin in a duel for survival,” writes John Murrin. “Working ceaselessly through the royal government, it slowly dismantled much that was unique in the system which the colony had constructed.” As Cornelia Dayton Hughes has shown, women in particular were negatively affected by this transformation, losing many of the protections that Puritan law and its enforcement of community had provided. But at times Puritan regulations were able to hold their ground or inform new legislation, such as that banning theater in the 1750s. Visitors to Boston in the mid-eighteenth century were amazed by the degree to which old Puritan blue laws were still enforced. “It is not by half such a flagrant sin to cheat and cozen one’s neighbour as it is to ride about for pleasure on the Sabbath day or to neglect going to church and singing of psalms,” Dr. Alexander Hamilton wryly reported in 1744.
When the law failed to uphold custom, crowd action could be called upon for the task. There is a rich literature detailing the importance of crowds to the regulation of community in the early modern period. Particularly influential for American historians has been E.P. Thompson's "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," which, building on the earlier work of George Rudé, argues that English food "riots" were both purposeful and restrained in their enforcement of community norms and market practices. Gary Nash has applied Thompson's theories to colonial Boston, New York, and Philadelphia to suggest not only the persistence of such traditions in the colonies, but also the growing political and class conscience of urban laborers. Most recently, Jack Tager's analysis of rioting in Boston concludes that it grew out of popular frustrations with unresponsive government, especially royal officials, beginning in the provincial period. Indeed, no place in eighteenth-century America was more riotous than Boston. As the old Puritan order faced new challenges, crowd action became a novel way to enforce tradition.

These crosscurrents are reflected in the marketplace controversy through which Bostonians first came to know Faneuil Hall--the subject of Chapter Two. Central marketplaces were a familiar feature of the English landscape that Boston's Puritan founders had left behind in 1630, one with deep spiritual implications for communities. Religious authorities had long sponsored fairs and markets as a means to channel mercantile activity toward productive, communal ends. The association was embodied spatially and architecturally as well, for markets were often held on church grounds--an arrangement reproduced in early Boston, where the first marketplace sat in plain view of the meetinghouse on Great Street. While it was little more than an open spot of ground,
it at least provided a convenient place for country traders to sell their produce to the local populace. In fact, the site proved popular enough that it was improved in the 1650s with the construction of Boston’s first Town House, which sheltered the marketplace while creating space above for government officials to gather. Before the end of the century, however, the seaport’s expanding commerce and imperial integration transformed the Town House marketplace into a fashionable exchange for transatlantic merchants, displacing country traders onto the streets and promoting their itinerancy in the process.

Although the diffusion of market space in Boston was itself a consequence of Anglicization, it also contradicted the centralizing tendency of imperial integration and complicated the community’s identity, as inhabitants divided over its significance. The resultant controversy, as Gary Nash has shown, was indicative of developing class tensions as the seaport suffered from inflation, unemployment, and poverty in the early eighteenth century. Elite merchants who identified with the imperial order would move marketing off the public streets, where ordinary artisans and laborers held sway, and into a more controllable environment that consolidated their authority over the community. Such a scheme, argues Nash, ran contrary to the “cultural traditionalism” of laboring-class Bostonians, who resisted marketplaces as inconsistent with the moral economy of their Puritan ancestors.27 However, such talk of tradition masks the extent to which their provisioning preferences were a recently constructed “custom,” an invented tradition based as much on contemporary developments as any “ancient” legacy. Laboring-class identity in Boston’s market controversy coalesced around a mythologized version of the town’s Puritan past that bore strong exceptionalist overtones and distinguished it from the seemingly more Anglicized form adopted by many elites. A similar pattern characterized
popular resistance to municipal incorporation, through which elites would have replaced Boston’s town meeting system of government with a mayoral format commonly found elsewhere in the Empire.

Yet market reformers understood their position as entirely consonant with Boston’s Puritan heritage. Led by the Reverend Benjamin Colman, one of the community’s most respected Congregational ministers, they reconciled religion with commerce and gentility to argue that centralized, regulated marketplaces would restore the godly order and spirit of community that their ancestors had so valued, but which now seemed threatened. As Christine Heyrman has shown, Colman and other New England clergymen adopted such rhetorical strategies as a means to keep traditional Puritan social values relevant in a rapidly changing culture by “allowing the ministry to endow provincial merchants with the ancestral mantle of public-spiritedness.” But whereas Benjamin Colman would sacralize merchant capitalism in the form of marketplaces, his critics would resist such reform to keep the New England Way sacred.

After colliding violently in the 1737 market riot, which compelled the closing of recently built market houses, the two competing strains of tradition found common ground with the construction of Faneuil Hall and its marketplace in 1740. As the gift of a wealthy gentleman-merchant, Peter Faneuil, the graceful brick building seemed to fulfill the hope of ministers such as Benjamin Colman that commercial capital and cultural refinement could together reinforce a sense of community and godly order. Faneuil Hall, proclaimed one proud Bostonian, was physical proof that “the most public-spirited man ... that ever yet appeared on the Northern Continent of America, was a Member of their Community.” And yet the antagonism of local artisans and laborers toward the
proposed structure, especially its marketplace, forced concessions to their values and ensured that distinctive local traditions would survive imperial integration. The marketplace was not allowed to interfere with customary marketing practices, and the main hall became the venue for town meetings, a unique regional tradition that Michael Zuckerman argues was central to the maintenance of "moral community" in colonial Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{30} As a result, Faneuil Hall embodied the enduring spirit of Boston's founders even as it reflected the Anglicization of New England culture.

Chapter Three examines how the community variously related to Faneuil Hall after its completion in 1742. Although the refined building was rapidly incorporated into the cultural milieu of polite society, acting occasionally as a concert venue, for instance, it was never exclusively their domain, since the structure was publicly owned and operated. The ordinary artisans and laborers who attended its main hall on town meeting days imparted a decidedly different character to the place, according to critics. While some gentlemen sought to manage the meetings, others, contemptuous of what they regarded as the town meeting's leveling tendency, simply stayed away from Faneuil Hall on these occasions. As Governor William Shirley complained, too many "working Artificers, Seafaring Men, and low sort of people" gave town meetings a "mobbish Spirit."\textsuperscript{31} He and other royal officials also resented the willful disposition of the institution, which had assumed the defense of Boston's long-standing tradition of local autonomy. But if Faneuil Hall exhibited Boston's notoriously independent streak, it also expressed deepening connections to the larger British Empire. Both the local and provincial elite staged various state celebrations there that not only conveyed royal authority over the populace, but also reinforced their own leadership within the seaport.
The meanings and rituals established and associated with Faneuil Hall in the decades before the American Revolution would profoundly influence the subsequent character of that contest in Boston, as opposition leaders appropriated them to legitimate local resistance against imperial authority. The second half of the dissertation, Chapters Four through Six, explores this process. Chapter Four argues that Faneuil Hall was central to Boston’s particular creation of the loyal opposition that historians such as Pauline Maier have shown generally characterized the Revolution in the 1760s.32

Existing in the ambiguous political space between, on the one hand, the imperial order of the Town House and, on the other, by the democratic streets of the city, the building enabled inhabitants to exercise civil resistance. Local control of Faneuil Hall in conjunction with its town meeting tradition provided an autonomous place of protest that reinforced community bonds and gave opposition leaders popular credibility. At the same time, the building acted as a foil to mob violence on the streets. The destructive Stamp Act riots in particular not only made town meeting protests appear comparatively respectable and moderate, but also increased efforts to channel popular energy through Faneuil Hall, which confined it while legitimating it—a strategy also effectively applied to other venues of protest. But as the crisis deepened, this ever-delicate balance act was lost.

The fifth chapter examines the pivotal transformation of Faneuil Hall in 1768 from a moderating influence upon the Revolution in Boston to a radicalizing force that changed the character of the opposition movement. The sources of this shift were essentially threefold. The first was royal policy that indirectly enhanced the building’s importance to patriot leaders. When Governor Francis Bernard prorogued an intransigent
Massachusetts legislature and prevented it from meeting further in Boston, he inadvertently threw the defense of charter rights and local autonomy more fully onto the shoulders of the town meeting at Faneuil Hall. Moreover, Parliament’s decision to send metropolitan customs commissioners to the seaport sparked a xenophobic reaction among the inhabitants that found expression at Faneuil Hall as well as elsewhere in town.

The second source for the building’s transformation was the local government, which in response to royal policy increasingly employed Faneuil Hall as a mechanism of community membership. Branded as “foreigners,” the customs commissioners were proscribed from the Hall and publicly ostracized. The Governor also found himself unwelcome there for his association with the commissioners, yet the town fathers opened up the Hall to the merchants’ meetings that informally managed the seaport’s non-importation campaign. And following the removal of the General Court from Boston, local officials approved use of the building for a controversial provincial convention that to critics looked suspiciously like an illegally reconvened legislature and made Faneuil Hall into something of an alternate statehouse.

Extralegal assemblies such as the merchants’ meetings and provincial convention form the third cause for Faneuil Hall’s noticeable radicalization. Though they claimed no governmental authority, their relation to Faneuil Hall gave them tacit legitimacy in the eyes of many locals. The merchants’ meetings, for instance, assumed such authority and popularity within the community that detractors such as Thomas Hutchinson could hardly distinguish them from town meetings and considered them more dangerous than street mobs. By the fall of 1768, Faneuil Hall stood unambiguously at the center of the
Revolutionary movement in Boston, becoming what Peter Oliver described as the "Sanctum Sanctorum" of patriot leaders.

As Chapter Six shows, Faneuil Hall's influence over the Revolution became increasingly symbolic after 1773 as the center of political opposition shifted away from Boston. Parliament's swift punishment of the refractory seaport for its destruction of valuable East India tea all but incapacitated it both politically and economically. This was the Boston to which Cooper's Lionel Lincoln returned. With the town increasingly resembling a British army camp, many residents, especially known rebels, reluctantly chose to abandon their homes and shops for the safety of other communities. "H[ancock] and A[dams] go no more into that Garrison," observed James Warren on the eve of the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Devoid of their leaders and handcuffed by British officials, Faneuil Hall meetings failed to wield their former political strength, yet the building continued to inspire patriotism and symbolically sustain the resolve to resist. Thus was Faneuil Hall's fame as the "Cradle of Liberty," and its genus loci or "spirit of place," secured even as events passed it by. In the years after the Revolution, the building became an integral part of Boston's-- and New England's-- claim to national prominence and regional distinction. Indeed, one no longer had to be a "Boston boy" to know Faneuil Hall.
CHAPTER NOTES

1 James Fenimore Cooper, *Lionel Lincoln; or, the Leaguer of Boston*, (1825; New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1855), 34.

2 Ibid., 26.

3 Ibid., 34.


5 Cooper, *Lionel Lincoln*, 34.


15 Bushman, The Refinement of America, p. xvii.


27 Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, pp. 80-84.


29 *Boston Gazette*, March 8, 1743.


31 As quoted in Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, p. 171.


CHAPTER I

“A GENTLEMAN FROM LONDON WOULD ALMOST THINK HIMSELF AT HOME IN BOSTON”: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF PROVINCIAL BOSTON AND THE ORIGINS OF FANEUIL HALL

Founded in 1630 and named after a commercial center in Lincolnshire, England, Boston, Massachusetts, still looked and felt very much like an old, yet vibrant Elizabethan market town when Crown commissioners paid it a visit in 1665. Its fine harbor facilitated overseas trade and made it an important supply source for inland agricultural communities. Bostonians were mainly middling artisan families and merchants whose Puritan faith had carried them across the Atlantic in search of salvation. Although they hoped that England could yet be reformed, they considered it dangerously corrupt and cruel. Their oppression under the Stuart monarchs had instilled in them a distrust of royal authority and a strong preference for local autonomy that colored both their politics and religion. It also conditioned their suspicion of outsiders, especially those connected to the Crown. “Strangers, though Englishmen, have no R[ight?] to think they may come hither, and seek the subversion of our civil and ecclesiastical politics,” complained the wealthy Puritan merchant John Hull in the wake of the commissioners’ arrival.

Since gaining the throne in 1660, King Charles II had determined to keep a close eye on the headstrong New Englanders, whose criticism of the Crown was considered treasonous. They were widely believed to have harbored regicides fleeing persecution
after the English Civil War, a charge that the commissioners were sent to investigate along with reports of religious persecution against Quaker itinerants. As the political and commercial capital of Massachusetts, Boston was subject to special scrutiny and suspicion. Its cold reception of royal officials only added to its image problem in England, prompting the commissioners to write a scathing indictment of the community that spared nothing. Even the townscape seemed to display the disloyalty and disorder that characterized Bostonians in their eyes. "Their houses are generally wooden, their streets crooked, with little decency and noe uniformity and, there, neither months, dayes, seasons of the year, churches nor inns are known by their English names," the commissioners reported back to the Crown.4 While obviously affected by political prejudice, their perception of Boston likely reflected metropolitan cultural predilections as well. Lacking the ornate architecture, genteel concerts, and broad thoroughfares that increasingly defined its counterparts in England, colonial Boston could seem rather crude, though it did sport an impressive new town house and paved streets.5

The Englishman Francis Bernard held a much different opinion of Boston when he arrived a century later to serve as royal governor. Although he had never visited the city before, he was excited by the prospect of residing in a place with a reputation for civility and urbanity. "Boston is perhaps the most polished & scientific Town in America," he told Lord Barrington, "I shall find there a good library, many very conversible men, tolerable musick & other amusements...."6 Bernard was welcomed into the community with great fanfare. Locals lined the streets to catch a glimpse of their new governor as he headed toward the Town House to take the oath of office. After the oath was administered, he triumphantly stepped out onto the balcony of the building
overlooking King Street, the center of Boston’s bustling commercial district, where scores of people cheered him. His day concluded with a sumptuous dinner surrounded by the town’s first citizens inside Faneuil Hall.7

Bernard’s warm reception reveals the profound changes that had taken place in Boston since the royal commissioners’ visit in the 1660s, a result of the imperial integration to which they had contributed. Increased political, commercial, and cultural contact between Britain and its maturing American colonies had broken down the insularity of early Boston, encouraging inhabitants to expand their worldview and embrace their English identities-- a process that historians have termed Anglicization. Yet this development did not signal the demise of their Puritan heritage, for Bostonians remained committed to the godly order of their ancestors. As the town’s Congregational ministers reminded Bernard, only where Christian virtue reigned would civil government flourish.8 Traditional values and local conventions significantly affected the manner in which the community received metropolitan culture, which was met with a mixture of enthusiasm and antagonism. Reconciliation was difficult and never fully completed, although significant strides had been made by the time Bernard dined in Faneuil Hall in 1760. Indeed, its construction twenty years earlier both embodied the conflict over Boston’s Puritan heritage in an age of Anglicization and marked a major milestone in the process of reconciliation. Before detailing Faneuil Hall’s contribution, however, it is important to examine the broader contours of the debates that formed the building’s foundation and structured its meaning for the community.
The Challenge of Charter Reform

Repeatedly poor evaluations from royal commissions prompted the Crown to revoke the individual charters of Massachusetts and the other New England colonies in the 1680s and appoint the English aristocrat Edmund Andros to govern them collectively as the Dominion of New England. “Before these changes happened New England was of all ye foreign Plantations... ye most flourishing & desirable,” recalled one contemporary.\textsuperscript{9} Actually, bloody King Philip’s War between 1675 and 1676 had already badly destabilized the region, increasing concern about the inhabitants’ ability to govern themselves. Some of Boston’s most influential leaders also worried that the war manifested New England’s moral decline and indifference toward its Puritan heritage. “We are the Children of the good old Non-Conformists...,” complained the Reverend Increase Mather in 1676, “And therefore that woeful neglect of the Rising Generation which hath bin amongst us, is a sad sign that we have in great part forgotten our Errand in this Wilderness.”\textsuperscript{10} But while Mather urged a return to the principles of the founding generation, royal officials arbitrarily sought their removal as obstacles to greater metropolitan control over the region.

Many Bostonians reacted to imperial encroachments by embracing their local institutions and customs, a pattern that would persist into the eighteenth century. A case in point is the town meeting. King James II’s commission gave Andros nearly unchecked authority to legislate in lieu of the General Court, causing inhabitants to protest that “Laws are made by a few of [them], & indeed w[ha]t they please. [N]or are they Printed, as was the custom in ye former Governm[en]ts, so [that] ye people are at a great loss to know w[ha]t is Law, & w[ha]t is not.”\textsuperscript{11} To strengthen his control and eliminate a
potential source of resistance, Andros also essentially outlawed the local town meeting. The decision raised a fierce howl from New Englanders, who had developed the institution as an expression of local autonomy. "The inhabitants of the country were startled at this law, as being apprehensive the design of it was to prevent the people in every town from meeting to make complaints of their grievances," wrote Samuel Sewall.  

Ironically, the effect of Andros's actions was to imbue the embattled institution with new significance for Bostonians and transform the town meeting into a future bulwark of resistance against the royal prerogative. They thereafter considered the town meeting not only a key to the seaport's political and social stability, but also a part of their Puritan patrimony to be protected. "Our Forefathers, the first Founders of this Town, esteemed by all that ever heard of them, to be Judicious, Understanding Men; chose and preferred this sort of Town Government, under which we now live, & under which they lived all their time, to all others whatsoever," explained one such defender of the institution in the early eighteenth century. "...Boston does not owe its present Grandeur, in some Mens Opinions, more to its excellent Harbour and good Air, than it does to its excellent good Government...." After Andros, support for the institution became a measure of one's loyalty to the community, and those who suggested reform were often vilified. "Its true," affirmed another resident, "and if Men will fish in such dirty Waters, and bring or endeavour to bring on their Neighbours such Calamities, they ought not think or take it hard to have dirt thrown in their Faces...."  

If their suffering under Andros and the Dominion of New England deepened inhabitants' attachments to their local traditions, then the subsequent Glorious Revolution
expanded it to incorporate elements of their English heritage. In 1688, English aristocrats and landed gentry executed a bloodless coup against James II, whose Catholic sympathies and arbitrary policies had alienated Parliament and large segments of the general populace. Except among the King’s partisans, the event was celebrated as a triumph of liberty and constitutionalism over tyranny. Inspired New Englanders seized the opportunity to successfully oust Andros the following year, which they hoped would restore their autonomy. Massachusetts accordingly sent a delegation to lobby England’s new monarchs, King William and Queen Mary, to reinstate the colony’s original charter, but it failed and returned in 1691 with a controversial new provincial government that some locals considered a betrayal of their Puritan heritage. The new charter eliminated gubernatorial elections in favor of a Crown-appointed executive, opened up voting privileges to non-Puritans, and encouraged religious toleration. Among the most hostile to such changes was Dr. Elisha Cooke, a respected Boston physician who had been a dissenting member of the delegation to England. His spirited resistance to the new imperial order was the catalyst for a loosely organized political opposition that envisioned itself as the guardian of the founders’ legacy of localism.

Other Bostonians, such as the Reverend Increase Mather, proved more willing to reconcile the community’s Puritan heritage with the new charter. Mather had staunchly opposed revocation of the founding charter as sacrilegious. “GOD forbid that I should give away the Inheritance of my Fathers,” he proclaimed to the Boston town meeting in 1683.16 His address reportedly moved listeners to tears and bolstered their resolve to resist the Crown’s encroachment. Such commitment to the charter also recommended Mather to the delegation sent to help recover it in 1689, and while he would have

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preferred to return with the original intact, he realized that the reformed provincial charter was the best that could be gained under the circumstances. He was pleased that he had at least been able to secure as royal governor Sir William Phips, a native New Englander whom he believed would defend the colony’s interests. Closer ties to England also meant that Massachusetts might share in the Glorious Revolution’s legacy of liberty. As scholars have shown, New Englanders after 1688 increasingly identified their particular Puritan heritage as part of a larger English inheritance that protected them from arbitrary authority and perpetuated the New England Way.\(^\text{17}\) Thus could Mather tout the provincial charter as a Magna Carta for Massachusetts. Although he and Cooke vehemently disagreed about the charter, each man believed that he had the colony’s best interest at heart and was being faithful to its Puritan past.

**The Advent of Urbanity**

Just as residents reacted differently to the new political order of provincial Boston, they also variously responded to the cultural changes that accompanied it. The Glorious Revolution may have checked the lavish self-indulgence of the Stuart monarchs, but courtliness and cultural refinement continued to spread among England’s upper classes in the form of novel modes of dress, architecture, and recreation.\(^\text{18}\) Crown officials also carried them across the Atlantic, where they represented the changing imperial relationship. If some Bostonians found the implications disturbing, others, such as the merchant John Foster, considered the new metropolitan culture compatible with their identities as New Englanders.

Although a native of Aylesbury, England, Foster embraced New England and became one of seventeenth-century Boston’s wealthiest and most respected residents, as

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evidenced by his marriage to Lydia Turrell, daughter of Boston Selectman Daniel Turrell. Foster's staunch opposition to Edmund Andros during the Dominion of New England also endeared him to the community. After Andros was deposed in 1689, he quickly emerged as a member of Boston's new gentry, for whom cultural refinement conveyed social status and political influence in the new provincial order. On November 28, 1689, a widowed Foster married Abigail Kellond, herself the widow of merchant and royal commissioner Thomas Kellond. Abigail was known to be both an exceptionally devout and unusually refined woman for Boston in the 1690s. Her grandson Thomas Hutchinson recalled that she used to instruct the wife of Governor William Phips on the finer points of polite society. After their wedding, she and John constructed a fancy new family mansion on Garden Court, a quiet side street in the otherwise noisy North End of Boston. The three-story brick structure was heavily influenced by the architecture of Inigo Jones, which had become all the rage among the English gentry but was as yet unseen in provincial Boston, where domestic architecture remained rather uninspiring.19 “With the erection of the Foster-Hutchinson House between 1689 and 1692,” concludes Abbott Lowell Cummings, “Bostonians were to discover that the Glorious Revolution in their political affairs heralded a revolution in architecture as well.”20

Bernard Bailyn suggests that Foster and his fellow merchants were leading critics of the New England Way who “joined the revolution [against Andros] not to overthrow royal government as such but to eliminate a governor and council they could not control.”21 Yet Foster was no royalist. He joined Increase Mather in heralding the Glorious Revolution and the new provincial charter as constructive for New Englanders and consonant with their republican traditions. As Increase’s son, the Reverend Cotton
Mather, explained, Foster was “One who Loved both our Liberties, as an English man, and our Principles as a New-English-man, and often appeared for them.” He developed a reputation for integrity as a member of the Governor’s Council, and Bostonians were deeply saddened when he died in 1711. “His place at the Council Board and Court will hardly be filled up,” lamented Samuel Sewall, a steadfast Puritan and fellow merchant. “I have lost a good Left-hand man. The Lord save New-England!”

Other wealthy inhabitants soon followed Foster’s lead in refining their family homes. In 1711, William Clark purchased land near the Foster mansion and built a rival three-story brick home. Over on Beacon Street near Boston Common, Edward Bromfield constructed an impressive mansion in 1722, while the following decade saw Thomas Hancock build a grand Georgian home on the same picturesque street. One of the wealthiest men in Boston, Hancock furnished his house in the finest European fashions, including the use of Dutch tiles, London Crown glass, paper wall hangings, and even the family crest. Although such cosmopolitan mansions were superior in taste and elegance to their neighbors’ dwellings, they still remained frustratingly truncated versions of more sophisticated models in the metropole, owing to limitations in money, material, and skills. Since the seaport lacked its own trained architects, it initially depended upon imported handbooks and the collective know-how of local builders and worldly residents for design ideas.

Metropolitan-minded Bostonians were therefore thrilled to hear of the arrival of the Scottish-born painter and architect John Smibert to New England in 1729, which they interpreted as acknowledgement of their growing cultural sophistication and an opportunity to refine the community further. The Boston Gazette printed a poetic tribute
to the painter that celebrated his work as evidence of America's increasing urbanity. Smibert found the local elite eager for his services, and his studio became something of an art gallery, where interested individuals could view reproduction paintings and sculptures as well as his own work. He not only painted portraits of leading individuals and families, but also was tapped for his architectural abilities. Indeed, it is Smibert who is generally credited with designing Faneuil Hall in 1740.

The Faneuils were among Smibert's patrons and contributed to the changing culture of the community. Along with others of their faith, the Huguenot merchant family had first arrived in Boston shortly after King Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which removed legal protections for French Protestants in the Catholic nation and intensified persecution against them. Puritan Bostonians readily identified with the refugees and welcomed them into the community both as fellow Protestants and victims of royal oppression. The Faneuils thrived in Boston as part of what historian J.F. Bosher has called the "Protestant International"—a vast transatlantic trading network that relied on religious affinities to overcome ethnic differences and connect colonial market towns such as Boston with French, Dutch, and English merchants. Such contacts enabled the cosmopolitan family to enter the ranks of Boston's social elite and encouraged them to participate in the cultural refinement of the seaport. Andrew Faneuil, the family patriarch, owned a sizable estate on Tremont Street, complete with formal gardens and a fashionable mansion filled with genteel furnishings. As Richard Bushman has suggested, the garden in eighteenth-century England and America acted as an outdoor extension of the gentleman's parlor, a quiet and refined place where members of polite society could recreate away from the bustling city streets. To this same end Faneuil and
his friends might resort to the Mall on nearby Boston Common, a tree-lined promenade with a view of the Charles River.

The Faneuil home was also across the street from King’s Chapel, built in 1688 to accommodate the Anglican contingent introduced through the Dominion of New England. Since then, the Anglican Church had grown rapidly throughout New England. Tied to the new political order, it attracted lifelong residents as well as recent immigrants. As with many Huguenots, who held the Church of England in high regard for the succor it had offered their persecuted brethren, the Faneuils became active Anglicans, although Andrew also remained involved with Boston’s small French Huguenot church. Anglicanism achieved a major coup in Connecticut when influential Congregationalist ministers converted in 1722, whereupon its churches appeared across that colony’s countryside. At the same time, Boston’s King’s Chapel congregation had become so large that the building could no longer contain it, so funds were collected for the construction of a companionate church in the bustling North End. Christ Church, as it was called, bore the unmistakable influence of Christopher Wren’s architectural work in London. Capped by an elaborate spire that reached towards the heavens, it cut a bold figure across the landscape and served as a tangible reminder of the growing metropolitan influence over the provincial seaport. Residents from nearby Braintree invited the church’s rector, Timothy Cutler, to preach to them and administer the sacrament while they raised funds for their own church.

Provincial Boston’s increasingly refined character impressed many visitors. Some were charmed by the hospitality of the local gentry. The Scottish physician Dr. Alexander Hamilton noted that, while the town’s middling sort were rather “disingenuous
and dissembling" toward one another as well as outsiders, "[t]he better sort are polite, mannerly, and hospitable to strangers, such strangers, I mean, as come not to trade among them (for of them they are jealous)."34 At the end of his long journey he found no colonial town more civilized than Boston. James Birket likewise appreciated the local merchants' geniality, though he felt they tried a little too hard to impress others. He seemed more interested in their trade and townscape. As with others who visited Boston in the early eighteenth century, Birket was surprised by both the extent of paved streets in the seaport, "a thing rare in New England," and the breadth of its principal avenues, especially Cornhill and King Street. The intersection of these two streets, which led toward the Massachusetts interior and Boston Harbor respectively, stood at the commercial and political center of the community and, as their names imply, had arguably undergone the most change through imperial integration. Here could be found many of Boston's most cosmopolitan shops and taverns competing for the patronage of wealthy merchants, worldly travelers, and powerful politicians who gathered about the Town House. Birket judged Cornhill to be "one of the finest [streets] I saw in America" and King Street a similarly "fine Open Genteel Street...."35

Indeed, many eighteenth-century visitors were struck by the seaport's physical maturity, with some even comparing it favorably to London. "There are a great many good houses, and several fine streets, little inferior to some of our best in London...," observed Joseph Bennett in 1740.36 The next year John Oldmixon concluded "that a Gentleman from London would almost think himself at home at Boston, when he observes the Number of People, their Houses, their Furniture, their Tables, their Dress and Conversation, which perhaps is as splendid and showy, as that of the most
considerable Tradesman in London.” Even metropolitan-minded locals liked to think of their town in these terms. “As London is to England for priority, so is Boston to this Province,” proudly proclaimed Benjamin Colman, minister to one of Boston’s most genteel congregations at Brattle Street Congregational Church.

Reasserting Tradition

Provincial Boston’s rapid gentrification should not obscure the fact that many inhabitants were dissatisfied with the character and pace of its cultural development. Some found it too slow. Merchants, who were among the foremost purveyors of polite culture in the seaport, were especially apt to find fault, for their business interests brought them in close contact with other cosmopolitan societies that put Boston’s own progress in sharp relief. Sometimes the experience increased their affection for and identification with the community, as was the case with Hugh Hall. Hall spent much of his time in Barbados dealing in slaves, a grim business that made him more appreciative of his Boston upbringing. “It’s a singular satisfaction… that I have spent nigh twenty years of my Life in that Metropolis,” he concluded. “I never was Taxt with any thing Dishonorable, Unmanly or Unchristian…” More often, however, such contacts made Boston appear pitifully provincial.

In a point to be developed in the next chapter, the absence of a central provisions marketplace proved particularly embarrassing in this regard. The one operating at the Town House had been gradually transformed into a local version of London’s famed Royal Exchange and represented the community’s growing overseas commercial interests. Local traders were accordingly left to peddle homegrown produce through the crowded streets, creating a system that many sophisticates found inefficient and corrupting. “All the World besides us, have gone into the usage of Markets as a point of
wisdom and prudence,” complained Benjamin Colman, who counted some of Boston’s foremost merchant families among his congregants. Their influence over his thinking on the matter was obvious. “They that have travel’d into other parts of the World have seen the Convenience, the Order, the Beauty, of their Markets,” he continued, “...When we come home again and see this comely Order and general Benefit wanting to so fine a Town, and so many disorders and mischiefs attending both the Town and Country from the want thereof, it seems such a defect of Wisdom in us, as can hardly be excused....” Such feelings of inadequacy among the gentry were driving forces behind Boston’s market reform and the eventual construction of Faneuil Hall in 1740.

Visitors were sometimes exposed to Boston’s cultural shortcomings as well. On a warm summer evening in 1744, Alexander Hamilton sat in Boston’s King’s Chapel church near some sweaty Indians, “who stunk so that they had almost made me turn up my dinner,” and listened to a dreadful sermon by the Reverend Stephen Roe along with music played by “an indifferent organist.” The ship captain Francis Goelet was invited to attend a private concert of music, the performance of which he unenthusiastically judged to be “as well asCould be Expected.” Although he was quite impressed with aspects of Boston’s architecture, particularly its brick mansions and “Grand” Town House, he was less enamored of its churches, even the Anglican ones: “This Place has about Twelve Meeting Houses and Three Churches which are all Very Indifferent Buildings of no Architect but Very Plain....”

Historians have long noted the influence of Anglican church architecture on the design of Congregational meetinghouses in eighteenth-century New England. To counter the growing appeal of the Church of England, Puritan leaders revised the traditional
plain-style of their buildings, which resembled secular structures more than sacred shrines, to incorporate inspiring church elements such as steeple.\textsuperscript{44} Two of the best examples of this process are Brattle Street Congregational, constructed in 1699, and the Third (Old South) Meetinghouse, rebuilt in 1729. Yet Boston’s Puritan heritage may have conversely restrained the architecture of the community’s Anglican churches. The construction of King’s Chapel during the Andros regime was mired in controversy, especially after the Governor chose to locate the unpopular building on the site of Boston’s oldest burying ground. After its erection, Anglicans repeatedly complained of local boys throwing stones through the windows.\textsuperscript{45} Such a situation was not conducive to investments in elaboration. Indeed, it was not until the 1750s that the modest wooden structure was replaced with a more impressive and expensive stone design. And Trinity Church, the town’s third Episcopal church, was built in the 1730s without the characteristic Anglican spire. “[T]his Church hav[in]g no Steeple Looks more Like a Prespetarian Meeting House,” Goelet observed.\textsuperscript{46}

Spires or not, the proliferation of Anglican churches alarmed those Bostonians who still saw Congregationalism as the spiritual and cultural core of the community as well its safeguard against oppression. Overzealous Anglicans such as the shopkeeper John Checkley only aggravated the situation. Emboldened by the church’s substantial gains in the 1720s, Checkley openly challenged Puritan principles and practices by defying local custom in celebrating Christmas, advocating an American episcopacy as well as Anglican governors, and accusing New Englanders of sanctioning regicide. His publication of a religious tract that many Bostonians found both heretical and slanderous prompted an outcry from the community and led directly to his arrest and trial for libel in
1724. "I have been sadly harassed & persecuted by the Dissenters here, on Account of the Book I caused to be printed in England, and am just now come down from ye Narragansett Country, and from ye Western Frontiers of Connecticut, whither I was obliged to flee from their Fury, above 200 miles from Boston," Checkley told a friend. ""Tis not possible to express their Rage & Madness by Reason of the great Increase of the Church, throughout the whole Country." There was clearly a limit to what some Bostonians would tolerate, and Checkley had exceeded it.

So too did those who encouraged the theater. A victim of Puritan reform during the Cromwellian era, theater had enjoyed a resurgence of interest in Restoration England. But in seventeenth-century Boston, where playacting was still considered morally corrupt and self-indulgent, it remained so unpopular and unfamiliar that officials never felt compelled legally to proscribe it. However, the exposure to metropolitan culture occasioned by the introduction of royal government seemingly created a more conducive environment for staging plays. In 1714, for instance, just as the burdensome Queen Anne's War was coming to a close, rumor had it that some gentlemen intended to sponsor a theatrical performance in Boston's Town House. No place was better suited for such an event. First built in the 1650s, the once-wooden structure had been remodeled in more refined brick following a fire in 1711. After 1691 it also acted as the center and symbol of Massachusetts's new relationship with the Crown, serving as the seat of royal government in the province.

If some inhabitants saw the building in this new light, others, such as the devout Samuel Sewall, looked upon it as a part of their Puritan past. Sewall had trouble reconciling certain elements of the new culture with his values as a New Englander, and
he blamed metropolitan officials for introducing “high-handed wickedness” into the once virtuous community. He had been at the Town House when the old charter government had been dissolved by the Andros regime and could still recall that dreadful day. The thought of staging plays in that venerated space accordingly filled him with righteous indignation. To his friend Isaac Addington, he vowed,

...as much as in me liyes, I do forbid it. The Romans were very fond of their Plays: but I never heard they were so far set upon them, as to turn their Senat-House into a Play-House. Our Town-House was built at great Cost and Charge, for the sake of very serious and important business... Let not Christian Boston go beyond Heathen Rome in the practice of shamefull Vanities....

Others apparently agreed with Sewall’s opinion, for the proposed play was never staged—at least not openly and not at the Town House. Yet a fascination with playacting continued, forcing the General Court to pass legislation in 1750 explicitly banning theater as inconsistent with the morals of Massachusetts. Not until the 1790s would Bostonians fully reconcile themselves to formally admitting playhouses in their community.

For reasons often different from those of merchants and gentlemen, local juveniles were also conspicuous consumers of metropolitan cultural practices such as theater. While an adolescent culture had developed in playful deviance from adult norms and Puritan practice as early as the Restoration, it appears to have blossomed during the turmoil of the 1680s, when royal officials overtly challenged Puritan authority over the colony. Looking to establish their own identities, many local youths were attracted by the novelty of the newcomers’ customs and began experimenting with them, much to the chagrin of tradition-minded parents and clergymen. Imperial integration thus triggered generational conflict. In December of 1711, for instance, Cotton Mather scolded a number of youngsters from his flock for participating in a Christmas night frolic, which violated Puritan values and threatened to “provoke the Holy One to give them up unto
eternal Hardness of Heart.” Nathaniel Ames and his friends were likewise admonished by their parents for acting in a play, which may have been the height of fashion in England but was forbidden in Massachusetts. William Douglass complained, “[O]ur Young Men called Gentlemen, follow no other Business but Drinking and Gaming.” And Henry Hulton later observed, “[H]owever rigid & severe the old people may have been, the young ones are forward enough in following every thing that is fashionable & genteel.”

A fatal duel between two Boston youths in the summer of 1728 heightened concern about the impact of metropolitan culture on impressionable local youths. On July 3, Henry Phillips, son of an influential publisher and bookseller in town, went over to Luke Vardy’s Royal Exchange Tavern for some company and entertainment. With the decline of Puritan control over the community, tavern culture had begun to flourish in Boston by the 1720s. While most taverns were rather modest affairs, several establishments consciously marketed themselves to a cosmopolitan clientele by genteelly furnishing their rooms and assuming such names as the “Crown Coffee House,” which Peter Faneuil frequented. Some inhabitants found the atmosphere inside these places disarming. “I have observed in all the Companies I have been in, from the Caravan-Lodge in China, to the Crown-Coffee-House upon the Long-Wharffe, that all Conversation is built upon Equality,” declared Mather Byles, “Title and Distinction must be laid aside in order to talk and act sociably, and the ungrateful Names of Superior and Inferior must loose themselves in that more acceptable and familiar one, the Companion.”
However, other observers were more ambivalent or even hostile toward what they saw as the pretentious character of such establishments. Though a purveyor of polite culture, Richard Steele described London's coffee-house gentleman as "a little Potentate that has his Court, and his Flatterers who lay snares for his Affections and Favour, by the same Arts that are practiced upon Men in higher Stations." One local detractor launched into a more direct critique of Boston's coffee-house culture in 1720, describing "the smoak of Coffee-houses, and the suffocating Stench of Court-flattery, (a wonderful Engine in this Pedantick age,) whereby Men of small fortune and smaller merit, easily climb to a considerable pitch of Honour and Greatness." These observers perceived more competition than companionship brewing in the community's public houses.

Indeed, at some point during Phillips's tavern visit, he got into a heated argument with the even younger Benjamin Woodbridge, the son of an Admiralty Judge who took to mercantile trade while still a teen. Whatever the nature of Woodbridge's quarrel with Phillips, the two finally agreed to settle their differences outside in the gentlemanly fashion by dueling with swords. Dueling was a traditional, if controversial custom among England's upper class. Highly ritualistic in character, it was considered by proponents to be an honorable means of resolving personal conflict. However, the practice was abhorred by Puritans, who regarded it, along with suicide, as a damnable form of self-murder.

Unknown to Boston before the 1690s, dueling seems to have arrived with the military officers and metropolitan officials sent to enforce the king's will in the province. Samuel Sewall recorded a duel on Boston Common as early as the summer of 1695. In 1701 the Boston merchant Epaphæas Shrimpton complained to authorities that fellow
merchant John Shippen "hath challenged menaced and threatened the Complainant to beat out his brains." Many locals supposed that this surreptitious subculture influenced the tragic decision of Woodbridge and Phillips to resolve their dispute through a duel.

Boston Common at night provided an appropriately open, yet inconspicuous, area for clandestine dueling, and it was to there that Phillips and Woodbridge retired under the cover of darkness on July 3, 1728. A handful of witnesses on hand for the event watched as Phillips fatally stabbed his opponent and then fled the scene for his brother Gillam's house, leaving them to help comfort the bloodied and dying Woodbridge. With the wounded and worried Henry begging him for help, Gillam Phillips turned to his sympathetic brother-in-law Peter Faneuil, who used his Huguenot connections to arrange for Henry's covert flight to Rochelle, France. There the homesick and guilt-ridden Phillips would himself die a short time later.

Word of the Woodbridge-Phillips duel electrified the New England seaport, particularly with the news that one combatant was dead and the other nowhere to be found. Such conduct among the foreign part of the population was bad enough, but now the destructive influence of the new metropolitan culture over native Bostonians was seemingly laid bare. Inhabitants were shocked that "any of the sons of New-England, who have been born and educated in this land of light, should be so forsaken of GOD, and given up to their lusts and passions, as to engage in a bloody and fatal DUEL..." Of course the manner of death offended the religious sensibilities of many Bostonians, including the Reverend Benjamin Colman who was usually sympathetic toward Boston's
privileged elite. Others viewed the incident as a disturbing example of the trend away from the community's traditional values. Samuel Sewall's son Joseph, who was minister at (Old) South Meetinghouse, urged inhabitants to avoid the evil-doers in their midst, who "make use of many pernicious Arts and Methods whereby they seek to prevail upon Men to joyn with them in breaking GOD's Commandments."65

Reaction to the tragedy also divided the community along political lines. Phillips's predicament drew sympathy and a signed petition from the royal governor and his social circle urging clemency. By contrast, the opposition faction saw an opportunity to reassert tradition and win popular support by toughening up anti-dueling laws. Leadership of this group had passed to Elisha Cooke, Jr. after his father's death in 1715. Born and bred in Boston, Cooke had inherited his father's aversion to royal government. A recent political trip to London had reaffirmed his attachment to local autonomy, although it also made him appreciate (more than his father had) the protections afforded Massachusetts under the provincial charter. He returned touting tradition and courting popular support to counter the inordinate influence of the imperial elite and protect Massachusetts' charter rights. Royal officials cursed him for "Endeavour[ing], to poysen the Minds of his countreymen, with his republican notions, in order to assert the Independency of New England."66 Cotton Mather, whose father Increase had clashed with Cooke, Sr., also blamed his brand of popular politics for causing "much Disorder and Confusion and Iniquity."67

But with regard to the issue of dueling, it was the Cooke faction who appeared on the side of law and order. They had capitalized on the 1718 duel between Captain Thomas Smart and John Boydell, Governor Shute's former secretary, by pushing through...
legislation that punished duelers and would-be duelers with stiffer fines, prison terms, or corporal punishment. While the act was justified as defending the honor of God and the laws of nature, a number of gentlemen suspected ulterior motives. David Dunbar, the Surveyor-General of the King’s woods, argued that the “Memorable” law had “putt all upon a level, so that a man is liable to common affronts to wear a sword or to be distinguished like a Gentleman... they have been remarkably insolent since this law....” The Woodbridge-Phillips duel provided another opportunity to make a political statement against the corrupting influence of such foreign practices and to assert some control over the conduct of metropolitan officials.

In the wake of the tragedy, the General Court repealed the 1719 law and installed a significantly more dramatic means of dealing with duelists in the future. Now anyone convicted of participating in or even abetting a duel was to be “carried publickly in a cart to the gallows, with a rope about his neck, and sit on the gallows for the space of one hour with a rope about his neck as aforesaid, and then committed to the common gaol of the county, and there remain, without bail or mainprize, for the space of twelve months.” Neither the killer nor the killed in duels were to be granted Christian burials. Similar to those who died by suicide, they were to have stakes driven through their hearts and be buried without coffins at the “place of execution.”

Both in spirit and substance, the legislation reflected Boston’s Puritan traditions as well as old English folklore in its style of punishment and use of the local landscape. As David D. Hall has shown, New England’s early settlers reconciled their Puritan beliefs with a variety of older folkloric customs that affirmed the essential spirituality of the universe, creating in their minds a “world of wonders” animated by supernatural
forces: “We may speak of a lore of wonders, an accumulation of stock references and literary conventions that descended to the colonists from Scripture, antiquity, the early Church and the Middle Ages.” Part of this inheritance were the beliefs and rituals associated with suicide. Medieval Christians had considered suicide profoundly evil and treated its victims with a mixture of trepidation and contempt, an attitude reflected in their interment of the bodies. In England, they often mutilated the corpses and buried them at a distant crossroads outside the community, where the victims’ restless souls could not disturb them. Opinion against self-murder hardened even further after the Protestant Reformation, when religious and political rivalries assigned new propaganda value to suicides committed by opponents. According to Michael MacDonald and Terence Murphy, “The belief that suicide was a desperate sin was therefore a means at once of discrediting rival sects and of strengthening the resolve of the members of one’s own with a dreadful warning.”

Many of these beliefs and practices were carried across the Atlantic and incorporated into the culture of Puritan New England. In 1660, for instance, the Massachusetts General Court ordered that victims of suicide “shall be denied the privilege of being Buried in the Common Burying place of Christians, but shall be Buried in some Common High-way... and a Cart-load of Stones laid upon the Grave as a Brand of Infamy, and as a warning to beware of the like Damnable practices.” When Daniel Oliver’s Indian servant hanged himself in 1688, his body was buried, as Samuel Sewall described it, “by the highway with a Stake through his Grave.” The highway referred to was most likely Orange Street, which ran across Boston Neck and represented the lone land entrance into the community. Although the narrow Neck experienced an
increasingly steady stream of country traders carting goods to town as well as genteel families seeking a rural retreat, its dank, barren ground still conjured up images of an untamed, heathenish wilderness that threatened dissolution of the community. Those marched or carted to the Neck—be they criminals, self-murderers, or now duelists—were being physically and symbolically ostracized. The anti-dueling legislation thus enabled the Cooke faction to exploit popular religious traditions to scandalize its political opponents and censure the new culture. As William Douglass explained just days after the act’s passage, “Cook has for some years been declining as to his party and thinks this a good opportunity to ingratiate himself with the Populace.”

Protesting Polite Culture

Yet new practices as well as old customs afforded opportunities to resist unwelcome aspects of Anglicization. Boston’s burgeoning newspaper business in the early eighteenth century provided a prime forum for the community’s ongoing debate about the merits of metropolitan culture. As Charles Clark has shown, the advent of newspapers in Boston was tied to its new political order after the Glorious Revolution. In England, newspapers had long been regulated by the government and often reflected its interests. Beginning with the Boston News-Letter in 1704, Boston’s early newspapers also became unofficial organs of the provincial government and were operated by civil servants, specifically postmasters, who were often eager for advancement, creating competition between them for the patronage of influential officials, merchants, and gentlemen. The growth of polite culture in the 1720s created a new sort of newspaper that was more literary in its content than the predominantly political News-Letter and Boston Gazette, which were forced to adjust their content to meet the new challenge.
Between 1727 and 1728, for instance, the *New-England Weekly Journal* sponsored a series of collaborative essays, poems, and sketches that extolled the benefits of gentility while poking fun at the people's provincialism. "This Age is too polite, to bear the same ill-Manners and Roughness as the former," boldly proclaimed one of the authors, John Adams. "Then a Man was thought the more Religious for being a Clown, and very honest because he used no Ceremony but downright plain dealing. But now the taste of Mankind is very much rectified; and the World cannot endure the Absurdity to see a Man behave himself as if he were under the Reign of Queen Elizabeth." As a cosmopolitan Congregational minister capable of reading several languages, Adams rejected the argument popular with some Bostonians that refinement was incompatible with religion. Instead, he suggested that it could actually revive the languishing religious spirit in the community, which he blamed on dour critics of gentility. "But the worst of all is, that whereas these deceived good Men think to advance Religion by their Dulness and Unsociableness, there are no Men in the World who cast such a Gloom upon it, and bring it under such Disgrace," he concluded. If Bostonians were to retain their traditional piety, then they would have to adapt to the new polite culture.

Predictably, critics scoffed at such a notion and submitted their own examples to discredit it. Charging gentility with ill-mannered hypocrisy, "Simon Hearty" addressed himself to Adams and his fellow essayists. "It seems because I am honest, I am incapable of relishing anything polite," he noted, "...and tho' I admire good Breeding, good Sense, and fine Writing, as much as any Man breathing, yet I have the unhappiness to be thought dull, because I will not be profane." Conversely, "Sam Wildfire" complained of the psychological burdens of being a gentleman. While outwardly he appeared "the merriest
Man living,” he was, he confessed, a tortured soul inside: “I know some of your Priests call it Conscience, but I am too much a gentleman to have any such thing.” Fortunately for critics, none of Boston’s polite newspapers lasted long for lack of a consistent audience. Their demise indicates that Bostonians had not fully embraced the new culture.

Yet the controversy continued in the pages of established newspapers such as the Boston Gazette, which published pieces on both sides of the issue. On November 11, 1732, for instance, a pious Bostonian told readers of an incident in which he had had an advertisement suddenly thrust into his hand while walking before the Town House. Taking it up, he was shocked to read of an upcoming assembly of music and dancing to be held at Peter Pelham’s Dancing School. “I could not read this Advertisement without being startled and concern’d at the Birth of so formidable a Monster in this part of the World; and I began to consider what could give encouragement to so Licentious and Expensive a Divertion, in a Town famous for its Decency and Good Order.”

Such establishments had in fact been popular for years and there is evidence that this story was but a satire of Puritanical prejudices in Boston. Indeed, few among the gentry seemed to take such rants seriously. “The government being in the hands of dissenters, they don’t admit of plays or music-houses,” noted Joseph Bennett, “…But, notwithstanding plays and such diversions do not obtain here, they don’t seem to be dispirited nor moped for want of them; for both the ladies and gentlemen dress and appear as gay, in common, as courtiers in England on a coronation or birthday.”

Yet not everyone was amused. Such gaiety, Bennett added, was “much taken notice of and exploded by the religious and sober part of the people.” Though the
Puritan settlers had privately enjoyed music in their homes, the organized public concerts and balls sponsored by Pelham and others were of a wholly different origin. In England, the public concert had begun to flourish when courtly culture again became fashionable after the Restoration. And in Massachusetts, as Cynthia Hoover notes, “the arrival of the Anglicans (who were appointed to official colonial positions by the late 1680s) brought a group of citizens who considered dancing the height of fashion. By the first decades of the eighteenth century, frolicking, balls, and dancing parties had become more common.” In many cases, outsiders like Peter Pelham were the ones responsible for schooling eager inhabitants on the finer points of politeness. Pelham had left London for the colonies around 1726 and by the following year had settled in Boston. A mezzotintist by trade, he appears to have opened his dancing school by 1730 as a means of supplementing his income. Pelham must have sensed local interest in such an establishment, and perhaps took his cue from one already operating in 1729.

Puritan authorities had resisted attempts to start dancing schools and assembly rooms in the past, but such establishments continued to gain popularity and prompted opponents to launch a rumor and innuendo campaign designed to discourage attendance. A rumpus outside Mr. Gatchell’s Dancing School in 1723 was paraded as evidence that foreigners were ruining the morals of the town’s youth. In response to charges that genteel assemblies attracted sullied souls, one devotee of Pelham’s gatherings insisted that, “had it been possible any Licentious Person could have confidence enough to have gone to that Assembly, he could not possibly have shewn that Licentious Temper there; for in all Assemblies of this kind, any Person who is either Indecent, or Unmannerly, is immediately turn’d out of it.” Unconvinced opponents floated nasty rumors around
town in the hopes of shutting down another such assembly. The tactic failed. "Whereas it was falsely and maliciously Reported that the said Assembly was put off last Wednesday, this is to Inform the Publlick that it was then held, and will certainly Continue as above-mentioned," reported the Boston Gazette.91

Conclusion

While perhaps no colonial American city was more highly regarded within the British Empire for civility and cultural refinement than was provincial Boston, no community was conversely more critical of metropolitan cultural norms. Ironically, both developments exhibited the continuing influence of the seaport’s Puritan heritage among the inhabitants. Rather than create a simple dependency upon metropolitan England, Anglicization involved a complex process of accommodation and resistance that enabled Bostonians both to refashion their traditions and tailor the new culture to suit their distinct identities as New Englanders. Visitors to the seaport were as struck by the persistence of old customs as they were by the adoption of new ones. The Anglican minister Andrew Burnaby found Boston "much improved" in its religion and culture when he visited it in 1760, although he was also disappointed to find that "Puritanism and a spirit of persecution is not yet totally extinguished."92

The controversy over Faneuil Hall marketplace in 1740 likewise exhibited the peculiarities of the local culture, which sometimes perplexed outsiders unfamiliar with them. "[W]hat is Surprizing to Strangers," James Birket said of the Faneuil Hall controversy, "before it was Accepted by the town It was put to the vote whether or not it Should be Accepted of and was Only Carried by 6 or 8 votes So great is the Aversion of the vulgar to any Public or stated markets..."93 Such an aversion had not always
characterized the community, but imperial integration would also politicize local economic practices to the point where they too became contested expressions of Boston’s heritage and its identity as a community.
CHAPTER NOTES


8 Boston Evening-Post, August 11, 1760.


10 Increase Mather, An Earnest Exhortation to the Inhabitants of New England..., (Boston, 1676).


13 Historians of the town meeting system have noted the growing importance of the town meeting after the 1680s, but have ignored the impact of the Andros regime in the process. For Dedham and Watertown, Kenneth Lockridge and Alan Kreider remark, “Anyone reading the records of these two towns can not but be struck, on the one hand, with the increasing vitality and authority of the towns between 1680 and 1720 and, on the other hand, with the declining prestige and power of the selectmen during the same years.” Michael Zuckerman suggests that the pivotal year was 1691, when the new provincial charter went into effect and separated provincial politics from the realm of local affairs. See Kenneth A. Lockridge and Alan Kreider, “The Evolution of Massachusetts Town Government, 1640-1740,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Series, Vol. 23 (October 1966), p. 563; Michael W. Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century, (New York, NY: Knopf, 1970).

14 My Son, Fear Thou the Lord,..., (Boston, circa 1714), reprinted in Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 10 (1904-1906), p. 349.

15 A Dialogue Between a Boston Man and a Country Man, (Boston, 1714), reprinted in Ibid., 347.


19 A notable exception was the Dutch-influenced Peter Sergeant house, which attracted officials seeking a suitable home for the royal governor and eventually became the Province House. For an architectural analysis of the Sergeant House, see Nancy Halverson Schless, “The Province House: English and Netherlandish Forms in Gables and Chimneys,” Old-Time New England, 62 (April-June, 1972): 115-123; and Fiske Kimball, “The First Remodeling of the Province House, 1728,” Ibid.


25 *Boston Gazette*, December 29, 1730-January 5, 1730/1. The author of the poem was the Reverend Mather Byles, the grandson of Increase Mather and one of a growing number of Congregational ministers who considered gentility compatible with Christian virtue.


28 The story of the Huguenots became a cautionary tale in Boston. Edmund Andros used it to scare the locals into submission, reminding them “what Effects the stiffness of the Protestants in France had, who would not Yield... and now there is not the name of a Protestant in France.” Conversely, the Huguenot example inspired Bostonians to greater resistance against their oppressors, be it Andros or the French Catholics in Canada. See [Increase Mather], *A Vindication of New-England from the Vile Aspersions Cast upon that Country by a Late Address of a Faction There, who Denominate Themselves of the Church of England in Boston*, (Boston: 1690?), 12; Jon Butler, *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), chap. 1; and Thomas S. Kidd, “‘Let Hell and Rome Do Their Worst’: World News, Anti-Catholicism, and International Protestantism in Early-Eighteenth-Century Boston,” *New England Quarterly*, 76 (June 2003), p. 276.


30 Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 130.


Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman’s Progress*, p. 146.


Benjamin Colman, *Some Reasons and Arguments Offered to the Good People of Boston and Adjacent Places for the Setting Up Markets in Boston*, (Boston, 1719).

Ibid.

Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman’s Progress*, p. 110.


Thomas, ed., The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1:337.

Deposition of Epaphias Shrimpton, Massachusetts State Archives, Vol. 45 (Judicial, 1683-1724): 725-726.


A Preface by the United Ministers of Boston, (Boston: B. Green, 1728).

Joseph Sewall, He That Would Keep GOD’s Commandments Must Renounce the Society of Evil-Doers, (Boston: B. Green, 1728).


“As an Act for Repealing an Act Entitled ‘An Act for the Punishing and Preventing of Duelling,’ and for Making Other Provision Instead Thereof,” reprinted in Acts and Resolves of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, Vol II (1715-1741), (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1874), pp. 516-517. Evarts Greene claims to have found no more stringent penalty for duelers in all of colonial America. See Greene, 375.


74 Thomas, ed., *Diary*, 1:179.


78 Ibid.


81 Ibid.


83 *Boston Gazette*, November 11, 1732.

84 This argument has been advanced by Andrew Oliver, “Peter Pelham (c. 1697-1751), Sometime Printmaker of Boston,” *Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, 46 (1973), p. 142.

85 Bennett manuscript, p. 125.

86 Ibid., p. 125.


90 *Boston Gazette*, November 27, 1732.

91 *Boston Gazette*, December 25, 1732.


CHAPTER II

"ALL THE WORLD BESIDES US, HAVE GONE INTO THE USAGE OF MARKETS": BOSTON'S MARKETPLACE CONTROVERSY AND THE ORIGINS OF FANEUIL HALL

In November of 1639, Boston's Puritan authorities found themselves in the midst of a controversy. The town's meetinghouse, built shortly after settlement in 1630, had become badly deteriorated and it needed to be replaced, yet inhabitants could not agree on a new location. Some wanted it removed from its site on the south side of Great Street near the marketplace to another area more convenient for them. But the suggestion sparked a protest from many of the town's artisans, who had set up their shops to take advantage of the concourse of people created by the meetinghouse and marketplace. If the former were relocated, they argued, the latter would lose business and consequently so would they. The effect of this chain reaction would be devastating for the fledgling community and the Puritan errand into the wilderness.

The obstinacy on both sides of the issue disturbed town leaders. Boston had already suffered its share of controversy recently. Just two years earlier, as New Englanders were recovering from the bloody Pequot War, Anne Hutchinson had been banished from Massachusetts for criticizing the local clergy and disrupting the community. Inhabitants were also complaining about the questionable business practices of merchant Robert Keayne, who would be forced into a tearful confession of guilt before the church and face a stiff fine from the General Court. Boston in 1639, it seemed, was a
far cry from the model of Christian charity that John Winthrop had hoped it would be when the town was settled.1

To prevent the meetinghouse controversy from undermining the community any further, Puritan leaders intervened. The Reverend John Cotton tried to explain the artisans' point of view to their critics: "[T]he removing it to the green would be a damage to such as dwelt by the market, who had there purchased and built at great charge, but it would be no damage to the rest to have it by the market ..."2 Much to their relief a compromise was worked out whereby the new meetinghouse would be built on the western side of the marketplace, where it would remain for the rest of the colonial era. “This good providence and overruling hand of God caused much admiration and acknowledgment of special mercy to the church, especially considering how long the like contention had held in some other churches, and with what difficulty they had been accorded,” John Winthrop recorded in his private journal.3

As the above example suggests, Boston's marketplace served as a key indicator of both change and persistence in the community from its inception, creating a tension that kept it near the center of controversy throughout the colonial era. Its role in reinforcing the Puritan order was transformed through imperial integration into an expression of the seaport's English identity and international mercantile interests. For local families who lacked such cosmopolitan connections, however, the marketplace gradually became spatially and conceptually foreign as they gravitated toward an alternate commercial space developing in the streets. Erstwhile supporters became ardent opponents, but instead of marking the breakdown of Puritan principles, the marketplace controversy points to their enduring, if evolving, influence in the provincial period. Indeed, the
debate helped perpetuate them as each side claimed to represent ancestral values. As a manifestation of this process in the 1740s, Faneuil Hall and its marketplace must therefore be understood as an innovative approach to conserving tradition in a rapidly changing environment.

**Boston's First Market House**

The construction of Boston's Town House in the 1650s, an important antecedent to Faneuil Hall, represented an early effort to sustain the spirit of Puritan community in a time of great change. The impetus for the project was Robert Keayne's personal search for redemption. In a final effort to prove his purity of heart and affection for the community, he willed funds for the erection of a town house to protect the marketplace from the elements and provide meeting space for government authorities. After his death in 1656, additional funds were raised through a subscription signed by everyone from the Governor to ordinary artisans. The completed structure resembled the sort of town halls that Robert Tittler has found proliferated throughout Tudor England as town officials looked to "take charge and protect local interests in the face of intensified political and social change."^5

Boston faced its own such problems in the 1650s that contributed to popular support for Keayne's Town House. The Great Migration of Puritan settlers had ended with the beginning of the English Civil War, and with it ended the influx of wealth and piety they brought to Massachusetts Bay. The result was not only Boston's first tangible economic downturn, but also a shifting social composition that unsettled many locals. The deaths of familiar leaders such as Governor John Winthrop in 1649 and the Reverend John Cotton in 1652 gave the town an increasingly strange countenance as it filled with
foreign faces. Local artisans complained about the economic competition that they faced from these strangers and sought to close ranks against them. So too did church leaders confronted with the growing threat of itinerant Quakers disrupting their services and questioning their leadership.

Feeling besieged, Bostonians developed a defensive attitude about their Puritan heritage that extolled the founders and encouraged them to adopt new means to protect their legacy. One such method was municipal incorporation, petitions for which were repeatedly sent to the Massachusetts General Court in the 1650s and 1660s. In England, city charters acted as bulwarks against outside interference, centralizing political power in a mayor and aldermen who safeguarded the inhabitants’ interests and managed growth—something many believed that Boston’s town meeting had failed to do effectively. The construction of a town hall often followed, and occasionally even immediately preceded, incorporation as a way to protect and enhance local authority. The timing of Boston’s Town House amidst calls for government reform indicates that it was designed to reinforce Puritan order and redeem not just Robert Keayne, but rather the entire community.

The building’s location atop the marketplace also helped control a space that many considered dissolute, a liminal point where the bounds of community blurred as locals and outsiders intermingled in a maze of activity. Puritan officials had previously established their presence in the marketplace by designating it as a disciplinary site for transgressors of local bylaws and mores. A pillory and whipping post were positioned in the street nearby, where they remained throughout the colonial era. Samuel Breck could recall watching as a boy in the 1770s while women were lashed and men pilloried before
jeering crowds "who pelted them incessantly with rotten eggs and every repulsive kind of
garbage that could be collected." It was a part of Boston’s Puritan legacy that he would
have preferred to forget. After William Pynchon published what was considered a
heretical criticism of Puritan beliefs in 1650, the General Court ordered his tract, The
Meritorious Price of Our Redemption, “to be burned in the Market Place, at Boston by
the Common Executioner, on the morrow immediately after lecture.” Important
political announcements that affected the town’s welfare were also routinely made from
the marketplace. In 1665, for instance, the General Court ordered that its protest against
the conduct of King Charles II’s commissioners in the colony be publicly aired “with
sound of trumpet in the Market place in Boston below the Court House” among other
places.

After the construction of the Town House in 1657, the marketplace also began to
reflect the emergence of genteel culture within the community as a result of
Anglicization. The growing importance of overseas trade to Boston’s economy elevated
the merchant class and encouraged them to associate with the Town House as a
legitimizing symbol of their authority. John Josselyn’s 1663 account of the building
suggests that they had already begun displacing the country traders who had traditionally
utilized the marketplace, making it at times more of an exclusive merchants’ exchange
than a public market. By the 1690s, Samuel Phillips had established a bookstore on the
premises that appealed to the local gentry and further alienated country traders, who
appear to have abandoned the site in favor of street peddling. “[S]ometimes a tall Fellow
brings a Turkey or Goose to sell, and will travel thro’ the whole Town to see who will
give most for it,” observed one visitor to Boston around 1709.
The removal of such commoners from the marketplace completed its evolution into a meeting ground for the provincial elite. By the eighteenth century it was no longer even referred to as a marketplace, but instead as “the Change” in imitation of London’s famed Royal Exchange. “[T]he Merchants meet [there] every day about Eleven o’Clock & continue until near One before they retire to dinner,” noted James Birket of the site in 1750. Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish gentleman traveler, visited Boston’s Exchange in July of 1744 and encountered the wealthy merchant and legislator Thomas Hutchinson. The following day there he watched an exchange of French and English prisoners taken in battle during King George’s War, an event that adapted the site’s traditional disciplinary function to the new realities of Boston’s imperial existence.

**Peddling Politics**

As established customs were adapted to changing circumstances, new practices also became old traditions. Such was the case with Boston’s provisioning system by the early eighteenth century. The transition to street peddling was problematic, for it created new opportunities for market fraud. Yet it had advantages as well, especially for laboring families. Since they often lacked servants to do their buying, they learned to depend on itinerants coming to their homes and shops with goods, which, among other things, saved them valuable time that could be used for work. Moreover, their connection to the streets as a political arena was strengthened in the provincial period. If the advent of royal government encouraged public celebrations of loyalty and affection for the Crown—royal birthdays, accession days, and governors’ welcomes—then it also provided a place for the protestation of unpopular policies and the assertion of local mores. As such, street culture became essential to ordinary Bostonians’ political as well as economic identities.
Although they recognized the problems of peddling, they nonetheless resented reformers who would remove marketing from the streets.\textsuperscript{19}

One of the major complaints against the new system of provisioning was the proliferation of huckstering. These opportunists would meet incoming country traders on Boston Neck and purchase large quantities of the best produce, which they would then resell at higher prices in town. Locals looking to avoid their influence would often have to go to the Neck themselves and barter with the country traders directly, or rely on those traders who did not cut deals with the hucksters. Complaints against hucksters in Boston were heard as early as 1682, but repeated attempts to regulate their activities in the colonial period proved fruitless.\textsuperscript{20} They operated on the margins of both society and the economy, making them appear especially dangerous and difficult to monitor.

While the pejorative term “huckster” referred specifically to an unscrupulous trader who intentionally forestalled the market, in eighteenth-century England it more generally meant any “trickish mean fellow,” a definition often applied to other itinerants as well.\textsuperscript{21} Like hucksters, peddlers, hawkers, and petty chapmen were also accused of cutting into local merchants’ profits and defrauding customers with false promises and shoddy products. “Pedlar’s French” was the popular English term to describe their mean, often unintelligible speech patterns, although by the eighteenth century most of England’s peddlers were provincials from Scotland and Ireland.\textsuperscript{22} Local officials looked upon them as disorderly elements, and they were portrayed as such in popular culture. Hawkers, for instance, appeared in English art and literature as destitute old women possessing a penchant for mob violence.\textsuperscript{23}
The reputation of itinerant traders seems to have fared no better in New England. For instance, a tavern song popular in Boston damned the “whispering Pedlers” who “do watter sell Instid of Rum.”24 Some observers believed hard times rather than hard hearts explained such duplicity. As one person poetically put it, “For fear of [poverty], the Treader swears and vows His Wares are good, altho’ his Conscience knows That he hath us’d his utmost Art and Skill, Their Faults and Imperfections to conceal…”25 Yet Cotton Mather worried that itinerants were spreading sin into the country by selling people “foolish Songs and Ballads” instead of “poetical Composures full of Piety.”26 In the early 1720s local officials also blamed them for spreading smallpox among Bostonians. Merchants in neighboring Connecticut similarly raised the frightening prospect of “many raging and contagious diseases” if authorities did not do something to control the “Multitudes of foreign or Peregrine Peddlers who flock into this Colony and travel up and Down in it with Packs of Good to Sell.”27

Itinerants were moreover often suspected of stealing from their customers and the communities they visited. Country traders were charged with swindling unsuspecting servants and slaves sent to procure provisions for their masters, a situation that got so bad in Boston that local officials stepped in to try to stop it.28 A Massachusetts anti-peddling law, passed in the wake of a devastating 1711 fire that destroyed Boston’s Town House, accused itinerants of pawning stolen goods from the victims of the blaze, which, on top of Queen Anne’s War, had in fact convinced some struggling artisans to turn in their tools for peddlers’ packs. Indeed, some observers thought that deceitfulness was the defining characteristic of all of Boston’s common traders. “As for the Rabble, their Religion lies in cheating all they deal with,” concluded John Dunton. “When you are
dealing with 'em, you must look upon 'em as at cross purposes... for they seldom speak and mean the same thing...”29 But the lowly status and poor reputation of itinerant traders made them especially susceptible to abuse as well as being convenient scapegoats for a community’s social and economic ills.

As Margaret Spufford has shown, peddling proliferated in seventeenth-century England in conjunction with textile manufacturing and actually played an important role in England’s commercial expansion.30 The growing number of shopkeepers’ complaints against peddlers was as much a sign of itinerancy’s economic success as its social stigma. T.H. Breen has also linked itinerancy’s growth in the American colonies to the consumer revolution of the following century. “As the number of stores increased, so too did the number of peddlers,” he concludes.31 Indeed, the establishment of Boston’s mercantile elite may owe something to itinerancy, at least if Edward Ward is to be believed. Visiting the seaport at the turn of the eighteenth century, he gazed up at the gentry’s fine mansions and was reminded how “the Fathers of these Men were Tinkers and Peddlers.”32 Once they were established, however, many merchant-gentlemen promptly forgot such humble origins in the search for status. Polite society had no place for peddlers, and the local gentry became the foremost critics of itinerant traders in Boston.

The problem of peddling in the provincial period became entangled in a whole host of issues that divided the community, such as the question of currency reform. The General Court had been issuing paper money to prop up the economy since the 1690s, creating inflation that critics claimed was ruining the community. Their arguments against paper currency combined traditional Puritan values with the concerns of genteel society. Since few European merchants would accept the bills for payment, they were
useless in international trade and remained restricted to circulation among the local traders. Consequently, complained William Douglass, "the generous foreign Adventurer or Merchant, and consequently Trade in its genuine Sense, is hurt, the Gainers are the Shop-keepers and Merchant Hucksters...."\(^33\)

Such petty retailers catered to the consumer needs of ordinary Bostonians, for whom specie was scarce, and depended on plentiful paper currency to stay in business. As Joseph Bennett noted, "the people in common had much rather take those bills for anything they sell than gold or silver."\(^34\) This was particularly true among the country traders, who "are all of them so averse to any sort of coin, that one may as well offer them pebble-stones as gold and silver for anything one wants to buy of them."\(^35\) Monetary preference became as much a social marker as a business decision, serving to distinguish not only gentry from commoners, but also locals from foreigners.

Yet at the same time, they served to blur such distinctions. Critics of paper money complained that it allowed people to live well beyond their means, a development that challenged Puritan notions of frugality and a divinely ordained social order as well as genteel social divisions. As Stephen Innes has remarked, the aristocratic Attorney General Paul Dudley's comment in 1714 that commoners had become too extravagant in their habits sounded as though it could have been written in the 1630s.\(^36\) Conversely, cheap paper money also afforded them access to the cheap rum that was flooding the province and promoting drunken idleness. The author of *The Present Melancholy Circumstances of the PROVINCE Consider'd...* argued that rum consumption aggravated Massachusetts's problems by draining more specie out of the colony and encouraging the growth of "needless Retailing" such as huckstering.\(^37\) Currency reform
might put a crimp in the business of hucksters and peddlers who encouraged idleness and indulgence instead of industry and frugality among the inhabitants, thereby serving as social reform as well.

Another proposal for combating what some observers saw as the related problems of huckstering, economic inflation, and social instability was the reintroduction of centralized marketplaces. Interest in the idea was first evident in the 1690s, when charter reform and King William’s War combined to heighten tension within the community. To the north, Salem had succumbed to witchcraft hysteria, while a nervous General Court forced all Frenchmen in the province to swear allegiance to the English Crown in hopes of preventing an insurrection. Trade and agriculture were so badly disrupted by 1696 that Boston’s poor congregated “in great companys at the Bakers doors crying for Bread, & frequently forced to goe away without.”38 Local officials hoped that reviving the marketplace would more efficiently provision the people and avoid additional upheaval. Their thinking on the issue also exhibited the expanded worldview and attendant sense of inadequacy that Boston’s new provincial status encouraged by noting, in what would become a staple argument among market reformers, “there is not one Town in any of his Matys. Plantations of the bigness & number of Inhabitants as this is (and many that are much lesser than the same) but what hath a Market.”39 The General Court accordingly granted the local selectmen’s request, which was apparently not put before the town meeting for a vote, and the marketplace was reopened in 1696. However, the war’s end the following year helped normalize trade relations, reducing the immediate need for market reform and prompting the marketplace to close. Moreover, it may have run into resistance from the country traders themselves, who had grown accustomed to street
selling and its perceived pecuniary advantages. As they saw it, "If Market-Days were appointed, all the Country People coming in at the same Time would glut it, and the Towns People would buy their Provisions for what they pleased."\(^{40}\)

Little more was made of market reform until the aftermath of Queen Anne's War nearly two decades later. Compounding the suffering of that war was the fire of 1711 that ripped through Boston's downtown and devastated scores of shops and homes. Trying to make sense of their affliction, some inhabitants saw God's wrath while others attributed it to scheming merchants who ignored their neighbors' needs while sending off scarce provisions to more lucrative foreign ports. In 1713 they broke open warehouses believed to contain grain bound for export, shooting two men in the process. Town officials responded to such rioting by building a public granary the following year, but some residents saw market reform as a more effective means to prevent future unrest.\(^{41}\)

The most comprehensive argument on behalf of market reform in the postwar period came from the pen of Benjamin Colman, minister of Boston's Brattle Street Congregational Church. Founded in 1699 by Boston merchants seeking to inject politeness into the local Puritan culture, Brattle Street was the first church in town to break tradition by sporting a steeple.\(^{42}\) Its powder-haired minister was branded both a royalist lackey and an Anglican dupe for espousing metropolitan manners; he even went so far as to praise the controversial Joseph Dudley, whom many locals still blamed for their sufferings under the Dominion of New England.\(^{43}\) However, Colman's thoughts on the marketplace exemplify the pattern that historians have found common among New England clergymen in the early eighteenth century. Instead of abandoning Puritan
principles, they adapted them to the expectations of civil and commercial society in an effort to exert their traditional influence over a rapidly changing culture.44

The fundamental reason for adopting centralized, regulated marketplaces, Colman argued, was the order and certainty that they would restore to the volatile community. For him, social order correlated to spiritual welfare and had very deep implications for the people’s fortunes. Disorder shook him to the core:

... But next to Death, or worse than Death is Disorder and Confusion. All the Misery of Man, both in this Life and in that which is to come, comes of it. It subverts Families, Schools, civil Government, and all Religion.45

Conversely, order promoted welfare through efficiency. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the commercial realm. Commerce, Colman maintained, “enlarges Peoples Hearts to do generous Things, for the Support of Divine Worship and Relief of the Poor.”46 But if it is frustrated by inefficiency, then benevolence and humanity suffer as much as the economy. “To loose our time then is to throw away our Money and our Life (not to say our Souls),” he warned47

Centralized marketplaces would not only save Bostonians time and money by conveniently bringing together buyer and seller, Colman argued, but would also combat idleness. There was growing concern that the community could not sustain its own burgeoning population, particularly when costly imperial wars turned it into a refuge for displaced families. “Idleness, alas! idleness increases in the town exceedingly,” cried Cotton Mather in the wake of King William’s War.48 The problem of idleness offended Puritan sensibilities because it was seen as the seed of sinful conduct and directly violated the biblical teachings that guided their work ethic. “So far as we are thus Industrious we are obedient to God, profitable to our selves, useful to our Neighbours, advantageous to
Posterity, but Idleness is the reverse of all these,” explained an advocate of market reform, who blamed Boston’s poverty on idle, crooked hucksters selling provisions at exorbitant prices. Citing Scriptural precedent, he asked inhabitants, “Would not the settling of a Market help you?” Benjamin Colman certainly thought that it would. Marketplaces, he argued, would discourage idleness and encourage industry by forcing itinerants off the streets and into a close, competitive environment that would drive down prices and improve both purchasing power and product quality, thereby alleviating poverty and attendant social ills. For some reformers, then, marketplaces were a means of sustaining a sense of Christian community and Puritan work ethic.

Perhaps marketplaces would also help clear Boston’s increasingly congested streets, which posed efficiency problems and safety concerns as well. Standing carts had become serious impediments to the flow of local traffic, while heavy, moving carts often tore up the roadways and posed dangers to nearby pedestrians, particularly children. In the spring of 1711, for instance, fourteen-year old Richard Hobby was crushed to death when a loaded cart toppled over on top of him. The Reverend Cotton Mather was so moved by the accident that he resolved to “preach a Sermon, wherein Children shall be particularly and importunately called upon, to prepare for the Day, wherein the Small as well as the Great, shall stand before God.” Attempts to regulate the weight and speed of carts, going all the way back to the 1650s, proved unable to prevent such deadly incidents.

 Critics considered Boston’s current system of provisioning to be undignified as well as dangerously inefficient. “The Country-Man... to my eye and ear debases himself while he trots about the Town, crying at every Corner what he has to sell...,”
complained Colman.⁵¹ Even worse, however, was its effect on the local inhabitants, especially the elite. Boston's gentry was already beginning its gradual physical and psychological withdrawal from the noisy, chaotic streets: setting their homes back, creating garden hideaways and country retreats, traveling in carriages, and sending servants on errands to avoid indiscriminately mixing with their social inferiors.⁵² But the manner of marketing in Boston confounded their best efforts at distinction, forcing them to choose between sending naïve servants to be cheated out of their money, or demeaning themselves by dealing directly with the street peddlers. A regulated marketplace, many believed, would solve the dilemma. “[T]hen we would not see our very Gentry as well as Trades-men Travelling... to the Ends of the Town to get a little Butter or a few Eggs, for their Families, stooping to that which becomes their Maids...,” Colman explained.⁵³ Markets would reinforce the social order.

Finally, a central marketplace would dignify not just its patrons, but also the entire community, proponents argued. Other areas of the Empire were readily embracing the idea, making Boston appear rather backward and provincial by comparison. Recent economic and social instability brought on by Queen Anne’s War only increased concern that the seaport was regressing. “This which was within these Ten years, one of the most Flourishing Towns in America, in the Opinion of all Strangers who came among us, will in less than half so many more years be the most miserable Town therein,” grumbled the merchant John Colman, who, like his brother Benjamin, favored market reform.⁵⁴ The construction of one or more market houses would architecturally signal the community’s commitment to order, urban improvement, and cultural refinement. When Reverend Colman suggested that marketplaces would grace and beautify Bostonians, he expressed
the sentiments of the polite Puritan, for whom material objects conveyed spiritual significance.⁵⁵ “Virtue and good Morals, as well as the worldly Estate and Interests” would be improved with the construction of market houses, he concluded.⁵⁶

**Mayors and Markets**

Market reform might have succeeded had it not been entangled with a parallel effort to incorporate Boston and thus abolish the town meeting. For some inhabitants, Boston’s instability during Queen Anne’s War indicated the institution’s ineptitude and revived talk of municipal incorporation. In much the same way as market reformers, incorporation advocates pointed to its popularity elsewhere in the Empire as a sign of efficacy. “[A]lmost every Town in Great Britain has sought to be, and is a Corporation,” they argued.⁵⁷ Moreover, comparable communities in the colonies had also adopted a mayoral form of government, including New York, Albany, and Philadelphia. Such similar reasoning suggests that market and government reform stemmed from the same cosmopolitan sentiment—common among the local gentry—that saw Boston as pitifully provincial and out-of-step with the rest of the Empire.

Incorporation would have enabled local officials to exert greater control over the marketplace. In England, city charters empowered municipal authorities to collect rents, duties, and usage fees from traders using the marketplace, creating an important source of government revenue. Mayors also possessed executive and judicial powers to enforce regulations and bylaws.⁵⁸ When “Loose and Idle” hawkers encumbered the streets around London’s Royal Exchange in the 1680s, for instance, they were arrested and brought before the Mayor, who was authorized to sentence them “to hard Labour at Bridewel.”⁵⁹ But in Boston critics of incorporation worried that such measures would
unduly antagonize the itinerants who provisioned the community, “driving out the Trade of the Town, to its Neighbouring Towns, & so make them Rich & Happy, and this Poor, and Miserable.” Thus, any benefits the town might derive from collecting duties would be more than offset by the lost trade to surrounding communities.

Of related concern was the issue of controlling competition among local tradesmen. As early as the 1650s Boston artisans had complained that excessive competition from strangers and neophytes threatened their livelihoods, a problem that some felt incorporation could fix. The draft of a 1650 Boston city charter contained a clause that, if enacted, would have ensured that “one Trade, Mistery or Occupation may not intrude or entrench upon another nor use any more Trade then one at once...” This prospect was revived with talk of municipal incorporation after Queen Anne’s War, but the changing character of the economy had also changed the minds of many artisans on the issue. To survive the vagaries of an economy battered by repeated bouts of war and inflation, many inhabitants had diversified their labor to include secondary trades or petty retailing. “The Shop-keepers... do many of them occupy more than Twelve Trades,” explained one inhabitant, “and the Handy-crafts-men as many as their Genus and Stock do lead them to, without Interruption.” Laboring Bostonians now saw the idea of restricting or eliminating this practice as more threatening than advantageous, and it shaped their objection to incorporation. “That which is worst than all,” claimed one critic, “is to the Trading part which is put under a possibility of being reduced to manage but one Trade, which will be great Confusion, if not Unsupportable in its difficulties.”

Local artisans and laborers worried about the economic costs of incorporation for their families, as well as about the political consequences of placing so much power into
the hands of so few men. Many Bostonians could still remember the Andros regime and its elimination of the town meeting, which had stripped them of their political power and left them exposed to the arbitrary will of an oligarchy. Proponents of government reform tried to allay such fears by insisting that municipal officials would be "Men in Good Estates and undoubted Fidelity," who would relieve their poorer neighbors of the burden of attending town meetings to the neglect of their labors. This last argument took the tradesman's logic about street peddling and applied it to municipal reform. But critics felt that they were being baited, and this premise did not prove persuasive to them. They had learned the hard way that the town meeting constituted the best defense of their interests. If inhabitants approved incorporation, they argued, "then the Great Men will no more have the Dissatisfaction of seeing their Poorer Neighbours stand up for equal Privileges with them, in the highest Acts of Town Government." If, as Gordon Wood suggests, most commoners in colonial America "accepted their own lowliness," the trait was in little evidence during Boston's incorporation controversy.

Indeed, critics of reform sought to cut the gentry down to size. Popular opposition exhibited a strong undercurrent of resentment against Boston's elite that questioned the correlation between piety and politeness. "[A] Man may be worth a 1000/. and yet have neither Grace nor good Manners," complained one such critic. Another argued that a selfish search for status and lust for honors animated municipal incorporation in Britain and, by implication, Boston. Frustrated by their limited influence within the realm, provincial elites found it "absolutely necessary... that every considerable Town in the Kingdom, should have a Charter, and set up within it self a particular Government, within the great National One; that so he that could not arrive to
be a Counsellor, Treasurer or Secretary of State; might at least be distinguished from his meaner Neighbours, by being made a Mayor, Alderman, Common Councilman, Recorder, Clerk, or Treasurer to some City, or Corporation."68

Such rhetoric played to local anxieties about metropolitan culture and reinforced people's commitment to the town meeting as a uniquely New England tradition. Quoting Scripture to warn against undue reform, antagonists of incorporation mythologized the town meeting as part of Boston's Puritan patrimony. "This is the great Privilege their Ancestors have conveyed to them," declared a defender of the institution, "and which they ought to be very careful of transmitting entire to their Posterity, and thereby let the World know, That they are not only the Heirs of their Fore-fathers Possessions, but the heirs of their Virtues too."69 When it came time for the town meeting to decide its own fate, another opponent borrowed words from the Bible and shouted out to his fellow Bostonians, "It is a whelp now- it will be a Lion by and by. Knock it in the head."70 They promptly obliged. In fact, incorporation met with such a resounding defeat and stirred up so much popular resentment that, according to Thomas Hutchinson, some of the town's leading gentlemen "would never be present in a Town meeting afterwards."71

The debate over municipal incorporation after Queen Anne's War shared much of the rhetoric that characterized the market controversy, and the call for market reform ultimately met the same fate as government reform. But whereas incorporation went out with a bang, market reform died quietly in committee afterwards. Not even Reverend Benjamin Colman's reasoned defense of marketplaces in 1719 could resurrect it.
Market Reform Finds New Life

Having suffered several setbacks in the years after Queen Anne’s War, the reformist impulse waned during the 1720s. Nary a word was printed about mayors or marketplaces, and the pamphlet war over paper currency subsided as well. But things began to change after 1730, when the new royal governor, Jonathan Belcher, arrived in Boston with instructions to rein in runaway inflation by retiring provincial currency and returning Massachusetts to the specie standard over the next decade. The news raised the hopes of many merchants and gentlemen for economic recovery. And since they held most of the specie, they could financially survive, and perhaps profit by, the transition.

Conversely, the announcement raised the anxiety of laboring families who wondered how they would support themselves without the popular bills. When neighboring Rhode Island and, later, New Hampshire tried to provide solutions to the problem by printing more of their own notes, Boston merchants boycotted the bills and established their own alternate currency, which proved so sound that they were hoarded and quickly fell out of circulation. The contraction of the money supply thus bred popular resentment against the seaport’s seemingly selfish gentry. “Money, if it circulate not, but stops, by being confined by some rich Miser or other in a Chest, Trunk, Coffer, Bag or Box, especially if the whole Mass of Money be thus pent up or confin’d, then surely the State or Body-politick is in a miserable and very deplorable Condition,” explained one resentful resident.72

Currency reform revived Boston’s marketplace controversy as inhabitants struggled for a way to manage the difficult transition away from paper money, which local leaders worried might, in the short term at least, destabilize and demoralize the
community. Their fears were reinforced by incidents such as the robbery of Captain John Hubbard in January of 1733. After Hubbard had suddenly taken ill on the road, a man posing as a Good Samaritan proceeded to steal his possessions. Although the rascal was caught and publicly whipped, the incident only added to a growing sense of corruption and instability in the seaport. "[T]he more Rogues increase among us the more Care is absolutely necessary to Protect and Secure our Respective Properties be they more or less," counseled the Boston Gazette the following year. Some gentlemen and merchants considered the situation so bad that they instituted a private watch to guard valuable property at night.

They also led a renewed campaign to institute marketplaces as a means to combat idleness and maintain order in the community. A few weeks after the Hubbard incident the Boston Gazette reprinted Reverend Colman's 1719 pro-market tract in anticipation of the annual town meeting in March, when the local leadership and new policies for the ensuing year would be decided. A petition to have the market issue reconsidered was also circulated about town in preparation for the crucial meeting. Signed by over one hundred inhabitants, the document repeated common criticisms of the current system, especially huckstering, and insisted that "[t]he Introduction of Markets in all the Neighboring Governments and in Foreign Parts has by their happy Experience prov'd of the Greatest Benefitt & Advantage to Them, and can any One render a Sufficient reason, why the Same should not prove of Equall, if not much Greater Benefitt & Advantage to this Town, should we come into the Like practice."

Of those petitioners whose names and livelihoods could be positively correlated, no group was as well represented as Boston's gentry. Some of the signatories were men
of great political ambition within the province, such as Andrew Oliver and the recently arrived William Shirley, who would eventually replace Jonathan Belcher as royal governor. John Boydell, whose 1718 duel with Captain Thomas Smart provoked public outcry, had been Governor Shute's secretary and was now postmaster. One biographer has called Byfield Lyde, an unwavering supporter of market reform, essentially "a professional office-seeker."78 Raised as an Anglican, he transferred his allegiance to the Congregationalists in order to marry Governor Belcher's only daughter. Always angling for advancement, Lyde knew the issues that mattered most to Boston's upper crust and was quick to show support. Scholars have shown that a number of other influential marketplace proponents were personally tied to the Governor's social and political circle.79

Other signers of the pro-market petition were less obsessed with holding political office and rarely, if ever, served in a public capacity. Peter Faneuil's brother Benjamin fits this mold, as do James Pitts and Hugh Hall. Still, these men were wealthy, influential merchants who moved in polite circles and were personally connected to powerful proponents of the marketplace. For instance, Hall was the brother-in-law of Pitts, who was married by Benjamin Colman to the daughter of James Bowdoin in 1732. The Bowdoins were prominent members of Colman's Brattle Street Church, staunch supporters of market reform, and, as French Huguenots, familiar with the Faneuils.80 Both families had fled religious persecution in France and become members of Boston's small Huguenot Church. The Faneuils, in turn, were also associated with the local Anglican churches and worked with men like William Speakman and John Arbuthnot, both signers of the pro-market petition, to found Trinity Church.81
Along with the republication of Colman's piece, the pro-market petition and those who signed it triggered an immediate reaction from opponents, one of whom responded in print. Admitting that market reform had some merit, the author was still leery of dispensing with the "ancient Custom" of street selling without proof that it was to blame for Boston's problems. Analogous concerns had been raised years earlier about eliminating town meeting democracy, which was similarly cast as "Ancient" and mythologized in an effort to preserve it. Against the pressure of imperial integration and metropolitan reform, the decentralized system of street selling had become uniquely, and proudly, Bostonian to many locals. "[U]nless it can be proved, that our Circumstances are exactly parallel with those of other Places, I don't know why our Practice should," complained the author.82 In words indicative of both the Puritan sentiments and artisanal backgrounds of many market opponents, he ominously warned that a vote for the markets would "lay a Foundation of Repentance for our Selves and Posterity."83

Critics of market reform also turned the polite, cosmopolitan arguments of proponents against them, suggesting that Boston with a marketplace would become chaotic.

Let us dress up a Market in as many fine and beautiful Phrases as we please, a great deal of Noise and Confusion will naturally arise from so great a Collection of People of Different Tempers, Quality, Ages, Sex, and Colour. Great Numbers will very often be inclined at the same time to one and the same Thing, and every Person will think he has an equal Right to it, upon which will arise Disputes and Contentions, if not Blows and Skirmishes.... Whereas in the usual Way of buying and selling, there is ordinarily nothing but Quietness, Peace and good Order. The Market Men and Women pass along silently through the Town...84

The situation would be made even more volatile if, as many assumed, a regulated marketplace drove hucksters and country traders off to distant towns and more hospitable communities, "while we shall be all gathering like Bees about the Market, and ready to devour one another for their Leavings..."85 This was essentially the same argument used
against municipal incorporation after Queen Anne’s War. And as for idleness among the inhabitants, critics added, “what can we think that a Market will prevent this Abuse?”

Such statements piqued reform advocates, who saw them as blatant examples of the parochialism they disdained. Obviously the writer of such drivel “had never seen a Markett, for had he been in London, or any other Markett-Town, where there are ten times the number of Persons as there are in this he could not but have observ’d that there does not happen such disorders as he has dres’d up.” Neither were local streets as quiet and peaceful as the anti-market faction would have Bostonians believe. For instance, two itinerants, John and Rachel Hill, repeatedly conned locals out of their money with a pathetic story about John’s torture at the hands of merciless Turks, which was told by Rachel since his captor had supposedly ripped out his tongue. They successfully kept up the story until 1733, when one potential victim violently took John by the throat and demanded that he “produce his Tongue or be choaked.” Acting upon protests that the streets were becoming overly loud and raucous, town officials had earlier limited the crying of goods and merchandise to those licensed by authorities. And they continued their futile efforts to control the volume of carts and carriages traveling through town.

The political climate of 1733 appears to have favored the reformers in the marketplace controversy. Native son Jonathan Belcher had, at least temporarily, stolen some of the Cooke faction’s thunder and shown that a balance could be struck between the province’s Puritan heritage and its responsibilities as a royal colony. Though the Governor still quarreled with such popular political institutions as the House of Representatives and Boston town meeting, the relationships lacked the rancor of past (and future) years and helped mute the calls for incorporation that had previously sunk
market reform. And with the prospect of currency reform made a reality, there was an increased sense of urgency to find ways to keep families afloat during the difficult transition, which proponents promised marketplaces would do. Critics cried foul, ominously predicting that "the little Money that may be left, will fall into the Hands of a few Men, and it is easy to Know who will have Money then to go to Market with, and who must go without Provisions for want of Money to buy." But the wearied town proved willing to take that chance, and in 1734 voters narrowly approved construction of three regulated market houses while sweeping their supporters into office.

Following the advice of pro-market petitioners, a town committee composed of prominent gentlemen and merchants recommended three distinct building sites to serve three different constituencies. The Town House had completed its evolution away from an old provisions market and was not among the locations listed. The first market house was to be situated in the South End, close to the intersection of Orange and Beech Streets, near the Great Elm (which would later become the "Liberty Tree"). Orange Street was the route typically traveled by country traders bringing provisions into the seaport, making it a convenient site for a market house. Moreover, the South End was still rather sparsely populated (though growing), so that a centralized market there might help concentrate consumers and more effectively provision the people living in the area. The second site chosen was Clarke's Square in the North End. Adjacent to the Mathers' North (or Second) Congregational Church, it not only was one of the few open spaces available in that crowded section of town, but also allowed for a traditional arrangement of meetinghouse and marketplace that harkened back to Boston's early years.
The third location chosen to receive a market house was adjacent the Town Dock near the center of town. Later the site of Faneuil Hall, this area was one of the earliest commercial districts in Boston. And while some business had been drawn off by the construction of Long Wharf to the south, Dock Square remained ringed with shops, warehouses, and taverns and was connected to bustling King Street by several lanes and alleys. It was not Boston’s most beautiful landscape, however. At low tide the water in Town Dock resembled nothing so much as “a very stinking puddle,” as one disgusted visitor put it. Moreover, several buildings owned and rented by the cash-strapped town had fallen into a state of disrepair and become an eyesore to residents. Benjamin Colman had been arguing for years that a market ought to replace the “wretched” buildings, and the town entertained various proposals for improving the area. A number of influential citizens had recently pledged to pay the costs of demolition if the ground were laid open for a public square, something that had become quite fashionable in metropolitan England. Marketplace proponents insisted that their reform would also refine the space.

“...A new sort of Reformers, vulgarly call’d The Mob...”

From the beginning, there were signs that the buildings would not fulfill their promise of reforming the economy and refining people’s manners. Although the marketplaces were abuzz with activity when they finally opened in the summer of 1734, compromises had left many country traders free to sell on the streets and removed several types of produce from the list of those limited to sale at the sites. Moreover, despite Jacob Wendell’s generous gift of fifty pounds to help defray expenses, a weak town treasury and strong criticism about cost combined to curtail the design of the structures,
leaving them rather crude wooden affairs that originally lacked even floorboards. Other problems soon began to manifest themselves as well. Though allowed to continue operating shops throughout the city, many Boston butchers feared that the new markets would favor their country competitors and began to set up stalls in the market halls. Butchers were generally characterized as a boorish bunch in Anglo-American culture and were often implicated in community disorders. Soon this old reputation followed them into the recently built market houses.

Shortly after its opening, the middle market was disrupted when a country butcher discovered a local competitor pilfering a quarter of lamb from his stock. A chase ensued, and the offender was eventually caught and prosecuted. However, the episode prompted a formal complaint from inhabitants about town butchers encumbering the market, driving out competition, and generally stirring up trouble. They requested that local butchers be banned from the buildings, which only agitated the butchers and triggered a protest. A compromise was finally reached by which butcher stalls would be built at a suitable distance from the marketplaces. But disillusionment with the new system had already set in and would continue to grow, encouraging many locals to return to their former habits and avoid the markets. By March of 1735, disaffected residents were petitioning the town meeting to have all three structures appropriated for more useful purposes.

Even supporters of the market houses realized after a year of operation that they had not solved the seaport's social ills, so on March 12th a group of gentlemen appeared before the town meeting to propose construction of a public workhouse that would take additional idlers and indigents off of the streets. As David Conroy has shown, Puritan
Authorities had used the idea of almshouses and workhouses in the 1680s and 1690s, a time of great political upheaval in Boston, to combat the growing problem of drink amongst Boston's poor. "Whereas taverns operated by the poor might undermine constituted authority, workhouses enhanced it and cultivated work discipline at the same time," he maintains. However, the erection of an almshouse on Boston Common in the 1680s had failed to slow rising indigence rates in the early eighteenth century, which to some seemed to be breaking the bonds of community. "[T]he Additional Number of the Town Inhabitants is chiefly Owing to the resort of all sorts of poor People, which instead of Adding to the wealth of the Town, serve only as a Burden and continual Charge, and which is as frequently complain'd of by the Inhabitants, but without having it in their Power to repell or prevent the growing Evil," the town complained to the General Court in 1735. Not even the advent of private charitable organizations had been able to stem the tide.

Casting about for solutions to the problem, cosmopolitan minds again turned toward Britain for answers, as they had done with markets and mayors. The editors of the New England Weekly Journal, a principal instrument for polite education in Boston, assumed a leading role in this process by printing a series of articles in the 1730s promoting the idea of work and self-help as welfare reform. "We will look at Great Britain," wrote one columnist. "Take a View of Country Towns and Villages there, where every Body being known, few idle Men can live, and you'll find Honesty grow up with Industry and Frugality; but come to the great City of London which is become, thro' the Extent of its Buildings and Number of its Inhabitants, the Shelter and Rendezvous of broken Tradesmen, beggarly Gentlemen, and the lazy, the maim'd, the halt & blind,...
and you'll see Vice ride triumphant, and all sorts of Rogueries increase as Idleness increases.” What would save that great city from descending into barbarism and becoming “a Den of Thieves, and a Nest of Rogues?” According to the author, it was the erection of workhouses to “make all work who can work, & maintain all who cannot.”

This attitude was reinforced by an essay reprinted from the *London Magazine* of April 1733, which argued “[t]he truest Charity, and justest Benevolence, is employing People in honest Labour and Business, and not supporting of them in Idleness.” Arguing such points before the Boston Town Meeting, local gentlemen were able to secure approval for a workhouse to be managed by the town. To encourage this endeavor, on May 25, 1735, over one hundred citizens pledged to donate funds for the construction of a workhouse on Boston Common.

Given their comparable aims, it is not surprising that workhouses and market houses drew on similar sources of support in Boston. Of the 124 names on the workhouse subscription list, fifty-two can be found elsewhere in support of market reform— including Peter Faneuil. By contrast, a mere ten are found on petitions critical of the marketplaces. As Peter Borsay notes, such a subscription was an ideal medium by which to express genteel status in the community since it “conferred on its users both the prestige of patronizing some culturally elevating project, and that of being ranked alongside more illustrious contributors.” Advocates of the workhouse also employed some arguments strikingly similar to those that characterized market reform. The cosmopolitan claim that “Such Houses hav[e] been found very Beneficial in other Countrys” was applied to both issues. As the workhouse neared completion in March of 1738, the *Boston News-Letter* honored the occasion by reprinting an account of the
new workhouse in Glasgow, Scotland, another of England's cultural provinces looking to make its mark in the Empire.105

But as support for the workhouse was building in Boston, commitment to the market houses waned. Ironically, just days after the workhouse was approved, a homeless man was found dead of exposure in the North End market house. A brutal spring storm had forced him to find shelter, so he ducked inside the empty market house in a vain attempt to stay warm.106 The incident was a shameful reminder of the failure of markets as social reform. By the spring of 1736, so few people attended business at the buildings that the town meeting discontinued their regulation. Indeed, it was becoming more difficult to enforce market regulations of any kind as the economy continued to slump. In May, Increase Blake came before the Boston selectmen complaining that residents were making his job of regulating weights and measures nearly impossible. Few were heeding his mandate to inspect their instruments, "most peo[ple] taking no notice of the warning, Others bringing some, but not all their weights, &c., whereby the good End and design of the Law is frustrated."107 And the fraud of hay marketers grew so troublesome that leading citizens began to call for stricter regulations the following spring. But to other inhabitants more regulation was the problem, not the solution.

An already tense situation was aggravated by the brutal winter of 1736/37, which one inhabitant described as "a winter the most severe for a continued cold that has been known for Twenty years past."108 Benjamin Colman described its effects on the region: "Some living in these provinces have perished by the cold, & a multitude of cattle and sheep; so that these last three months provisions have grown very scarce and dear, & ye poor have been greatly distressed."109 As a result of such devastation and scarcity, the
price of provisions, meat in particular, rose beyond the reach of many residents, prompting protests and destabilizing the community even further. Accusations of mismanagement and collusion were rampant. Stoking the flames of frustration and anger, the Boston Evening Post reported that “The Price of all sorts of Provisions is very high, especially Flesh Meat; not because there is a Scarcity of any of the Species thereof, but, as we are informed, by the Management of the Drovers and Butchers, who (‘tis affirmed) have agreed to keep up the Price of Beef at Twelve Pence per Pound for a considerable Time yet to come.”\textsuperscript{110} It was the sort of story that only reinforced popular suspicions that marketplaces would spawn such schemes. Bitterness toward the butchers was evident, but many inhabitants also blamed the situation on Boston’s government and its wealthy citizens, who, they were convinced, pulled the levers of power in town. Colman was puzzled by this notion and complained of “murmurings against ye government & ye rich people among us, as if they could by any means within their power besides prayer, have prevented ye rise of provisions.”\textsuperscript{111}

To others, however, the connection was clear. Recent reforms had done nothing to stem price inflation or slow corruption within the community as its imperial integration advanced. Inhabitants complained about the negative impact of Parliament’s Molasses Act upon the local economy and grew increasingly restless about currency redemption, the deadline for which was fast approaching and increasingly affecting Governor Belcher’s reputation. In February, the Governor rejoiced, while others lamented, when the General Court approved a budget with stricter safeguards for the issuance of paper money, which the once mighty Elisha Cooke, Jr. proved powerless to prevent. A very sick man in 1737, Cooke would not survive the year, and his weakness, both physical and
political, only added to the impression that local interests were increasingly imperiled. The anxious sense of impotence that prevailed among some inhabitants became apparent in March of 1737 when a mob targeted town brothels for destruction. The choice was meaningful, since sober people had long seen such seedy establishments as a source of Boston's moral corruption and social disorder. "What! Shall there be any bawdy-houses in such a town as this," exclaimed Cotton Mather in 1698, as he beseeched Bostonians to purge their community of the growing problem before their neighbors had "their children and servants poisoned, and their dwellings laid in ashes..."\(^{112}\)

As with other elements of Boston's heritage, its "tradition" of mob activity was forged against the anvil of royal government after the 1690s. Often directed against selfish merchants or overbearing metropolitan officials, the mobs represented a common conviction that local needs were being ignored and autonomy eroded in the new imperial order. One historian estimates that Boston witnessed twenty-eight riots between 1700 and 1764, but none to speak of beforehand.\(^{113}\) Previously, the force of Puritan ideology and, when that failed, Puritan authority had effectively contained overt dissent.\(^{114}\) While the character of Boston mobs may have been informed by English custom, then, there had been nothing customary about them in the local culture. Dissent was heretofore considered destructive of the safety and sanctity of the town. But now such overt opposition as mob violence seemed the essence of communal integrity to some inhabitants, especially those in the lower ranks of society.

Members of the local gentry as well as royal officials saw things differently. Street mobs offended their sensibilities by threatening the order and civility of the seaport. Many privately worried about their prospects against the Mobile Vulgus. "I
thank God we are not yet got to Mobs and their Insults and Ravages, tho' we have feared them,” wrote Benjamin Colman in 1725. As a leading advocate of genteel reform, Colman recognized that “should there be any my house would be as much exposed as any; for I have freely abode by what has appeared to me just and righteous.” His prediction would prove close to the mark.

It was not Colman’s private home that they went after in the early morning hours of March 24, 1737, but rather the public market houses he championed. Cloaked by darkness and disguises, the individual identities of participants remained unclear, but their collective identity was manifest in their choice of targets. They were, as Gary Nash puts it, “cultural traditionalists,” who resented the recent turn their town had taken and determined to restore local conventions. “I Now in behalf of my self and others who assembled at a Mob assure you,” wrote one participant to the County Sheriff, “… we had no Design to do the Town any Damage, but a great deal of Good.” Ironically, the markets had produced the very sort of behavior that they were intended to preclude.

The market riot provoked a more serious confrontation with provincial authorities than the bordello riot earlier in the month. Although they were largely unused by 1737, the market houses still represented order and conveyed a certain civility that now seemed imperiled. The identities of crowd participants were never revealed, but Lieutenant Governor Spencer Phips labeled them “rude and disorderly Persons” and promised their prosecution. He only succeeded in sparking further defiance from townsmen, some of whom registered their displeasure by secretly posting a warning to provincial officials on the door of the Town House, the symbolic threshold of metropolitan authority over the province and the gateway to rank and privilege in the community. Addressed to “you
Gentlemen,” the posted letter warned that if they tried to prosecute members of the market mob, then they must be prepared for civil war. “[I]f you are Resolved to go on in what you have begun, take and call your Men that are of your Side, and we will show you a Hundred Men where you can show One.”

As if to reinforce this message, other letters, equally rebellious in tone, were dropped in town, cautioning authorities against enforcing the Lieutenant Governor’s proclamation. One addressed to Sheriff Edward Winslow advised him “That we have above Five Hundred Men in solemn League and Covenant to stand by one another, and can procure above Seven Hundred more of the same Mind.” The letter ended with this ominous warning: “… I do now declare in the Name of 500 Men, That it will be the hardest Piece of Work that ever you took in Hand, to pretend to Commit any Man for that Night’s Work, or at least keep them when Committed; so that Governour Belcher himself may pretend to do what he will, there must be a great deal of Blood shed before we will be suppressed…” Another letter to Winslow railed against rumors that the Governor would bring in the country people to restore order and that private citizens would set up another market, calling such threats “not consistent with English Men.” It is clear that laboring Bostonians had developed their own notion as to what it meant to be an Englishman, one that contained strong overtones of Puritan exceptionalism.

The references to civil war and the Solemn League and Covenant conjured up images of the English Civil War, which had thrilled Boston’s founding generation by thwarting royal prerogative and restoring Puritan influence in government. For subsequent generations of Bostonians, the events of that era were an inspirational reminder of their forefathers’ sufferings and sacrifices for them. “There are too, too
many who defend the horrid Regicide, and glory in their being of their King-Killing hellish principles," cried one critic of the local culture. Whenever the designing hands of evil men threatened their customary way of life, as seemed the case to some in 1737, Bostonians could rally around this proud legacy in defense of tradition. In the 1720s, for instance, when John Checkley and Timothy Cutler were openly espousing greater Anglican control over the populace, they worried that locals were contemplating “something like the solemn League & Covenant, to prejudice the rising Generation against the Church.” The mere mention of a Solemn League and Covenant was a threat to be taken seriously amongst a people who had convincingly demonstrated their discontent with royal prerogative in the past. Governor Belcher accordingly denounced such “seditious and infamous” language circulating Boston in the wake of the market riots. Hoping to alienate the authors from the populace, he branded supporters as “weak and inconsiderate” and requested that the “good Subjects of this Province” help him expose the perpetrators. But they were never found.

Historian G.B. Warden, for one, has been rather dismissive of the market riot and assigned it little symbolic significance. “It is possible to read all sorts of anticlericalism, Anglophobia, and class conflict into the market issue,” he argues, “but the riot itself is best seen perhaps as one indication of how troubled times made the townspeople sensitive about relatively minor matters and necessary adjustments to meet the needs of the growing community.” However, few contemporaries regarded the issue as a “minor matter,” and the riot cannot be separated from the controversy of which it was a part. Not every reform effort had engendered violent crowd action, nor had every crowd action occasioned a denunciatory proclamation from provincial officials. Even after the
upheaval of the American Revolution, Bostonians would remember March 24th as the anniversary of the market riot. Indeed, there was something so consequential about the market houses and the values they embodied that the passions of both sides of the debate were aroused. If nothing came of the vicious threats against officials (Boston did not erupt into civil war as promised), it was not because they were implausible, but rather because the situation was resolved in the rioters’ favor, at least temporarily. Authorities never discovered the instigators, which Benjamin Colman attributed to the collusion of the people, “their favourers being so many.” Any arrests might have rekindled the fires of protest. Moreover, the town meeting subsequently voted to discontinue the market houses, which may have mollified their critics but incensed market supporters, who charged that such a vote merely sanctioned the mob’s actions.

Some Bostonians likened the market riot to Wat Tyler’s 1381 insurrection in England, which shook the very foundations of royal government before being suppressed. For them, the lesson to be learned from such incidents was that stronger laws were needed to prevent “any riotous and disorderly Meetings of the People... for tho’ at first it might be only a small Spark, yet falling upon combustible Matter, it may occasion a Conflagration not to be extinguish’d but by an Ocean of Blood.” Instead, the town meeting punished reformers by having their markets dismantled, which so infuriated Benjamin Colman’s brother-in-law John Staniford that he repeatedly disrupted the meeting with reproachful speeches against local officials and the town in general. After being warned several times not to hinder the public business so, the exasperated Staniford was finally grabbed by a constable and physically thrown out of the meeting. Other gentlemen began privately discussing ways to replace the defunct markets almost.
immediately after the riot, prompting threats of blood in the streets if their plans were carried out.\textsuperscript{130} Circumstances therefore demanded prudence and a judicious proposal that placated the people while restoring propriety.

\textit{Faneuil Hall from the Ruins}

The town was still restless after the rioting, and many gentlemen worried about both their personal safety and the security of their property. On May 3, 1737, James Bowdoin and John Osbourne, both market supporters, petitioned along with others to have the town revive its subsidy of the Merchants’ Watch. As previously mentioned, this watch was designed to patrol the commercial districts of town and protect private property from would-be vandals.\textsuperscript{131} Similarly, a number of “Gentlemen in Authority, with a considerable Number of well disposed Inhabitants” let it be known in April of 1738 that they intended to enforce the bylaws to prevent disorders at night, particularly those that restricted the activities of Indian, black, and mulatto slaves and servants.\textsuperscript{132} Such measures indicate the degree to which the market riots had rattled the gentry, diminishing their faith in the local government even further and forcing them to reformulate their plans to bring manners to the marketplace. The result was Faneuil Hall.

On July 2, 1740, the selectmen received a petition signed by 340 residents for a town meeting to consider a new market proposal by Peter Faneuil. The merchant had recently come into great wealth and was now offering to personally finance construction of a “noble and compleat” market house for public use. The connection to the events of March 24, 1737 was obvious and readily admitted. Since the riots and the closing of the markets, “the Inhabitants of the said Town have had no certain Place for Buyer and Seller to meet at, which forces People to go out upon the Neck, and spend a great part of the
Day in providing Necessaries for their Families, to the great hindrance of Business, and Loss and Damage of the Town."¹³³

Yet Peter Faneuil’s liberality must be understood not only as a response to the market riot, but also as a personal search for identity in the community. French Huguenot by birth, Faneuil and his brother Benjamin had arrived in Boston from New York shortly after their father’s death in 1719. Under the wing of their opulent uncle Andrew, both young men became active in his lucrative mercantile business, which Peter primarily managed after Andrew took ill in 1737, the year of the market riot. With Andrew’s death early the next year, Peter emerged from his uncle’s shadow and assumed legal control of the estate. Suddenly made one of the wealthiest men in Boston, he began putting his own stamp on the family mansion, his houses of worship, and the community in general.¹³⁴ He became heavily involved in both public and private charity work, which, as Christine Heyrman has shown, New England clergymen promoted as a means for the eighteenth-century gentleman to distinguish himself in a Christian manner: “Although supporting the regulation and reformation of the poor, preachers showed at least as much concern to reform and regulate the behavior of the wealthy, to persuade a highly visible commercial elite to conform to certain traditional standards of public-spiritedness, selflessness, and gentility through involvement in charitable endeavors.”¹³⁵

Many prominent supporters of market reform (and often other reforms) in Boston were known for their piety, benevolence, and devotion to the community. John Alford, an advocate of the 1733 market scheme, was a wealthy gentleman-merchant and congregant of Benjamin Colman’s Brattle Street Church who founded the Alford Professorship in Natural Theology at Harvard. Thomas Hubbard, a proponent of Peter
Faneuil’s plan, was renown both for his alms and his opulence. “If there was any one Virtue more conspicuous in this good Man, than another, it seems to have been the Charity and Liberality of his Heart,” explained the *Boston News-Letter*, “… His House was a Temple of Hospitality: Oft did he fill the Hands of the Indigent, oft wipe away the Tears of Poverty and Distress….” It was said of Faneuil that he was “not contented with Distributing his Benefactions to private Families, [but] extended them to this whole Community.”

Faneuil’s marketplace was the ultimate expression of his affection for Boston, and he insisted that it be publicly operated. At some point in the process, he also expanded his offer to include a public meeting hall above the market, making it somewhat similar in design to Keayne’s original Town House (although it would be built of brick rather than of wood). To assuage popular fears and build support for the project, he and his allies assured the people up front that the new market would not be allowed to interfere with traditional market practices. In this sense, it was meant to be a conciliatory force in the community, offering Bostonians progress without sacrificing custom, while yielding to the demands of local street culture. Moreover, his privately financed market would not tax the town treasury the way former markets had. Such compromises should have prevented the kind of political wrangling that had held up previous market plans, yet Faneuil’s proposal still met with vehement protest. Conversely, the plan appeared to defang commercial reform in the seaport, yet received vigorous support from leading merchants and gentlemen. To understand the dynamics of the battle over Faneuil Hall, then, we must move beyond the proposal itself to explore the circumstances surrounding it.
Faneuil announced his intentions at a time of great uncertainty in Boston. The Crown had declared war on Spain, and many locals feared that more hard times were ahead. Moreover, the deadline for currency redemption was fast approaching, which only heightened anxiety over the province’s financial future. In response, a land bank scheme was proposed to provide ready currency and easy credit for commoners, sparking a nasty war of words that would eventually end in riots and arrests. Governor Belcher had become increasingly unpopular and was viewed by many as the stooge of English officials. Visiting the town in 1740, Joseph Bennett sensed the hostility immediately, and blamed it on Belcher’s betrayal of the people in 1730. They had sent him to England to defend their interests against then-Governor Burnett only to find that he had thereafter secured the governorship for himself, returning to enforce the royal prerogative over them. “This behavior seems to have laid a foundation for endless jealousies between the governor and people,” concluded Bennett, “for although this gentleman was born, and bred up, amongst them, and a member of their darling Independent Church,... yet coming to the government in this manner, and altogether unexpected to them, they never after like him, and imagine that the governor has sold them to Sir Robert, and, in consequence of that, distrust him in every thing he says or does in relation to government.” Another critic cited Belcher’s “Romantic, Rakish Air” as contributing to the growing popular resentment against him. The day before petitioners delivered Faneuil’s proposal to local officials, the Reverend William Williams wrote to Benjamin Colman complaining of the mobbish temperament that prevailed in Boston. In this atmosphere, nerves were raw and a renewal of the marketplace issue rubbed many locals the wrong way, particularly when they saw who was associated with Faneuil’s plan.
As with past schemes, support for Faneuil’s market proposal drew heavily from the ranks of the wealthy gentleman-merchants with whom he identified. Here was cause for concern among those who balked at their leadership and their priorities for the community. A number of Faneuil’s supporters, including James Bowdoin, Byfield Lyde, William Shirley, Andrew Oliver, John Osbourne, and Jacob Wendell, had supported the discredited market scheme of 1733/34. Many others were earnest opponents of the Land Bank and inflationary financial schemes supported by local artisans and laborers. Edward Hutchinson, Peter Oliver, Thomas Hubbard, James Pitts, Edmund Quincy, Stephen Boutineau, and others had denounced Rhode Island’s paper currency; many of these same men would refuse to accept Land Bank notes from the public.

Unlike the earlier market house proposal, however, Faneuil’s scheme was framed as a gentlemanly act of benevolence, which in certain respects made it more difficult for opponents to condemn. To refuse such a benevolent gesture would appear ungrateful, and to be ungrateful, as Samuel Mather explained, was to be disingenuous to God, unjust to the benefactor, and unkind to one’s self. “Nor indeed are particular Persons only obliged, but even Cities and Kingdoms ought to shew a proper Gratitude for publick Blessings received by them,” he added.141 This sense of obligation may have contributed to the markedly greater number of men who signed Faneuil’s pro-market petition than the previous one, though its less controversial terms likely played a greater role. Abiel Walley, for one, was convinced to abandon his former opposition to the marketplace and support Faneuil’s proposal, which also received the unanimous thanks of the town meeting. But proponents of the plan were not deceived that serious opposition still
existed within the community and took additional, controversial steps to secure its approval from voters.

Faneuil’s generous offer ran into resistance when brought before the town meeting for a vote on July 14, 1740. Interest in the matter was so intense that inhabitants packed the Town House and forced a change of venue, but not before Thomas Cushing, Junior was chosen to moderate this important meeting. Cushing was known as an honest, fair man, who could be trusted by both sides on the issue.¹⁴² “He appear’d to have no Interest of his own in view,” admirers insisted, “He had a single Eye to the Publick Good.”¹⁴³ On the one hand, Cushing was a gentleman-merchant and a noted anti-inflationist. He had left the Mathers’ church for the more genteel Brattle Street church in 1713 and married into the Bromfield family (which supported Faneuil’s market). On the other hand, he occasionally cooperated with the Cooke faction, was repeatedly elected Representative by the town, was distrusted by the royal governor, and had not signed any pro-market petitions himself. In short, he seemed an ideal compromise candidate to moderate the potentially volatile meeting. But not even Cushing could manage the passions stirring in the populace over this issue.

In an effort to gain control over the unwieldy meeting, two decisions were made that had important repercussions for its outcome. Because of its size, the meeting was adjourned from the Town House to the more spacious Brattle Street Church. This change of venue stripped it of a neutral site and placed the meeting squarely in the symbolic center of the market reform movement. For decades Brattle Street’s minister had been among the foremost advocates for centralized, regulated markets in Boston. When reformers pushed through the measure in 1733, they used largely the same arguments that
Reverend Colman had perfected in 1719. And as with earlier market proposals, Brattle Street congregants formed an important nucleus of support for Faneuil’s market. The Quincys, the Bowdoins, the Boylstones, the Pitts, the Wendells, and the notorious John Staniford all worshiped inside its walls. The move clearly placed the opposition on the defensive and emboldened proponents.

Once inside Colman’s church, the meeting assumed a hard-line approach to voter qualification that also favored pro-market petitioners. Despite complaints from some gentlemen about mobbish town meetings, the institution had grown increasingly formal, orderly, and refined in its conduct of the public business. The once popular, if imprecise, hand-vote was gradually relegated to issues and offices of lesser importance, while regulated paper balloting assumed greater import as a way to ensure accuracy and reliability in the voting process. A stricter enforcement of qualifications likewise bolstered the integrity of the voting process and combated fraud. In the case of Faneuil’s market, it might also exclude unwelcome opposition from marginal characters. As such, the recommendation was made and approved by Cushing to employ a strictly enforced written vote to decide the matter. After a vigorous debate that was “carried on till near Night, (Dinner Time excepted) with such Heat and Vehemence on both Sides, that the like was scarce ever known before,” voters “were Desired to prepare their Votes in writing, either Yea or Nay; and to bring and Offer them at one of the Doors of the House-And the Assessors were directed to attend there with their Lists of Valuation of Estates and Facultys, that so None might be allow’d to Vote in the Affair, Excepting such as were Qualified according to Law.” In the process, a number of individuals who had been allowed to vote in the past were now turned away and their votes disallowed. The
result was a narrow vote (367-360) in favor of Faneuil’s proposal and a whole heap of controversy about the means by which it had been secured.

Opponents of Faneuil’s market were dismayed and disgusted by what transpired at Brattle Street Church. It was a prime example of why they opposed centralized market houses, demonstrating how regulations were easily manipulated to serve self-interest and foster fraud under the guise of decorum. Within weeks critics began collecting signatures to protest the vote and lodged a formal grievance with authorities on September 10th. Drawing heavily from the ranks of artisans and tradesmen for support, they complained that Faneuil’s plan “would not have been obtain’d, had the qualifi’d Persons objected against and a great many more that were actually deterr’d from voting, been but allowed their just Privilege.” Thomas Cushing was particularly censured for sanctioning the vote without first considering the case against it, something completely out of character for a man whom admirers claimed “was open to Light from Others, and gave a diligent attention and full Weight to all they said.” While the protest did nothing to stop plans for Faneuil Hall, which were already moving forward, it did help change voting procedures for the future. When Representative Thomas Hutchinson sailed for England on private business in November, townsmen were asked to vote for a replacement and assured “that if any Person or Persons Offering their Vote in the present Election should happen to be Objected to, as unqualified therefore- He or they should have Liberty, after the Votes are Collected, to make good his or their Claim to that Privilege- According to Law.”

Boston’s marketplace controversy did not end with the completion of Faneuil Hall and the opening of its marketplace in 1742, but it did mark a fundamental shift in the
character of the debate. Whereas the onus had once been on market proponents to prove
the utility of centralized marketplaces, the burden of proof now rested with their critics to
show otherwise. And while they periodically persuaded voters to shut down the market,
they could never convince the town to keep it permanently closed. This partly reflected
their diminished clout in a changing political environment, for the death of Elisha Cooke,
Jr. had left the opposition faction in some disarray and no one immediately emerged who
could match his passionate leadership. Moreover, some Bostonians began to grow
accustomed to the market. Visiting the seaport in September of 1750, the West Indian
merchant James Birket observed that popular aversion to centralized markets “is now in
Some measure got the better of.” Finally, the expected benefits of closing Faneuil Hall
marketplace-- lower prices in particular-- never seemed to materialize as Boston’s
economy continued to suffer from inflation, which was more directly related to the
currency issue.

Conclusion

As the cataclysmic climax of currency reform overshadowed Boston’s
marketplace controversy in 1741, Faneuil’s hall gained greater political significance for
the community than did his ground-floor market. The approaching deadline for currency
redemption had revived popular interest in a private land and manufactory bank that
would enable cash-strapped farmers and craftsmen to borrow funds using their property
as collateral. While the Boston-based bank drew substantial support from the countryside
and from some local artisans, many (but not all) among the provincial elite ardently
opposed it. Royal officials resented it as an infringement upon the Crown’s authority and
a menace to currency reform. Fearing its potential inflationary effect on the economy,
Peter Faneuil joined with over a hundred other prominent Boston merchants and businessmen in refusing to accept land bank notes for payment. In retaliation, a group of local caulkers announced in February of 1741, that they would no longer accept merchandise or store credit as payment for their labor, but were willing to take provisions and manufactory (land bank) notes.  

A number of Bostonians, mainly petty retailers and artisans such as the tanner George Hewes, had a vested interest in the manufactory bank and would suffer badly when Governor Belcher moved to break it up, threatening them with arrest and prosecution if they persisted in their support. Civil servants suspected of sympathizing with the scheme were purged from office, which prompted a howl of protest from bank patrons, particularly in the backcountry. Several militia officers from Worcester Country resigned their commissions rather than submit to the Governor's highhanded tactics. The town of Pembroke defiantly declared the bank busters "Enemies to the Country," accusations also lobbed at market reformers in Boston after the 1737 riot. Then the Governor had been rumored to be mobilizing country militia units to defend the seaport from local mobs; now there were reports of armed provincials possibly marching against the capital in support of the land bank. Talk of civil war between Bostonians over the market had given way in 1741 to exaggerated threats of civil war in the province over paper currency.  

As work on Faneuil Hall progressed in 1741, the market controversy faded amidst all the commotion surrounding the land bank. Fallout from that crisis directly contributed to Governor Belcher's downfall and the political realignment of the General Court, as well as financial hardships for those who had been involved with the failed banking
scheme. Indeed, the repercussions of the clash would resonate all the way to the Revolution. In this highly charged political atmosphere, Faneuil Hall was increasingly seen as means of reconciliation for a troubled community. "May no private Views nor party Broils ever enter within these Walls," pleaded John Lovell in the wake of the land bank crisis.\textsuperscript{152} Lovell also hoped the building would help Bostonians better balance their spirit of liberty with that of loyalty to their King. In the years before the Revolution, at least, it served these functions well.
CHAPTER NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 310.


20 In 1682, a number of people were accused in town meeting of “goeinge out into ye necke & high way to Bostone to buy up the provisions [that] are brought in or comeing into ye Towne & the[n] sell the same againe at extraordinary deare rates.” See *Seventh Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston: Boston Town Records, 1660-1701*, comp. William H Whitmore and William S. Appleton (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1881), p. 154. (Volumes of the Boston town records and selectmen’s minutes will hereafter be referred to as BTR.)


22 Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Collection of the Proverbs Found in English Literature and


24 Tavern Songs, January 11, 1738/9, Boston Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division.

25 Boston Gazette, July 12-18, 1731.


28 BTR, 8: 225. This action was part of a general crackdown on blacks, Indians, and mulattos, whose liberties in Massachusetts were consistently eroded over the course of the colonial period. However, the greatest suppressions came after the introduction of royal government in the province. For two different views of this phenomenon, see Peter W. Mackinlay, “The New England Puritan Attitude Toward Black Slavery,” Old-Time New England, 63 (January-March 1973): 81-88; and Robert C. Twombly and Richard H. Moore, “Black Puritan: The Negro in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., 24 (April 1967): 224-242.


34 [Bennett], “Boston in 1740,” 123.
35 Ibid., 124.

36 Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth*, p. 103.


39 Petition of the Boston Selectmen, May 27, 1696, Photostat, Massachusetts Historical Society.

40 This was their argument as Captain Uring understood it when he visited Boston in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Uring is quoted in [John Oldmixon], *The British Empire in America,* p. 198.


42 For a discussion of Brattle Street Church’s relation to the culture of gentility in provincial Boston, see Anthony G. Roeber, “Her Merchandize Shall be Holiness to the Lord: The Progress and Decline of Puritan Gentility at the Brattle Street Church, Boston, 1715-1745,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register,* 113 (1977): 175-194.

43 See Benjamin Colman, *Ossa Josephi, or the Bones of Joseph, consider’d in a Sermon preached... after the Funeral of... Joseph Dudley, Esq....,* (Boston, 1720).

45 Benjamin Colman, *Death and the Grave without any Order, A Sermon Preached July 7, 1728, Being the Lord's-Day after a Tragical Duel and Most Lamented Death*, (Boston, 1728). Divine order, of course, is one of the fundamental characteristics of a Christian worldview, going back to the Book of Genesis. Colman notes in this same sermon that disorder “was the State of the old World before the Flood, and it was high time for the end of all Flesh to come. Order required their Destruction, and the bringing on a new World.” Other Boston ministers besides Colman connected the cosmic and social orders in their writings. See John Corrigan, *The Hidden Balance: Religion and the Social Theories of Charles Chauncey and Jonathan Mayhew*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

46 Benjamin Colman, *The Merchandise of a People Holiness to the Lord...* (Boston, 1736).

47 Benjamin Colman, *Some Reasons and Arguments Offered to the Good People of Boston and Adjacent Places for the Setting Up Markets in Boston*, (Boston, 1719).


49 *An Addition to the Present Melancholy Circumstances of the PROVINCE Consider'd, &c...*, pp. 370, 390.


51 Colman, *Some Reasons and Arguments... for the Setting Up Markets in Boston*.


56 *Boston Gazette*, February 12-19, 1733.


59 *Whereas this City and Liberties thereof... are much pestered with a sort of Loose and Idle People called Hawkers...* (London, 1682).


64 Ibid., p. 346.

65 *My Son, Fear Thou the Lord,...*, p. 352.


67 *A Dialogue Between a Boston Man and a Country Man*, p. 347.

68 *My Son, Fear Thou the Lord,...*, p. 351.

69 *My Son, Fear Thou the Lord,...*, p. 352.


71 Ibid., 206.
A Discourse Shewing the Analogy and Harmony Between the Body-natural and the Body-politick, or, What Agreement there is between Blood and Money, (Boston, 1739), p. 9.

Boston Gazette, January 15-22, 1733.

Boston Gazette, March 25, 1734.


Boston Gazette, February 12, 1733.

“Petition of Sundry Inhabitants to the Town of Boston for the Setting up Markets,” reprinted in Dianne Donnelly, Public Markets in Colonial Boston, (Boston: Boston National Historical Park, 1993), p. 120.


See Nash, The Urban Crucible, p. 81; Warden, Boston: 1689-1776, chapter 6.

For these connections, see the various biographies in Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates.


Some Considerations Against the Setting Up of a Market in this Town, With a Brief Answer to the Reasons that are Offer'd in behalf of it..., (Boston, 1733).

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Boston Gazette, May 21-29, 1733.

This episode is related in Stephanie Grauman Wolf, As Various as their Land: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth-Century Americans, (Fayetteville, AK: The University of Arkansas Press, 1993), p. 16.

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91 *Some Considerations Against the Setting Up of a Market*....

92 In 1728, the town resolved to fill in the south side of the Town Dock to accommodate a series of new shops there. This was among the earliest of Boston's many reclamation projects, for which it would later become renown. According to Michael Alterman and Richard Affleck, the necessary landfill likely was obtained through an organized collection of refuse from homes and businesses in Boston, which was then dumped onto the site. Archeological work at the Town Dock revealed the presence of a wide variety of artifacts, from butchered bones and tavern pipes to teawares and wig curlers- the stuff of gentility. For an analysis of the site, see Michael L. Alterman and Richard M. Affleck, *Archeological Investigations at the Former Town Dock and Faneuil Hall Boston National Historic Park, Boston, Massachusetts, Volume I: Technical Report*, (East Orange, NJ: The Culture Resource Group, 1993).


96 *Boston Gazette*, June 17-24, 1734.

97 "Petition of Sundry Inhabitants Relating to the Market, 1734/5," reprinted in Dianne Donnelly, *Public Markets in Colonial Boston*, (Boston: Boston National Historical Park, 1993), pp. 123-124. Attendance at the town meeting that considered the petition was unusually large and convened at the Old North Church to accommodate the crowd. The final vote was 275 in favor of eliminating the markets, and 377 opposed to it. See *BTR*, 12: 98.

These figures were derived by cross-referencing the workhouse subscription list with the various petitions on behalf of, or in opposition to, markets between 1733 and 1747. The latter lists include: 1) the 1733 petition in support of regulated market buildings, 2) the 1734 petition against them, 3) the 1736 petition requesting an engine be erected on Boston Neck to regulate hay, 4) the 1740 petitions on behalf of, and in protest against, Faneuil Hall market, 5) the 1747 petition requesting that Faneuil Hall market be reopened, and 5) the 1747 petition to keep it shut. It should be noted that of the 52 matches on pro-market petitions, 36 could be positively identified as the same person through signature analysis and other records. Of the 10 anti-market matches, 6 could be so identified by this author. The workhouse subscription list can be found in BTR, 12: 180-183. With the exception of the hay engine petition, the petitions for markets- pro and con- are compiled in Dianne Donnelly, *Public Markets in Colonial Boston*, 120-134. The petition for better regulating hay in Boston may be found in Uncataloged Town Papers, Volume 3 (1734-1740), Boston Public Library/ Rare Books Department.

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For an account of this event, see *The New England Weekly Journal*, March 24, 1735.

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Memorial of Increase Blake, Sealer of Weights and Measures, to the Selectmen of the Town of Boston, May 4, 1736, Uncataloged Town Papers, Vol. 3 (1734-1740), Boston Public Library/Rare Books Department.

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Letter from John Boydell to John Yeamans, March 6, 1737, D. Greenough Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

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Letter from Benjamin Colman to Samuel Holden, May 8, 1737, Colman Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

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*Boston Evening Post*, March 21, 1737.

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Letter from Colman to Holden, May 8, 1737, MHS.
112 Mather, Some Historical Remarks on the State of Boston, p. 13.


116 Nash, The Urban Crucible, p. 83.

117 Boston Gazette, April 11-April 18, 1737.

118 Boston News-Letter, March 24- April 1, 1737.

119 Boston Gazette, April 11-18, 1737.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

122 Letter from John Checkley to John Read, January 30, 1720/1, Boston Public Library/Rare Books Department.

123 Letter from John Checkley to Dr. Bennet, June 15, 1725, Boston Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division.

124 Boston News-Letter, April 14-21, 1737.

125 Warden, Boston; 1689-1776, pp. 122-123.

126 The degree to which the 1737 market riots affected the psyche of Bostonians is evident from the ledger of Samuel Phillips Savage, who in the 1780s noted that March 24th was both the anniversary of the market riots and, ironically, the day in which the property of Boston Tories was seized in 1776. See the Samuel Phillips Savage Ledger, 1772-1783, Massachusetts Historical Society, Pre-Revolutionary Diaries, Reel 8.

127 Letter from Benjamin Colman to Samuel Holden, May 8, 1737, Colman Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.
128 *Boston Evening Post*, March 28, 1737. The referenced article was a reprint from a *London Magazine* article of 1736, but was obviously reprinted in order to address recent events in Boston.

129 For an account of this episode, see *BTR* 12: 171.

130 For such threats, see *Boston Gazette*, April 11, 1737.

131 The efficacy of the town watch was a matter of increasing concern to Bostonians. In 1736, the town meeting considered ways to make it a more effective force for order and safety in the seaport. See *BTR*, 12: 138-140.

132 *Boston Gazette*, April 3-April 10, 1738.


134 For Faneuil’s background, see Abram English Brown, *Faneuil Hall and Faneuil Hall Market, or Peter Faneuil and His Gift*, (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard, 1900).


137 *BTR*, 14:15. Other instances of Faneuil’s benevolence include money toward the purchase of an organ for Trinity Church, funds for the remodeling of King’s Chapel, and a 100 pound subscription toward the construction of the workhouse on Boston Common.

138 Bennett manuscript, p. 118. According to his biographers, Belcher initially had much support in the community, but by 1740 had lost it over issues of timber rights, the Land Bank, and the nature of the governor’s salary. Though he tried hard to balance provincial interests with imperial demands, he eventually alienated both sides. Opponents, including Peter and Benjamin Faneuil, began working to have him replaced by the English-born Anglican William Shirley, who was also a noted supporter of market reform in Boston. On Belcher, see Michael Batinski, *Jonathan Belcher, Colonial Governor*, (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), and John A. Schutz, “Succession Politics in Massachusetts, 1730-1741,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 15 (October 1958): 508-520. On the Faneuils’ role in Belcher’s demise, see Letters from William Shirley to Samuel Waldo, April 21, 1739 and May 9, 1739, reprinted in *American Historical Review*, 36 (January 1931): 355-360. When Shirley arrived in Boston as the new royal governor in 1741, Peter Faneuil loaned him the use of his personal chaise. See Letter from Peter Faneuil to Benjamin Faneuil, August 18, 1741, reprinted in Lucius M. Sargent, *Dealings With the Dead, Volume II*, (Boston, MA: Dutton and Wentworth, 1856), p. 530.

140 Letter from Reverend William Williams to Benjamin Colman, July 1, 1740, Colman Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

141 Samuel Mather, *An Essay Concerning Gratitude*, (Boston, 1732).


143 Thomas Prince, *The Pious Cry to the Lord*, (Boston, 1746), as quoted in *Sibley’s Harvard Graduates*, Vol. 5 (1701-1712), (London: Oxford University Press, n.d.), p. 571. The following portrait of Cushing is also based on the *Sibley’s* account of his life.

144 On town meeting voting procedures, see Cook, Jr., *The Fathers of the Town*, chapter 1.


146 “Petition to the Boston Selectmen Stating that the Vote to Accept Peter Faneuil’s Offer... Is an Illegal One, September 10, 1740,” reprinted in Donnelly, *Public Markets in Colonial Boston*, pp. 128-129.


152 BTR, 14: 16.
CHAPTER III

"MAY NO PRIVATE VIEWS NOR PARTY BROILS EVER ENTER WITHIN THESE WALLS": FANEUIL HALL AND NEGOTIATED COMMUNITY IN PROVINCIAL BOSTON, 1743-1763

On March 3, 1743, less than six months after the opening of his controversial hall, Peter Faneuil succumbed to complications from edema. In the wake of his death, Bostonians temporarily put aside their differences to mourn the man and commemorate his many contributions to the grateful community. Commoners lined the streets to watch his funeral procession, and local leaders unsuccessfully lobbied Governor William Shirley to have flags lowered and cannon fired in honor of Boston’s benefactor, a practice reserved for royalty. Schoolmaster John Lovell, a devout Anglican and purveyor of polite culture, was chosen to deliver a eulogy before the next town meeting at Faneuil Hall on the 14th. He portrayed the French Huguenot as both the ideal eighteenth-century gentleman and a virtuous Christian. But like a old Puritan, the Anglican Lovell also warned his fellow Bostonians against idolatry in their veneration of Faneuil Hall: “[I]n vain, alas, would you perpetuate his Memory by such frail Materials! These Walls, the present Monuments of his Fame, shall Moulder into Dust: These Foundations, however deeply laid, shall be forgotten.”

Boston’s reaction to Faneuil’s death reveals the extent to which traditional Puritan values and metropolitan standards had become intertwined by the 1740s, a trait also
evident in the usage of the building. Its meeting hall became a venue not only for various genteel entertainments, from musical concerts to public orations, but also for expressing gratitude and allegiance to the king. Imperial rivalries with Catholic France and its North American colonists increasingly encouraged New Englanders to regard the Crown as an ally rather than an enemy to their religious and political traditions, a sentiment echoed in Lovell's oration.² “May Liberty always spread its joyful Wings over this Place...,” he said of Faneuil Hall, “And may Loyalty to a King, under whom we enjoy this Liberty, ever remain our Character. A Character always justly due to this Land, and of which our Enemies have in vain Attempted to rob us.”³ In the two decades after its completion, the building served as an important bridge between the local community and the larger Empire as well as a mediator of affairs within it, although it also exhibited a countervailing tendency to entrench social and political divisions.

Establishing Authority

Once its construction was completed in September of 1742, Faneuil Hall helped distinguish Boston as a community and reinforce its autonomous character. Local officials promptly transferred their offices and moved the town meeting out of the Town House and into the new building. They had formerly shared space with the General Court and the Royal Governor, but now Bostonians could boast of a place all their own. This attitude was evident in the controversy that erupted after the Town House was badly damaged by fire in 1747. When the General Court called upon Boston to contribute one-quarter of the funds for its restoration, the town balked. Now that they had Faneuil Hall for town functions, local leaders argued, they were no longer bound for sums beyond their share of the Province Tax, which all communities were obliged to pay. “Must it not
then appear to your Honours a much greater hardship that the Town should pay more than their proportion in common with the rest of the Province, for the Charge of building a House, which they have no manner of Use & occasion for and when those Rooms the Town formerly had in it, for several years past, have been, & still are, wholly Improv'd by the Province,” protested the town meeting to the General Court.⁴

With its cupola and gilded grasshopper weathervane dominating the sky above Dock Square, Faneuil Hall figured prominently in the local landscape. William Price accordingly revised John Bonner’s map of Boston to incorporate Faneuil Hall and fittingly dedicated it to Peter Faneuil after his death, further memorializing the man and enhancing the building’s identification with the community. Subsequent maps and engravings of the seaport would also accentuate the building. And while Faneuil Hall’s likeness was featured on maps of Boston, a map of Boston was likewise featured at Faneuil Hall. In May of 1743, Nathaniel Cunningham suggested that the town commission a map showing all of its land rights and hang it inside the Hall for the edification of the inhabitants.⁵ More than anything else, however, it was the building’s connection to the town meeting that identified it with the community. Indeed, many local men likely caught their first glimpse of the Hall’s interior by attending town meetings there, especially the artisans and laborers who so valued the institution. But the meetings also attracted gentlemen anxious to exert personal leadership while asserting the town’s authority. Their participation legitimized local government and made Faneuil Hall a pivotal source of political influence within Boston.

William Clarke witnessed this process at work in a 1755 Faneuil Hall town meeting debate of the Albany Plan, a proposed colonial union that he supported as the
most effective means to resist the French menace. Clarke was hardly surprised that provincial-minded commoners spoke out against the plan, but was mortified when, as he later told Benjamin Franklin, “one Gentleman, upon whom there was great dependence, ... stood up, [and] spoke so little to the purpose, that I was almost provoked to break through the resolution that I had maintained, through the whole, of not entering into any Argument upon such a subject, before such an Auditory.” As he watched Bostonians arrogate powers that he believed properly belonged to the General Court, Clarke became so bothered that he finally felt compelled to speak, announcing that “If these things were to come there, there was no occasion for any General Court, and that in fact it was dissolving all Government; and reducing everything to a State of Nature.” Such scolding chastened few listeners, however, and the meeting overwhelmingly rejected the plan as a violation of their English liberties and a threat to their local autonomy.

If the town meeting sometimes gave Faneuil Hall a reputation for misrule, then it more often imparted an air of authority to the building, as did the hall’s occasional use as a courtroom for high-profile trials. In December of 1744, for instance, it was the setting for the prosecution of prisoners captured by Captain Richard Spry of the Royal Navy. New Englanders had been locked in battle with French privateers as part of King George’s War since the summer and already held the upper hand when Spry arrived in the fall, leaving him free to mop up any remaining marauders. Such captives were once sent to England for trial, but imperial integration had created a legal structure that enabled prosecutions and punishments in Boston. These trials were something of a public spectacle, with the strangers paraded through the streets and gawked at by local inhabitants. Anticipating popular interest in Spry’s prisoners, a committee from the
Court of Admiralty requested permission from local selectmen to use spacious Faneuil Hall for the proceedings. The building’s waterfront location and connections to Boston’s bustling maritime community also made it a natural setting for such a trial. Ship captains in need of provisions for their crews often patronized Faneuil Hall marketplace; some even took up residence nearby. Local officials already rented a room inside the building to the naval office and readily granted the Admiralty Court access to Faneuil Hall for the upcoming trial, provided that the province pay for any damages it sustained from the crowd that would surely want to watch the proceedings.

The hall soon hosted other trials, many of which also involved seafaring. The Superior Court used it to try prisoners in the spring of 1745, while local justices gathered at Faneuil Hall that November to hear evidence against Deputy Sheriff Nathaniel Hasey and others accused of murdering two men during a naval impressment. Forcibly impressing ordinary Bostonians to serve in the Royal Navy often strained relations between the community and imperial authorities. Press gangs threatened not only the liberty of those they seized, but also disrupted commercial trade as nervous laborers shied away from wharves and warehouses. And although impressment was regulated to provide protection for potential victims, overbearing press officers such as Hasey often ignored restrictions on their conduct.

According to one account, Hasey had obtained liberty from the Lieutenant Governor to impress fifteen men for service on his Majesty’s Ship Wager, provided that he employ only locals for the job and not impress men recently returned from the Louisbourg expedition. Aware that he would likely receive little aid from the inhabitants,
Hasey disregarded the directive and instead solicited help from navy officers and their crewmen. He moreover targeted men who were supposed to be protected from the press gang. After several victims barricaded themselves in a house and had their captain inform Hasey of their exemption, he promised to search for sailors elsewhere. But his press gang surprised them as they emerged from hiding and so brutally beat them that two later died from their wounds.  

The murders outraged inhabitants, yet local officials managed to mollify them and avoid violent demonstrations by directing popular resentment through Faneuil Hall and into legitimate channels of protest. Such resentment was obvious in the “very affecting” funeral given the victims as well as in newspaper accounts of the tragedy, which appeared as far away as Philadelphia. “[F]or such Men to be suddenly deprived of Life, in so base and cowardly a Manner, in the midst of their Friends, and without any Provocation, by Scoundrels, who perhaps never drew a Sword, or fire a Gun against the King’s Enemies, tho’ they daily eat his Bread, is hard, very hard!,” concluded one such report.  

To prevent any further disturbances, Hasey and one of his accomplices were apprehended and taken to Faneuil Hall, where the Justices sentenced him to jail. A town meeting was also called there the following day to petition against impressments as a violation of the inhabitants’ rights as Englishmen. This tactic would become common during the Revolution as patriot leaders used Faneuil Hall to manage popular opposition to British policies while expressing loyalty to the Crown.

Faneuil Hall as Ceremonial Space

Faneuil Hall also negotiated tensions between the local community and metropolitan officials by serving as a ceremonial site where Bostonians might affirm their
British identity. One of the central ways in which this process was achieved was through an association with the monarch. Within weeks of taking up residence in the building, for instance, the town meeting was presented with a portrait of King George II courtesy of Governor William Shirley, who personally disdained and distrusted the town meeting as a den of "working Artificers, Seafaring Men, and low sort of people." The gift was a not-so-subtle reminder of Boston's place in the Empire. In his eulogy to Peter Faneuil several months later, John Lovell also urged inhabitants to express their allegiance to the Crown. To show that loyalty, William Sheaf along with other prominent gentlemen requested and received permission from the Selectmen to host a concert of music at the Hall as part of the annual Coronation Day celebration in 1744, which took on added significance since the King had declared war against France earlier that year. And when Bostonians learned that King George II had died and his grandson assumed the throne in 1760, they marked the transition of power with tolling church bells, cannon fire, a royal proclamation read from the Town House balcony, and a public dinner for the new monarch at Faneuil Hall. 

Bostonians also celebrated significant military victories against the French at Faneuil Hall. The capture of Quebec in 1759 was the occasion for, among other things, a public dinner there for provincial officials and prominent private citizens. The following fall reports reached Boston that a combined force of British regulars and colonial militia had taken Montreal, the last stronghold of French Canada. The news bolstered the spirits of the beleaguered community, which not only had contributed both men and money to the campaign, but also was still recovering from a devastating fire that had swept through the town in March of 1760. All over the seaport people turned out to
celebrate the joyous news, toasting the good turn of fortune and reveling in their hard work on behalf of the British Empire. Local and provincial authorities prepared a formal celebration that centered on the Town House but also prominently featured Faneuil Hall. Following a ceremonial cannonade from Castle William and ships in the harbor, Governor Bernard and other provincial officials as well as local leaders received a military escort from the Town House to Faneuil Hall, where a sumptuous dinner for 150 guests awaited. They then retired elsewhere for a concert of music and returned to the Town House in the evening to watch a fireworks display on King Street. As daylight faded, bonfires were lit and buildings illuminated to honor the occasion. The most spectacular display was at the Town House, where the balcony was adorned with luminous depictions of a cruel France frustrated in her designs to subjugate a triumphant Britain and America. Candles also flickered in the windows of Faneuil Hall, casting their light onto celebrants at Dock Square below.21

A similar scene was played out two years later after the Treaty of Paris formally ended the French and Indian War, which to many New Englanders signaled the coming millennium and the fulfillment of their Puritan legacy.22 Ceremonies at the Town House were followed by a processional to Faneuil Hall. Once inside, the nearly 200 invited guests feasted on an array of fine foods and concluded the meal with a toast to the King, whereupon two cannon placed outside the building for the purpose roared their approval.23 Only the most influential citizens were typically invited to attend Faneuil Hall banquets, making them elite affairs that used the state to reinforce rank and standing in the local community. And in a gesture of noblesse oblige, food and drink left over from the feasts were often given to the town poor, prison inmates, or laboring-class
Bostonians generally. Such gatherings would formerly have been held at local taverns or perhaps the Town House, and some still were. But increasingly Faneuil Hall became the preferred venue. Its impressive architecture provided more physical room and projected a sense of order and decorum that lent dignity to the events inside.

Those who could not attend such grand Faneuil Hall gatherings could still glimpse inside the building and experience the events vicariously through newspaper reports. And not just Bostonians either, for accounts of Faneuil Hall fetes often found their way into print elsewhere in America. People in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Newport, Rhode Island, New York, and Philadelphia, among other places, could thereby share in the celebration and feel connected to their fellow citizens in Boston through a common sense of British identity. They thus became familiar with Faneuil Hall without ever having visited Boston. Merchants and mariners who docked in Boston might also carry descriptions of the building back to their homeports. Captain Francis Goelet patronized Faneuil Hall marketplace in 1750 after a severe storm forced his London-bound vessel into Boston harbor. “They have but One Markett which is all Built of Brick about Eighty Foot Long and Arch’d on Both Sides being Two Stories heigh the upper part Sashd which Comprehends Several [of] The Public Ofices [of] the Towne...,” he recorded in his journal. William Price’s popular maps of Boston featuring Faneuil Hall may have made their way on board such ships as well. In such variegated ways, knowledge of Faneuil Hall was spread to other parts of the British Empire.

In addition to elaborate state dinners honoring monarchs and imperial officials, Faneuil Hall also hosted banquets for other, more localized occasions, such as the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company’s annual June 1st Election Day dinner. A
martial organization founded in the wake of the Pequot War, the Company historically operated out of the Town House, which had been financed and constructed partly for that purpose by one of the Company's original members, Robert Keayne. But the construction of Faneuil Hall offered an attractive alternative for military functions as well as social gatherings. Shortly after the building was completed, local officials transferred the town's stash of arms from the Town House into Faneuil Hall, and the Artillery Company moved theirs there as well, having first secured use of the building's uppermost floor. And although most military training took place outdoors on Boston Common, the Company of Cadets, a group of gentlemen who acted as the governor's guardsmen, were known to train in the Hall, which offered them a more dignified setting for their drills.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company had evolved into something of a social club, spending more time in entertaining than training. Its yearly election of officers was a community celebration, complete with a dress parade on Boston Common that attracted thousands of curious spectators, including the governor. Some eminent minister was chosen to write and deliver a special sermon for the occasion, after which an elegant dinner was prepared for the town's finest at Faneuil Hall. Fare included succulent meats such as lamb, beef, bacon, and duck as well as puddings, custards, and cheeses, while wine and punch washed it all down and accompanied the toasts that followed. The extravagance of it all offended some of Boston's more frugal inhabitants, but others found Artillery Election Day exciting and looked forward to the chance to peek inside Faneuil Hall, which was always delightfully decorated for the occasion. "Monday being Artillery Election I went to see the hall," wrote little twelve-year-old Anna Green Winslow in her diary for 1772.
Anna and her fellow schoolmates could also look forward to the annual school visitation, a community-wide celebration of Boston’s renowned school system that concluded with a Faneuil Hall feast. As a reflection of the town’s Puritan roots, its broad-based educational system was a source of great local pride and elicited praise from visitors. “[I]n general, they are as careful of the education of their children as in England,” observed the Englishman Joseph Bennett. Indeed, Anna Winslow had been sent from Nova Scotia to live with relatives in Boston expressly so that she might attend school there. Every March eminent citizens and provincial officials were invited to join the Selectmen as they left Faneuil Hall and strode from school to school taking stock of the students, who sometimes entertained their guests with examples of their erudition. Afterwards, the committee returned to Faneuil Hall and enjoyed an elegant meal to end the day. John Rowe attended the event in 1769 and judged the festivities “A very Genteel Entertainment.” Inclusion at such events was an important expression of one’s standing within the community, and during the Revolutionary crisis invitations to Faneuil Hall banquets would serve to separate Boston’s friends from its foes.

**Faneuil Hall and Boston’s Cultural Refinement**

Public dinners were not the only entertainments associated with Faneuil Hall. Eager to promote cultural refinement in the community, members of the local gentry immediately appreciated the building’s potential as a concert hall. Although acoustically inadequate, it could accommodate large numbers and more visibly express Boston’s urbanity than the assemblies that gathered in private homes throughout town. However, local selectmen only reluctantly approved the first Faneuil Hall concert to celebrate Coronation Day in 1744. Protective of the space, they stipulated that the event not
become a precedent despite a pledge by organizers that proceeds would benefit the town poor. Three years would pass before another concert was held in the hall.

In the spring of 1747, the wealthy Boston merchant Thomas Hancock applied on behalf of the visiting Charles Knowles for use of Faneuil Hall to host a concert of music. Knowles was a commodore in the Royal Navy and governed the infamous French fortress of Louisbourg after it fell to New England forces in 1745. But while Bostonians could boast of such signal military victories, King George’s War had taken its toll on the community in the form of higher taxes, inflated prices for provisions, and growing numbers of dependent widows in the seaport. Particularly worrisome was the prohibitive price of firewood, for the coming winter promised to be a grim one if local officials could not secure fuel at a reasonable cost for needy families. Knowles’s access to Canada’s natural resources provided a potential solution to the problem, so officials unanimously approved his request for Faneuil Hall as a gesture of good will. A few days later they approached him about possibly supplying their struggling seaport with Cape Breton sea coal, which he readily agreed to do.

Though few and far between, these Faneuil Hall concerts served important political functions and also may have provided the impetus for the construction of Boston’s first public concert hall in 1756. Among the key organizers of the events was Stephen Deblois, a French Huguenot merchant and music aficionado who had long hosted private concerts at his home on Wing’s Lane, not too far from Faneuil Hall. The success of the Faneuil Hall concerts, however, suggested that a more visible venue might be supported and sustained in Boston. If Deblois’ Concert Hall lacked the architectural elegance of Faneuil Hall, then it made up for it with a more intimate, enchanting
atmosphere. Among the first events held there was a ball to honor the departing Governor William Shirley. While outside a crowd lit fireworks to mark the occasion, guests inside danced minuets and dined by dazzling candlelight late into the night. "[T]he air was all harmony, the painted Walls return'd each Note & Echo redoubled the Joy," recalled Robert Treat Paine. "Here one would have thought the Muses were descended on the top of Parnassus & joined in Concert were holding a festival to Venus," he concluded. Concert Hall quickly became a favorite retreat for the local gentry and their privileged guests, effectively ending Faneuil Hall's employment as a public concert hall in the colonial period.

Deficiencies in Faneuil Hall's design sometimes discouraged its use, and the decision to build Concert Hall may have partly been a response to the building's acoustical inadequacies. The voluminous main hall also lacked any sort of heating system, which could make for rather uncomfortable meetings on wintry New England days. In February of 1790, for instance, Faneuil Hall became so cold that the town meeting adjourned to the County Court House, which was equipped with wood stoves. The absence of such stoves or fireplaces in Faneuil Hall also proved problematic for Ebenezer Kinnersley, a scientific lecturer whose extensive travels brought him to Boston in the fall of 1751. As Roy Porter argues, science became a favorite pastime of provincials in this period as a means to "rebel against the stigmas of rusticity, parading as lords of taste and fashion over their own rural hinterland." With its elegant architecture and generous seating capacity, Faneuil Hall seemed the perfect place for Kinnersley to perform his electrical experiments. According to James Bowdoin, curious Bostonians flocked to the Hall to see the show. "The Experiments Mr. Kennersley has exhibited
here, have been greatly pleasing to all sorts of people, that have seen them," he told Benjamin Franklin. But Kinnersely was frustrated with Faneuil Hall, for its lack of heat created a cool, moist atmosphere that adversely affected his demonstrations. The problem had become so severe by January of 1752 that Kinnersely finally forsook the building and moved the exhibition into the house of one of his sponsors, James Gooch.

If Faneuil Hall failed to catch on as a concert hall or exhibition hall in the colonial period, then it would prove somewhat more successful as a lecture hall. Although its fame as a "shrine of American oratory" largely stems from Faneuil Hall's political role in the American Revolution, religious sermons formed an early and enduring part of the building's function as a forum for public addresses. During the Great Awakening, religious discourse broke the traditional bounds of meetinghouses and spread out into the streets as itinerant preachers took their message directly to the people. In addition to appearing at several Congregational churches in Boston, George Whitefield attracted huge numbers to the Common when he spoke there. James Davenport became notorious for his strategy of spreading the word of God and challenging local ministerial authority by strolling through the city streets, which earned him the ire of Boston's establishment. "We judge also that ye Reverend Mr. Davenport has not acted prudently, but to ye Disservice of Religion, by going with his Friends singing thro ye Streets or high-ways, to & from ye Houses of Worship, on Lords-days & other Days; a Practice which we fear may be found big with Errors Irregularities & Mischiefs," complained the associated pastors of Boston and Charlestown.

The alarm over itinerant traders and Boston's increasingly impersonal commercial culture that had given rise to Faneuil Hall marketplace in 1740 was also apparent in the
reaction to itinerant preachers. Like the scheming street peddler, peripatetic preachers preyed on people using enchanting, if somewhat impetuous, language to rob them of their reason and riches. Not even so indomitable a figure as Benjamin Franklin could resist the charms of George Whitefield, and Franklin emptied his pockets to support the Reverend after hearing him speak. One Bostonian made the commercial connection explicit when he openly condemned Whitefield and other itinerant preachers as “Pedlars in Divinity.” Another somewhat sarcastically suggested that a building be constructed on Boston Common to accommodate all those whom itinerants were attracting to their sermons. This same urge to contain itinerants and instill order through architecture had fueled the movement for fixed marketplaces and contributed to the building of Faneuil Hall, which was considered the architectural embodiment of an ordered and rational community. Significantly, the champion of centralized markets in Boston, the Reverend Benjamin Colman, also became a vocal critic of itinerant preachers such as Davenport.

In contrast to the often-impassioned rhetoric of street preachers, Faneuil Hall sermons were characterized by moderation. Town meetings were often initiated with a prayer from well-respected local ministers such as Charles Chauncy, a staunch critic of the Great Awakening. “What good you may have been the means of elsewhere I know not,” he told James Davenport, “[b]ut I am well assured, instead of good, you will be the occasion of much hurt, to the interest of religion in these churches. Your manner in speaking, as well as what you say, seems rather calculated, at least at some times, to disturb the imagination than inform the judgment.”

The refined quality of Faneuil Hall sermons and speeches was also evident in 1755 when Bostonians flocked to the building to hear the celebrated Pennsylvania
Quaker preacher Samuel Fothergill. Once despised in Boston as the embodiment of disorder, the Quakers had lost much of their former zeal and become a disciplined denomination by the eighteenth century, even abandoning their traditional itinerancy to maintain a permanent meetinghouse near King Street. No longer did they burst into Puritan congregations uninvited to condemn the proceedings, but instead respectfully petitioned local selectmen to use Faneuil Hall for Fothergill, a reformer with a reputation for criticizing his fellow Quakers. While Fothergill’s language elsewhere could be quite caustic, inside elegant Faneuil Hall he “delivered an excellent Discourse to a very crowded and polite Auditory, and to the satisfaction of People of all Denominations.”

Even amidst the turmoil of the Revolution, Bostonians could enjoy the sermons of esteemed Quaker orators such as Rachel Wilson, who spoke in Faneuil Hall during the summer of 1769 and may well have been the first woman to do so formally. The merchant John Rowe, who attended the event and came away impressed with Wilson’s performance, estimated the crowd at over twelve hundred, well beyond the Hall’s comfortable seating capacity. As the setting for such varied cultural events as speeches, concerts, and banquets, Faneuil Hall functioned much like a community center and became an important source of both social cohesion and distinction for Boston’s inhabitants.

**A Phoenix from the Flames**

The value of Faneuil Hall to the community became painfully apparent after fire all but destroyed the building in January of 1761. Less than a year earlier, the Hall had played an important role in helping residents deal with another devastating blaze that leveled a large part of the town, leaving about 220 families homeless and in need of
support. Boston’s “Great Fire of 1760,” which reminded some of the Great Fire of London in 1666, broke out at a home in the densely packed Cornhill district and spread rapidly east toward Boston Harbor, passing just south of Faneuil Hall in the process. Those in the path of the flames grabbed what goods they could before fire engulfed their shops and homes. The crippled, the sick, the infant, and the aged all had to be carried from their dwellings to safe refuges, only to be sometimes carried off a second time when the fire again drew near. For those who could reach it, the waters of Boston Harbor proved the safest refuge. Others were forced to seek out the few open spaces nearby, such as Fort Hill to the south and Dock Square to the north, where Faneuil Hall’s brick walls also offered some protection from the billowing smoke and flames.⁵⁰

Faneuil Hall not only functioned as a refuge during the conflagration, but also aided in the recovery process. The flames had scattered property as well as people, and in the despondent days that followed many unclaimed items were taken to the Hall for safekeeping until their rightful owners could be located. Andrew Oliver, Jr. asked that anyone who found his missing furniture, which he suspected had been stolen amidst the confusion of the fire, “are desired to send them to Faneuil Hall, or to leave there in Writing where they may be found.”⁵¹ The reclamation process went on for months. As late as August, notices in the newspaper listed items still stored inside Faneuil Hall, including everything from fine wooden furnishings to metal utensils and cookware.⁵²

Local officials spent three hours every Thursday and Saturday afternoon in September trying to clear out the remaining property at Faneuil Hall and countless other days managing the massive relief effort for the town— a task made more difficult by the financial strain experienced as a result of the ongoing French and Indian War. Although
the smoke and flames of the fire miraculously took no lives, Boston's plight touched the heartstrings of communities, congregations, and charitable individuals throughout the British Empire.\textsuperscript{53} Social and political networks sprang into action as appeals from Massachusetts Governor Thomas Pownall and other prominent leaders resulted in an outpouring of financial support.\textsuperscript{54} From neighboring New Hampshire and Rhode Island, wealthy gentlemen personally sent cash contributions or put them in collection boxes marked for Boston's relief.\textsuperscript{55} The New York merchant Charles Apthorp directed his agent in Boston to give one hundred pounds to help the sufferers.\textsuperscript{56} Christopher Kilby's contribution was so great that Bostonians renamed a street in his honor. Governor James Hamilton of Pennsylvania informed Pownall that the legislature there had voted fifteen hundred pounds to be paid to Boston's selectmen and overseers of the poor, and Governor Francis Fauquier wrote from Virginia that Anglican Church leaders were earnestly collecting funds for the relief of Boston.\textsuperscript{57} When such contributions reached Boston, they were taken to Faneuil Hall, where local officials determined how best to divide the money.

Before Bostonians had completely recovered from the catastrophe, they suffered the loss of Faneuil Hall and its marketplace in a fire that started among a row of nearby shops. Attempts to contain it were hampered by the brutally cold temperatures of a colonial New England winter. "The Severity of the Weather was such that many Persons could scarce stand it; and the Water which issued from the Engines congealed into Particles of Ice before it fell," reported one newspaper.\textsuperscript{58} Fearing a repeat of the fire in March, many people were more interested in saving their movable property than in battling the blaze. But this time Faneuil Hall could offer them no refuge, as a chilly wind
pushed the fire directly toward the building. While inhabitants looked on in horror, flames began licking its brick walls and quickly found their way inside, gutting the building. As the fire continued on to the south side of the Square, several more shops were consumed before it finally died, but not before it shot menacing flames and burning embers in the direction of King Street and Long Wharf, where more valuable property sat helpless.

The destruction of Faneuil Hall in 1761 devastated the community. Reduced to a set of charred, rickety brick walls, the once resplendent building became a truly melancholy sight. "The Loss of Faneuil-Hall-Market must be great to this Town, as it was a noble Building, esteemed one of the best Pieces of Workmanship here, and an Ornament to the Town," lamented the Boston News-Letter. But more worrisome than such aesthetic implications was the loss of the marketplace and especially the meeting hall, which left inhabitants without a place to conduct the public business. The situation forced the town meeting back into the Town House, a situation that must have proved embarrassing given their earlier protests about paying for repairs to the fire-ravaged Town House. It was also rather inconvenient and provided the primary justification for rebuilding Faneuil Hall through funds raised from a public lottery.

The decision to restore Faneuil Hall in 1761 proved more momentous than anyone likely realized, for Boston was just then experiencing the first stirrings of what would gradually grow into a full-fledged revolution. On a wintry day in February of 1761, the lawyer James Otis went before the Massachusetts Superior Court to formally protest against writs of assistance, which gave imperial authorities license to arbitrarily search and seize suspected smuggled property. "I will to my dying day oppose, with all the
powers and faculties God has given me, all such instruments of slavery on the one hand, and villainy on the other, as this writ of assistance is," declared a defiant Otis in the bowels of Boston's Town House. Insisting that they violated English liberties and threatened private property rights, Otis likened general search warrants to the sort of tyranny practiced by the Stuart monarchs, one of whom, he reminded his audience, had lost his head and another his throne. Such rhetoric always played well in Boston, and at that moment, John Adams later recalled, "The Seeds of Independence were sown. Every Man, of a crowded Audience appeared to me to go away ready to take Arms against Writs of Assistant." But if revolution in Boston was planted at the Town House, then it was cultivated down the street at the newly rebuilt Faneuil Hall--soon to become the "Cradle of Liberty."

Conclusion

By the eve of the Revolution, Faneuil Hall had become both an integral part of the local community and an important link to the larger British Empire. Whether acting as a refuge from conflagrations or as a venue for charity concerts, it succored inhabitants in times of need. By the same token, its fancy feasts and fashionable functions exhibited the town's wealth and reinforced social distinctions. And if the building gave Bostonians an independent space in which to assert their political power, then it also helped bind them closer to imperial authority. Much as John Lovell had envisioned, Faneuil Hall promoted order and emerged as the nexus between liberty and loyalty in provincial Boston. But this role made the building extremely sensitive to changes in the relationship, which after 1763 began to compromise its capacity for coexistence. Events held inside the refurbished Hall assumed an increasingly partisan spirit that empowered opposition...
leaders such as Otis while alienating many of the building’s former admirers, including John Lovell, Thomas Hutchinson, and, ironically, even the Faneuil family itself.
CHAPTER NOTES

1 Lovell’s oration is reprinted in the *Fourteenth Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston: Boston Town Records, 1742-1757*, comp. William H. Whitmore and William S. Appleton (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1885), pp. 14-16. (Volumes of the Boston town records and selectmen’s minutes will hereafter be referred to as *BTR*.)


3 *BTR*, 14: 16.

4 Petition of the Boston Town Meeting to the Massachusetts General Court, January 9, 1750, Massachusetts State Archives, Volume 115: 784.

5 *BTR*, 14: 17.


7 *BTR*, 14: 266.


11 *BTR*, 17: 90.

12 On the Superior Court trial in the spring, see *BTR*, 17:132. Three years after the Hasey’s prosecution, Faneuil Hall was again the setting for a murder trial, this time of the
mariner Richard James. See Summons to Councilman Josiah Willard from Governor William Shirley, April 14, 1748, Massachusetts State Archives, 48: 357.

13 Pennsylvania Gazette, December 10, 1745.

14 Ibid.

15 BTR, 14: 84-85.


17 BTR, 14: 16.

18 BTR, 17: 87-90.


20 Pennsylvania Gazette, October 25, 1759.

21 Pennsylvania Gazette, October 9, 1760.


23 Pennsylvania Gazette, August 25, 1763.


26 Boston Evening-Post, May 6, 1765. This diverse sort of fare seems to have been typical for banquets in and around Boston during the period. Account books for Harvard College show its dinners to have included many of these foods as well as others, including pork, tongue, turkey, veal, and root vegetables. See “Harvard Dinners,” Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5 (1860-1862): 160-165.

27 Anna Green Winslow diary entry, June 1, 1772, in Alice Morse Earle, ed., Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 1771, (1894; reprinted, Bedford, MA:
Applewood Books, 1996), p. 66. Winslow's uncle was a member of the Company. For criticism of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, see *Boston Evening-Post*, April 22 and May 6, 1765.


31 *BTR*, 17: 160.

32 *BTR*, 14: 118.


34 *BTR*, 31: 214.


37 *Boston Evening Post*, January, 1752.


40 Declaration of the Associated Pastors of Boston and Charlestown, June 30, 1742, in Benjamin Colman Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.


43 Boston Weekly News-Letter, April 22, 1742.

44 Boston Weekly Post-Boy, July 12, 1742.


46 Charles Chauncy, Enthusiasm described and caution'd against, (Boston, 1742), p. ii.


48 Pennsylvania Gazette, August 21, 1755.

49 Diary of John Rowe, 189.


52 Boston Evening-Post, August 18, 1760.

53 Peter Virgadamo has argued that such charity is evidence for a nascent nationalism among the colonists, but the role of royal governors and contributions from sympathetic London merchants, if not from Parliament, suggest that it better represents the extent of...

54 See Proclamation of Governor Thomas Pownall, March 24, 1760, in *Broadsides, Ballads, &c. Printed in Massachusetts, 1639-1800*, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1922).

55 On New Hampshire relief efforts, see *Provincial Papers New Hampshire, Vol. 6 (1749-1763)*, (Manchester, NH: James M. Campell, 1872): 747-748, and *Boston Evening-Post*, April 7 & May 5, 1760; On Rhode Island, see *Boston Evening-Post*, April 7, 1760.

56 *Boston Evening-Post*, May 19, 1760.

57 *Boston Evening-Post*, April 28, 1760; *Boston Evening-Post*, May 26, 1760.


59 Ibid.

60 BTR, 19: 143. In its petition to the General Court requesting permission to conduct the lottery, Boston stressed the difficulties it labored under for lack of a “suitable place for transacting the publick business of said Town.”


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CHAPTER IV

"WE THE FREEHOLDERS AND OTHER INHABITANTS BEING LEGALLY ASSEMBLED AT FANEUIL HALL": FANEUIL HALL AND THE POLITICS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN BOSTON, 1763-1767

If the end of the French and Indian War witnessed jubilant Bostonians toasting the King's health at Faneuil Hall and hoping for harmony within his expanded empire, then it also saw the escalation of provincial rivalries that had been building since Governor Bernard's arrival in 1760. As his biographer readily admits, the English-born Bernard harbored a "metropolitan prejudice" that often blinded him to the subtleties of Boston's political culture. His controversial appointment of the genteel and erudite, but legally untrained, Thomas Hutchinson as Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court had sparked protest from the supporters of James Otis, Sr., a Barnstable lawyer and Speaker of the House. Otis claimed to have been promised the position by the Governor's predecessors when it opened up, but Bernard felt entitled to dispense political patronage as he saw fit. It did not likely help matters that Hutchinson's allies contemptuously described Otis as a "Pettifogger" with "a certain Adroitness to captivate the Ear of Country Jurors, who were too commonly Drovers, Horse Jockies, & of other lower Classes in Life."

Particularly upset about the slight to his father's reputation and the possible repercussions for his own political career was James Otis, Jr., an ambitious Harvard-educated lawyer who, with his father's help, had become deputy advocate-general of the
Vice Admiralty Court. Although he too was a native of Barnstable, Otis, Jr. spent much of his time in Boston, where lawyers could find more lucrative business and make better political contacts. His growing influence within the local community was evidenced by his participation in town meeting politics at Faneuil Hall, which became more pronounced after Hutchinson's controversial court appointment. Whereas his father's rival had used his town meeting leadership to secure a position in the provincial government, Otis seems to have turned to local politics in response to his family being denied such patronage. He resigned his position with the Vice-Admiralty Court and fell in with disaffected merchants angered by Bernard's aggressive style of enforcing the Navigation Acts, which included the use of paid informants, undisclosed depositions, and general writs of assistance. Otis's eloquent defense of their interests before the Superior Court in February of 1761 may have failed to move Chief Justice Hutchinson, but its Whiggish tone, complete with references to the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution, won him the hearts of many Bostonians, who took him for the principled gentleman he professed to be. Thereafter Otis became a fixture at Faneuil Hall town meetings and moderated the one that reopened the building in 1763. This power base also enabled him to be repeatedly elected to the House of Representatives.

As a space in which Bostonians exercised their civil liberties and asserted their local autonomy without seeming to sacrifice loyalty to the Crown, Faneuil Hall provided an ideal forum for Otis and other critics of royal authority after 1763. There they could appeal more directly to the popular elements of the community than at the Town House, which was both politically and architecturally more restrictive. Governor Bernard simply could not control Faneuil Hall to the extent that he could the Town House, where his
administration was centered and where, if need be, he could prorogue an uncooperative legislature. By contrast, it was the selectmen who managed Faneuil Hall in conjunction with the town meeting, and they did not need royal consent to hold political meetings or other events in the building. The traditionally autonomous character of town government had thus been transferred to Faneuil Hall itself, with important consequences for the Revolution in Boston.

If Faneuil Hall offered inhabitants a relatively open and independent space in which to resist the royal prerogative, it nonetheless exercised more restraint on protests than did other sites in the seaport, such as public streets and private taverns, neither of which could convey the same sense of order, dignity and legitimacy. As the Stamp Act riots would show, it proved inordinately more difficult to control street crowds than town meetings. Moreover, while such violent resistance served a political purpose, it also risked alienating moderates and ruining the town’s hard-earned reputation for civility. Constructed in the 1740s as an alternative to the vulgar, uninhibited quality of local street culture, Faneuil Hall provided patriot leaders with more civilized political alternatives to street protests and extralegal violence during the Revolution. Thus poised between the tyranny of the Town House and the licentiousness of the city streets, Faneuil Hall acted as the fulcrum of a loyal opposition to royal reforms in Revolutionary Boston.

**Otis, Adams, and Faneuil Hall**

Faneuil Hall town meetings empowered James Otis by providing a regular outlet for his greatest political asset, eloquence. In English opposition literature, rhetorical eloquence was regarded as an essential, if somewhat problematic, aspect of republican polities. "In free states, where publick affairs are transacted in popular assemblies,
eloquence is always of great use and esteem,” explained John Trenchard, “and, next to money and an armed force, is the only way of being considerable in these assemblies.” Only where the people were free to debate and decide policies for themselves could rhetoric and republicanism flourish, and attempts to silence them were taken for tyranny. Oratory thus became a powerful weapon of protest during the Revolution and was consciously cultivated by Boston’s patriot leaders to create popular support. Faneuil Hall quickly gained fame for its role in this regard. Returning to Boston after the British evacuation in 1776, Dorothy Dudley, who may have never even attended a town meeting, already recognized Faneuil Hall as “the Cradle of Liberty, whose walls have echoed the burning words of Otis, and Adams, and Warren.”

Another measure of the strategy’s success was the amount of energy royal officials and their allies expended on trying to discredit the opposition’s orators. They branded Otis a barnyard blusterer and warned people that he was deceiving them with words that masked selfish ends behind republican rhetoric. John Hancock was considered the dupe of the demagogic Samuel Adams and a prime example of how even the elite could be manipulated out of their money and sold a bogus revolution. Of Samuel Cooper, patriotic minister of Brattle Street Church, Peter Oliver remarked, “His tongue was Butter & Oil, but under it was the Poison of Asps.” Joseph Warren’s orations were publicly mocked by critics, one of whom appeared on a balcony above King Street and proclaimed to listeners below, “Oh! that some Son of Liberty would go to hell, and fetch a spark from the altar of enthusiasm, to kindle in me the reforming zeal of W—-n!- then might I speak of language.” Evident in such statements was the fear that eloquence was being misused to manipulate the masses and undermine authority.
In fact, patriot leaders were generally very careful about their use of rhetoric, for they too understood its potential for disaster. Space became an important consideration in this regard. Exercised outdoors, oratory risked losing restraint in its attempt to sway the masses. “[V]ehemence of tone and action, a hurry and pomp of words, strong figures, tours of fancy, ardent expression, and throwing fire into their imaginations, have always been reckoned proper ways to gain their assent and affections,” noted Cato’s Letters. George Whitefield, James Davenport, and other Great Awakening preachers had demonstrated the power of this approach and its potential for excess. Although patriot leaders greatly admired Whitefield for his support of the American position during the Revolution, none tried to duplicate his Boston Common address. Pulpit oratory was also criticized after a sermon by Andrew Eliot was blamed for sparking the street riot that destroyed Thomas Hutchinson’s house during the Stamp Act crisis. Thereafter speakers watched their language more carefully and oratory was largely limited to the indoors, where it served to civilize protest by channeling popular resentment into words. Faneuil Hall would play a major role in this process as the spacious site of the Boston town meeting, where inhabitants could legally assemble to voice their complaints and record them for others to consider.

In response to the Revenue Act of 1764, which threatened the town’s already weak economy with modified taxes to raise revenue for imperial administration, Bostonians had appointed a committee headed by Samuel Adams to explain their opposition to the reform. Such a step was necessary, they argued, because Governor Bernard had failed to consider the issue and call the General Court into session “till the Evil had got beyond an easy remedie...” Not only did the Revenue Act risk plunging
the town into financial turmoil, but also it struck at their charter rights and British privileges by depriving them of their right to tax themselves. In this sense, it affected the colonies as a whole, and Adams recommended that the General Court seek support from outside the province to protest the Act. But before the legislature could muster much of a defense, imperial officials had already begun preparing a more comprehensive measure to raise revenue in the form of stamps.

Samuel Adams's admiration for the British constitution was surpassed only by his fondness for New England and his hometown of Boston. Indeed, he believed that his Puritan forefathers had actually improved upon English liberties by "some additional privileges which the common people there have not." His father had been a political ally of the Cookes and was likewise remembered within the community as "a true New England Man, an honest Patriot." As a town selectmen in the 1720s and early 1730s, Adams, Sr. was among those officials unseated by the cosmopolitan reformers who implemented market reform in 1733. He was so shocked by their handling of the Faneuil Hall market vote in 1740 that he signed a formal protest against it. Ironically, however, the building became a source of his son's rise to greatness after it was gradually incorporated into the community, a process accelerated by the Revolution.

As Pauline Maier suggests, Sam Adams's political medium was not the mob, but rather "the press, the public celebration... and, above all, the committee or association." One might also add to the list oratory, for which he was both admired and reviled. Even his enemies admitted that he had a remarkable voice, although they would have preferred that he use it for something better than spreading sedition. As with Otis, Adams was able to use Faneuil Hall town meetings as a way to associate with the multitude while
assuming leadership over them in a controlled, legitimate environment. For all of his
closed-door dealings during the Revolution, his appearances at Faneuil Hall were what
many, including Adams himself, would remember most fondly and consider most
significant. "It is with heartfelt Pleasure that I recollect the Meetings I have had with my
much esteemd Fellow Citizens in Faneuil Hall, and I am animated with the Prospect of
seeing them again in that Place which has long been sacred to Freedom," he wrote to
John Scollay from Philadelphia, where in 1776 he was serving in the Continental
Congress.19

But in 1765, neither Adams nor the Boston town meeting, nor anyone else for that
matter, proved able to persuade Parliament to abandon its imperial reform program. As
Joseph Harrison explained to John Temple in January, "The affair of the Stamp duty
seems to be resolved on; so your people may as well make themselves easy about it."20
Initial newspaper reports on Parliament's debates seemed to confirm Harrison's
prediction, but soon it was revealed that opposition did exist in England, holding out the
prospect that the policy could be reversed.21 Particularly inspiring were the forcefully
eloquent speeches of Colonel Isaac Barre and William Pitt, the latter of which Peter
Oliver claimed in 1781 "hath not as yet died away in american ears."22 Hopes were
dashed, however, when Parliament approved the Stamp Act and set a date of November
1st for its implementation, word of which reached Boston around May 27th.

Although inhabitants gathered at Faneuil Hall that day for a town meeting,
nothing was done to formally protest the Stamp Act. Indeed, it was not until Bostonians
learned in early July that Patrick Henry and the Virginia House of Burgesses had resolved
to resist that they began to seriously debate the issue. "Accordingly, the Hydra was
roused," Peter Oliver recalled. "Every factious Mouth vomited out Curses against *Great Britain*, & the Press rung its changes upon Slavery." Yet the Virginia Resolves did not receive quite the ringing endorsement in Boston that Oliver's words would suggest. According to Thomas Hutchinson, no less a patriot than James Otis was overheard in King Street declaring them treasonous in tone. He himself had referenced the Stuart regicide in his speech against general writs of assistance, but was now disturbed by Henry's ominous warning to George III and the notion that the real traitors were those who failed to resist the Stamp Act.

It was from the streets, not from Faneuil Hall, that Bostonians first answered Henry's call, for the town meeting remained strangely quiescent. In the early morning hours of August 14th, an effigy of Andrew Oliver, the supposed stamp distributor, was hung from the bough of a large elm tree near the corner of Essex and Orange Streets. A longtime supporter of metropolitan reforms in Boston, the cosmopolitan Oliver had lobbied for centralized marketplaces, hard money, and workhouses in the past. He was still active in local government, although like his brother-in-law Thomas Hutchinson his involvement had tailed off somewhat after his appointment to a provincial office in 1758. Oliver's association with the Stamp Act would hardly have surprised anyone, but he raised additional red flags by escorting the stamp distributor Jared Ingersoll out of Boston on his way to his appointed position in Connecticut. The effigy was meant not only as a warning to Oliver against betraying his neighbors and countrymen, but also as a visible means to raise popular indignation and spread opposition in ways that the more aural town meeting could not.
The Birth of Liberty Hall

Boston had developed a number of popular sites of public protest over the years, some of which were buildings associated with royal authority. Adorned with the trappings of the British monarchy, the brick Town House was a common target for locals frustrated by imperial policy. In fact, Oliver’s effigy was eventually cut down and paraded through the building by demonstrators. But the popularity of the Town House as a site of protest also reflected its location. Situated at the intersection of Cornhill and King Street, it loomed over the main avenue of mercantile wealth and imperial authority in the seaport. The area teemed with businesses and was often thronged with people, making it an ideal spot to send a message. Residents had long gathered round the Town House to hear official news read to them, and, as with the Common, convicted criminals were deliberately punished there for all to see.

The Common was another, more democratic space in which to stage protests. Since the seventeenth century, Bostonians had flocked there to watch public executions, participate in militia day musters, and hear public lectures and sermons by visiting dignitaries such as George Whitefield. When weather permitted, women often washed their laundry over by the Common’s Frog Pond, which local livestock sometimes used for drinking water as well. Its publicity also made the Common an ideal site for the genteel sort to parade before the people and became their choice for a promenade. Perhaps too the Common’s visibility partly accounts for Thomas Hancock’s decision to build his elegant mansion atop the hill overlooking it. The almshouse, workhouse, powder house and public granary were all erected on the Common. And there loomed the Great Elm, near which Henry Phillips had fatally stabbed Benjamin Woodbridge in
1728. Yet this was not the tree chosen to hang Oliver's effigy. Instead, another prominently positioned tree was chosen for the task.

At first, the choice of a stand of elms located in the South End, outside of the Common and some distance away from the bustling central city, may seem rather unusual. But it appears calculated. The trees were situated near the main thoroughfare into town, not far from where one of the unpopular markets had been built in 1734. On a typical morning, country traders began making their way into Boston along this route. Knowing this, the protestors staged their demonstration at the trees in order to waylay these traders and "stamp" their goods before sending them on their way. "[N]ot a peasant was suffered to pass down to the market, let him have what he would for sale, 'till he had stop'd and got his articles stamp'd by the effigy," was how one newspaper described the scene.25 Their message was dispersed not only in town, but also throughout the countryside. As the traders wandered over to Faneuil Hall marketplace or other parts of Boston, their strange story would surely attract attention to the protest. And when they returned home to their families, memories of the day's events would travel with them. Moreover, groups that normally did not attend town meetings, such as women, children, and blacks, could also partake in the outdoor protest.26 Indeed, the effigies hung all day and drew all sorts of people to the spot, which subsequently became known as "Liberty Hall" and the elm as "Liberty Tree."

Representative of a purer, if more primitive and potentially radical sort of government, the birth of "Liberty Hall" in the summer of 1765 profoundly affected the function of Faneuil Hall during the Revolution, giving its activities a comparatively conservative and civil cast. "Wild conduct!," was how one person described the events
of the 14th, as the crowd at Liberty Hall proceeded to cut down Oliver’s image from the
elm, parade it down King Street and through the Town House, burn it in a bonfire on Fort
Hill, and then damage his property and force him to resign as stamp-distributor.27 By
comparison, Faneuil Hall town meetings appeared rather tame. This image was
reinforced after another mob spontaneously gathered in King Street on August 26th and
proceeded to ransack the houses of several conservative merchants and royal officials,
including Thomas Hutchinson, whose “domestic happiness in the enjoyment of his
children” was rudely interrupted by the mob.28 Although Hutchinson personally opposed
the Stamp Act, his sense of duty as a royal official prevented him from protesting
publicly. He had also made many enemies over the years, and the fury of the crowd and
the damage they did to his home reflected it. According to one witness, they “destroyed
almost every Article therein, leaving nothing standing but the bare Walls.”29 Perhaps the
dissemination strategy of the 14th had worked a little too well, for another observer
“supposed that several Contrary Fellows & sailors was concerned in this Mob, as there
were but few of them known.”30

Although the town meeting could be blamed for the second riot by not having acted swiftly after the first one, it swung into action on August 27th. Out in the streets
temper still flared as another crowd coalesced, but inside Faneuil Hall the voice of
reason prevailed. With the lawyerly James Otis moderating what Hutchinson called “as
full a meeting as had been known,” voters unanimously expressed their “utter detestation
of the extraordinary & violent proceedings of a number of Persons unknown against
some of the Inhabitants of the same, the last Night.”31 Reflecting on the moment, one
inhabitant ruefully realized that “had the minds of the people and the Inocence of
Governor Hutchinson been known before, as it was at this meeting, the mischief at his house mite easily have been prevented...” Instead, hundreds of people had watched the destructive mob do their dirty work, for “there was such a Universal obhorance of the Stamp Act...” Hoping to redeem the community and show detractors that it could be a force for order, the town meeting moved to enforce laws to prevent such incidents in the future.

Although local officials worked with Governor Bernard to restore order by posting militia and night watches at possible flashpoints in town, few among the elite were confident that the town meeting could keep the peace for long. Boston’s wealthy citizens were still anxious about what had happened to Hutchinson and began moving their valuables to safer locations in and outside of town, prompting James Gordon to quip, “[Y]ou see poverty is a sanctuary sometimes, tho not desireable.” The violence had spread to other colonies such as New York, and observers there worried that it would continue as well. Despite the efforts of the Boston town meeting, Governor Bernard publicly declared that law and order were endangered in the province, a statement that offended Sam Adams and others busily trying to counter such impressions. It was clear that more needed to be done to give Boston’s opposition movement a civil face.

One opportunity presented itself in early September when a member of Parliament, Lord Adam Gordon, arrived in Boston as part of his American tour. Accordingly, the town meeting sent out a welcoming party from Faneuil Hall to woo him and request his support, “particularly with regard to the new Parliamentary Regulations... which have created such Universal Uneasiness among his Majesty’s most loyal Subjects on this Continent.” Though he publicly pledged to use “[w]hat little Influence I may be
supposed to have” in order to keep the empire united, Gordon privately concluded that best means was to alter Massachusetts’ cherished charter and thoroughly reform its government. Otherwise, “that ancient rugged Spirit of Levelling, early Imported from home, and too successfully nursed, and Cherished, will, in the four New England Governments never be got the better of.”37 Gordon’s public response was read before the town meeting at Faneuil Hall on September 18th, after which voters endorsed the town’s participation in the proposed Stamp Act Congress, which was seen by many as a more reasonable and legitimate approach to the problem than mob violence. A motion was also unanimously approved that thanked both Isaac Barre and Henry Conway for their vocal support of the colonies in Parliament, and their portraits were commissioned to be obtained for Faneuil Hall as an expression of Boston’s everlasting gratitude to its benefactors for defending the colonists’ liberties while asserting their loyalty. “The people I believe are as truly loyal as any subjects the king has, but a people jealous of their liberties and who will vindicate them if ever they should be violated,” Barre had presciently warned Parliament.38

No place in Boston was better suited for such an honor than Faneuil Hall, the secular symbol of the community and itself the generous gift of a local benefactor. In fact, among the first portraits to be displayed in the Hall was one of Peter Faneuil himself. Governor William Shirley’s portrait was hung in Faneuil Hall in 1754 not only to honor his past military and political service to the community, but also to influence his position on the Assembly’s proposed alcohol excise, which many local merchants and distillers worried would shift the tax burden even further onto Boston’s back.39 Despite
pleas for personal liberty, their campaign ultimately failed, but it presaged the politicization of portraiture that would become prevalent in the Revolutionary period.

In certain respects, this process had started in 1761 with the confrontation between Otis and Hutchinson over general writs of assistance. Before deliberations began in that case, the newly appointed Chief Justice dusted off a pair of old portraits of King Charles II and King James II, both notorious for asserting the royal prerogative over Massachusetts, and prominently positioned them in the Council Chamber of the Town House, where the court held session. The point could hardly have been lost on Otis, just as the inverse message was clear in the town’s decision to hang the portraits of Barre and Conway in Faneuil Hall. Along with Sam Adams, Otis served on the committee charged with procuring the pictures. A few years later, in the wake of the Boston Massacre, Adams would have John Singleton Copley paint his portrait pointing suggestively to a copy of the Massachusetts Charter that he so admired.

If portraiture could serve to elevate the prestige and honor the character of its subjects, as the pictures of Barre and Conway were intended to do, then it could also be used to disgrace them. For instance, after British troops occupied Boston in October of 1768, some unknown, but obviously infuriated inhabitant entered Harvard’s Massachusetts Hall and gouged out the heart of Governor Bernard’s portrait in “a most charitable attempt to deprive him of that part, which a retrospect upon his administration must have rendered exquisitely painful.” Continental soldiers similarly bayoneted Thomas Hutchinson’s portrait while ransacking his country estate in 1778. Such behavior served to safely displace anger toward royal officials onto inanimate objects, thus controlling rage at the same time as giving it an outlet. This containment strategy
was evident in the street demonstrations of November 1, 1765, the day that the Stamp Act was set to take effect in the colonies.

**Political Protest as Public Spectacle**

About sunrise, tolling bells joined with blasts of conch shells to announce the arrival of the dreaded day. Shops stayed closed and ships still in the harbor dropped their flags to half-mast as people made their way to Liberty Tree, where hung an escutcheon bearing a dual portrait of George Grenville and John Huske, a member of Parliament who had once lived in Boston. While Barre and Conway were honored with portraits in Faneuil Hall, Huske had become a pariah in the community for his supposed support of the Stamp Act, relegating his likeness to Liberty Hall, where it would eventually fall prey to the mob. But opposition leaders were eager to avoid the sort of violence that befell Boston back in August and had inscribed the motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense* on the escutcheon, to which had been added “Good Order and Steady. By the Name of the Tree of Liberty.” This emphasis on order may also explain the choice of a refined portrait over a crude effigy as the object of protest, since another effigy might have sent the wrong message and induced the people to relive the summer riots. Instead, the day’s demonstrations took on the solemn air of a funeral.

At three o’clock the escutcheon and a ladder were ominously loaded onto a cart and paraded through the principal streets of the town, followed by thousands of onlookers. Instead of concluding the funeral procession at one of Boston’s local burying grounds, however, the people marched the cart out onto the Neck to where the gallows awaited. The purpose of the ladder was now clear; the funeral procession had evolved into a mock execution ceremony. By being taken to the Neck, Grenville and Huske were
branded as outsiders and purged from the local community. They were being symbolically executed for their crimes against the people. According to one observer, once the “enraged” crowd had assembled and the images hung for some time, protestors “exhibiting in open view the emblematic Object of their Wrath, rent it into a Thousand Fragments, and dispersed them on the four Wings of the Air.” Incredibly, given the gravity of the moment and the passions of the people, “there was not one Weapon of Defence, nor the least Token of Insult or Injury offered to any Person whatever.”

While the presence of Liberty Hall allowed Bostonians to be bolder in their defiance of the Stamp Act, it could also enhance the influence of Faneuil Hall town meetings. This synergistic effect is evident in the forced re-resignation of Andrew Oliver before the Liberty Tree on December 17th. Although popular protests had rendered the Stamp Act unenforceable, Parliament still showed no signs of repealing the controversial legislation, so that by December rumors suggesting a renewed attempt by Oliver to implement it in Boston were surfacing. Angry townsmen accordingly demanded that he come clean with them and again publicly repudiate the office, which he did by publishing it in the local newspapers on December 16th. Oliver’s response was likely calculated to confine the confrontation to the comparatively dignified domain of letters and avoid the sort of physical confrontations that had characterized his initial resignation in August. But if such was his intention, then the strategy backfired, for it prompted opposition leaders to call him out onto the streets. Meeting that night in Liberty Hall, members of the Loyal Nine, an influential, but extralegal collection of artisans associated with Sam Adams, decided that Oliver’s form of resignation was unacceptable and demanded that he
appear before Liberty Tree the next day to publicly disavow any relation to the Stamp Act.

While Liberty Hall may have symbolized popular sovereignty to some Bostonians, others believed it "was consecrated as an Idol for the Mob to worship" and dedicated to the destruction of all legitimate authority.44 Understanding the political implications of the space, Oliver tried unsuccessfully to have his resignation held at the stately Town House. With his request denied, Oliver was escorted to Liberty Tree by none other than Ebenezer McIntosh, a local shoemaker whom many conservatives blamed for the attack on Hutchinson's house. Apparently one of McIntosh's favorite means of intimidation was to parade menacing-looking mobs past the Town House while the General Court was in session to demonstrate the will of the people.45 Now he had figuratively reached into the Town House, pulled out a distinguished Crown official, marched him through a driving December rainstorm, and prostrated him before the public. But what was perhaps most disturbing to Oliver's friends and colleagues was that, when he arrived at Liberty Hall, several of the local selectmen, who were pledged to ensure the good order of the town, stood in a warm, dry house across the street and watched as a cold and wet, yet defiantly dignified Oliver politely renounced any connection to the Stamp Act. They then had the audacity to convene a town meeting in Faneuil Hall the following day and suggest to Governor Bernard that, since there would be no stamp distributor, the court system should reopen and operate without stamped paper.

The incident is illustrative of the political utility and symbolic manipulation of public space in Boston during the Revolution. By holding Oliver's resignation at Liberty
Hall rather than Faneuil Hall, the constituted seat of local authority, local officials could maintain plausible deniability in the affair and protect the town’s reputation. It could continue to assert its loyalty to the Crown and elude retribution by royal officials. In short, the presence of alternate spaces in which to perform “their dirty Jobs,” whether the gallows on the Neck or Liberty Hall, enabled the Faneuil Hall town meeting to maintain legitimacy and at least the pretense of dignity. Local officials and otherwise respectable gentlemen could stand and watch Oliver’s humiliation, congratulate themselves with “a very Genteel Supper” that evening, and then return to Faneuil Hall the next day to claim, “We have always understood that the Law is the great rule of Right, the Security of our Lives and Propertys, and the best Birth right of Englishmen.” In the meantime, much to their delight, Ebenezer McIntosh garnered the lion’s share of the blame.

Some royal officials saw through the opposition’s strategy, however, and connected the dots between Faneuil Hall and Liberty Hall. In a letter to Henry Conway, the same man whom Bostonians had strategically honored with a portrait in Faneuil Hall, General Thomas Gage complained:

... The whole have been united to oppose the Execution of the Stamp-Act, and to find Means to carry on Business independent of it; they have differed only in the Means to be pursued. One Part would Set the Act aside by open Force and Violence, the better Sort by Quibble that no Stamps were to be had, and every other Pretence that could give Some Appearance at least of the legality of their Proceedings.

Many officials back in England considered local government complicit, if not actively involved, in the Boston riots, and they ignored the efforts of inhabitants to restore order, prompting the Boston town meeting to protest that “we have been ungratefully & publickly charged with being tame spectators of this outrage and have been told that our reputation suffers much in the opinion of the world on this account.” Benjamin Franklin chastised one Londoner who “remembers that your papers have informed us of
the riots at Boston, but forgets that they likewise informed us, some of the rioters were apprehended and imprisoned, in order to be brought to justice; and that the body of the people detested these violences.” 51 And despite the fact that Bernard had fled to Castle William during the upheaval and left local officials to deal with the crisis, it was the Governor who garnered the praise in England. Bernard, wrote Thomas Whatley, “is at present so much a favourite here for his conduct in the late disturbances that no man recommends himself by appearing to be his enemy.”52

For his part, the increasingly pessimistic Thomas Hutchinson blamed Boston’s popular protests on the collaborative street bravado of Ebenezer McIntosh and the “mobbish eloquence” of Otis at Faneuil Hall. Power had passed into the hands of the people, he lamented, and there seemed little that could be done to restore their senses when “the director of their councils is without dispute, a m[a]dman.”53 Haunted too by Liberty Tree, which Bernard likened to “Jack Cade’s oak of reformation,” critics were convinced that Otis had promoted the protests there.54 They accordingly tried to scare him away from further demagoguery by calling forth the condemned specter of Masaniello, forever “chained, by the resistless hand of fate, to a wide spreading [Liberty?] Tree, the branches of which are hung with the Manes [?] of my deluded followers, whose almost ceaseless execrations torture my ear and rack my heart.”55

Instead of attending Liberty Hall, however, Otis and other opposition leaders invited inhabitants into the Town House to watch the political fireworks as Bernard and the General Court became locked in a battle of wills after the Stamp Act repeal in April of 1766. Feeling “obliged still to maintain a political Warfare with the Popular party,” a bitter Governor Bernard vetoed Otis’s nomination as Speaker of the House in May,
prompting the House to retaliate by voting Thomas Hutchinson, Andrew and Peter Oliver, and two other members of the government faction off of the Governor's Council.\textsuperscript{56} Hutchinson admitted the legality of the measure, but lamented that it "had a tendency to rekindle the flames of discord and contention, which otherwise might have expired."\textsuperscript{57} Determined not to be outdone, Bernard in turn negatived six counselors, challenged the loyalty of opposition leaders in his annual opening address before the General Court, and charged the people with ingratitude for inappropriate celebrations over the Stamp Act's demise. Sam Adams lamented the Governor's choice of words, "for the harmony between the Govr & the People wch is so necessary for the Support of Govt, & a mutual Confidence wch was greatly interrupted the last year, by means of the Severity of Expression in the Speeches then delivered, seems to me to be irrecoverably lost."\textsuperscript{58}

It was within this context that opposition leaders called for the construction of a House gallery that would expose provincial politics to greater public scrutiny, continuing a trend that had begun long before the Revolutionary period. While popular sovereignty had always been more prevalent in the colonies than back in England, office holders had become increasingly beholden to their constituents as popular political participation progressed over the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{59} But recent events gave even greater weight to the people's influence in politics. As Thomas Hutchinson explained after the Stamp Act crisis, "In the capital towns of several of the colonies & of this in particular, the authority is in the populace, no law can be carried into execution against their mind."\textsuperscript{60} No longer would Ebenezer MacIntosh need to parade people outside the Town House to prove the point; now their physical presence in the House gallery would provide a visible reminder
of their growing power. Unpopular legislation and critical remarks about the people or their leaders would now have to be more carefully weighed against the potential political consequences, making it more difficult for the Governor to forge an effective coalition in the House.

Opposition leaders such as Otis and Adams were perhaps the greatest beneficiaries of the House gallery, which enabled them to speak directly to the people from whom they drew political influence. "Our disease is the Power of the People, who blindly devolve it on an artful Demagogue," complained James Murray. House debates soon became something of a public spectacle in Boston. Speakers self-consciously directed their words at the new audience, and a system soon developed whereby they were conveyed from the gallery to inhabitants outside on the streets. As such, "a speech, well adapted to the gallery, was oftentimes of more service to the cause of liberty than if its purport had been confined to the members of the house," noted Thomas Hutchinson. This innovation effectively turned the traditionally exclusive House chamber into a counterpart, even a rival, for Faneuil Hall as a popular, yet dignified forum for patriot orators of a professedly loyal opposition, one that circumvented the streets but still connected directly with the people.

If the Town House was coming to resemble Faneuil Hall in its popular appeal, then Liberty Hall conversely began to assume its more orderly qualities. It was well known that royal officials had considered sending troops to Boston after the Stamp Act riots, and rumors to that effect persisted well into 1766. So to stave off this possibility and symbolically show Boston's commitment to order, local Sons of Liberty gave Liberty Tree a makeover, beginning with a pruning in February to dignify its appearance. After
a band of "disorderly people" helped a female criminal escape justice the next month, they took out a newspaper advertisement supporting the town's vote at Faneuil Hall to uphold civil authority and offering her captors a ten dollar reward, which, they instructed, "shall be paid under Liberty-Tree, the day justice takes place." The tree was also neatly decorated with flags and streamers to celebrate the repeal of the Stamp Act in May, festivities which drew a reprimand from Governor Bernard. The moderation of Liberty Tree and Liberty Hall did not sit well with inhabitants who still admired it as a radical alternative to town meeting politics at Faneuil Hall. The site subsequently became the center of a struggle within the opposition movement to shape the character of public protests against Parliamentary reform.

"ALL depends upon our being cool, deliberate, and firm"

By 1767, the events of the past two years had seriously affected Governor Bernard's credibility both in Boston and Massachusetts generally. When he pledged in 1766 "to promote the Honour and Reputation of the Province," one angry resident retorted, "Is the representing the province in a state of rebellion, oppugnation, fighting against the King's authority, and then nothing but a standing army will do? I say, is this promoting the honour and welfare of the province?" Now the Governor was placed in the unenviable position of trying to enforce a new set of duties, the so-called Townshend Duties, that many Americans regarded as more devious than the Stamp Act. Taxing the colonists to provide independent salaries for royal officials was bad enough, but "[t]o do it by the secret modes of imposts and excises would ruin their trade, corrupt the morals of the people, and was more abhorrent in their eyes than a direct demand," complained Mercy Otis Warren. After confirmation of the Townshend Duties reached Boston in
early October of 1767, the merchant John Rowe declared them “[a]n Imposition on America in my Opinion as Dangerous as the Stamp Act.” And bookseller John Boyle rightly predicted, “An Opposition to this Act no doubt will take place.”

But what sort of opposition would it be? The potential for mob violence was great, especially after an American Board of Customs Commissioners was appointed to convene in Boston and enforce the duties. Not only did this seem to unfairly single out Bostonians as renegades, but also it aggravated the long-standing mistrust of outside authority that animated the popular opposition and reinforced the power of community in Boston. The ostracized Thomas Hutchinson believed that the commotion caused by the Stamp Act could have been easily contained had the legislation not originated outside the province and exposed the people’s property to Vice-Admiralty judges who, as the Boston town meeting explained, “may be Strangers to us, and perhaps malicious, mercenary, corrupt and oppressive.” And historically royal commissioners had never been well received in Boston. Indeed, inhabitants who tried to welcome them were often scorned for their efforts. The commissioners who visited Boston in the 1660s recalled an instance in which one such person “was derided for being soe civill to accompany one of the commissioners from the town where he lived to Boston, and others in Boston derided those of Road Island for having yielded soe much to the commissioners.” Making the current situation even more ominous was the inclusion of two Americans, John Robinson and Charles Paxton, on the Customs Board. Nothing aroused popular rage more than the sense that the community was being betrayed by one of its own, as Thomas Hutchinson could attest. To avoid another “Hutchinsonesque” riot, patriot leaders would have to find an effective way to harness the power of community and direct it toward less destructive
ends. Their solution was an economic boycott that would channel anti-foreign sentiment away from the Board toward British imports and enforce community through the town meeting rather than the mob.

As the site of the town meeting and symbol of community, Faneuil Hall played a key role in the process. The building was packed on October 28th when inhabitants gathered to consider a boycott “Forreign Superfluities.”71 To dramatize its efficacy and persuade doubters, local makers of starch and snuff were invited into the Hall to physically display their products before the people. Some of the greatest supporters of non-importation were local artisans and country traders, who understood its advantages for domestic manufacturing. “So strong is the disposition of the inhabitants of this town to take off the manufactures that come in from the country towns, especially womens and childrens winter apparel,” reported one newspaper after the boycott began, “that nothing is wanting but an advertisement where they may be had in town, which will be taken in, and published by the Printers of the Boston Gazette, gratis.”72

Despite a unanimous vote of approval and a great show of community spirit at Faneuil Hall, the town meeting’s non-importation resolutions proved controversial both at home and abroad. News of them generated fierce criticism in London, where it was seen as another example of American impudence. “Parliament has not yet taken notice of them, but the newspapers are in full cry against America,” reported Benjamin Franklin.73 Some of the colonists’ metropolitan supporters complained that the resolution had only hurt their cause, although they tried to put the best face on it. Franklin, for instance, sat down and penned a long explanation of American discontents, which appeared in the

*London Chronicle* in January.
In Boston, criticism of the town meeting resolutions came from two corners of the community. As John Tyler has shown, some mid-level merchants and shopkeepers opposed non-importation out of concern for their businesses and a distrust of the wealthy merchants behind the movement, whom they suspected of trying to drive them out of the market.\textsuperscript{74} But other inhabitants left Faneuil Hall also complaining that the boycott did nothing to address the problem of the commissioners, for which they blamed James Otis and suggested that he secretly supported the interlopers. Rumors that had once circulated the streets about resisting a British troop landing were now redirected against the commissioners. Everyone waited with baited breath when the strangers appeared in Boston harbor on November 4, just before Pope’s Day. “Arrived Capt. Watt from London, in whom came a most unwelcome Cargo,” wrote a disgruntled John Boyle.\textsuperscript{75} John Rowe’s diary entry for the day underscored the unfamiliarity of the newcomers: “Capt Watts arriv’d from London in whom several Gentlemen Passengers, Robt Temple, Charles Paxton, Mr. Hollen & Twenty more names unknown to me, except Mr Birch, Mr Williams, Mr Porter.”\textsuperscript{76} Perhaps it was the wet weather, but Pope’s Day celebrations in the city remained remarkably calm, even with Customs Commissioner Henry Hulton looking on in amusement.\textsuperscript{77} But not everyone was amused with him and his colleagues. “The commissioners, from the first moment of their institution, had been an eye sore to the people of Boston,” recalled David Ramsay.\textsuperscript{78}

Agitated by the commissioners’ presence in their town and dissatisfied with the boycott, some inhabitants turned to Liberty Hall for a more radical enforcement of community norms and Revolutionary principles than that being offered at Faneuil Hall. On the evening before a scheduled town meeting, a disaffected patriot hoping to incite
crowd action posted threatening papers throughout the streets and at Liberty Tree. But instead of interpreting the effort as a call for community action, most Bostonians took it as an affront to the community. Sanctioned by the town meeting and administered from Faneuil Hall, the boycott had become a representation of the community and, as Edmund Morgan has argued, "a way of reaffirming and rehabilitating the virtues of the Puritan Ethic."\textsuperscript{79} The first order of business when townsmen convened at Faneuil Hall the next morning was to discuss the provocative papers. As he had done with respect to the writs of assistance, James Otis again invoked proud memories of the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution, but this time to discredit what he saw as the papers' incendiary design. "Our forefathers in the beginning of the reign of Charles I for 15 years together," he proclaimed, "were continually offering up prayers to their God, and petitions to their king for the redress of grievances, before they would betake themselves to any forceable measures."\textsuperscript{80} Moreover, "during the course of the revolution which placed king William on the throne, there was no tumults or disorder, and when the whole city of London was in motion, only a single silver spoon was stolen, and that they shewed such resentment to this, as immediately to hang up the person who was guilty of the theft."\textsuperscript{81} With these words reverberating through their ears, voters condemned the broadsides as a "dirty trick" and reaffirmed the town meeting's original course of action "at a time when ALL depends upon our being cool, deliberate and firm."\textsuperscript{82}

**Conclusion**

As the center of local government, symbol of community, and forum for oratorical eloquence, Faneuil Hall played a critical role in creating a forceful, yet restrained opposition to Parliamentary reform by 1767. In less than a year, however, all
of this would change. Against the pressure of mounting customs seizures, influence over the building increasingly passed into the hands of extralegal organizations that sought the space and legitimacy Faneuil Hall offered its patrons. Unbound by the conventions that governed town meetings, they encouraged its growing radicalism and transformed many of Faneuil Hall's formerly integrative functions into partisan affairs. Indeed, the republican balance between liberty and loyalty that had once defined the building seemed imperiled by the end of 1768, as it stood accused of hosting blatantly treasonous meetings and fell victim to the British troops that it had theretofore functioned to fend off.
CHAPTER NOTES

1 See Jeremy Belknap, diary entry, 1763, Diary of Jeremy Belknap, Massachusetts Historical Society.


6 Otis’s speech on writs of assistance has been reprinted in David Potter and Gordon L. Thomas, eds., *The Colonial Idiom*, (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), pp. 90-94.


10 See, for instance, *Boston Evening-Post*, May 2, 1763.


12 Ibid., 44-45.

14 Trenchard and Gordon, Cato’s Letters, II, 731.


21 See, for instance, Boston Gazette, May 13, 1765, p. 2.

22 Oliver’s Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion, p. 55.


25 Newport Mercury, August 26, 1765.

26 Liberty, Property, and No Excise: A Poem Compos’d on Occasion of the Sight Seen on the Great Trees, (so-called) in Boston, New England, on the 14th of August, 1769, (Boston, 1765), p. 6.

George Richards Minot, *Continuation of the History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, from the Year 1748: Vol. I.*, (Boston, MA: Manning and Loring, 1798), p. 216. Minot was a lawyer whose descriptions of the crowd as raging mad, brutal, and diabolical suggest the conservative political climate of Federalist Boston, where dignitaries such as William Tudor and John Adams lauded his work.


*Deacon Tudor's Diary*, p. 20.


*BTR*, 16: 153.


44 Oliver’s Origins & Progress of the American Rebellion, p. 54.

45 Ibid., p. 54.

46 Ibid., p. 54.


48 Ibid., p. 689.


50 BTR, 16: 193.


52 Letter from Thomas Whatley to John Temple, August 14, 1766, reprinted in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 6th ser., 9 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1897), p. 76.

53 Letter from Thomas Hutchinson, March 26, 1766, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 26: 216.
54 Letter from Francis Bernard to the Earl of Hillsborough, June 16 and 18, 1768, in Letters to the Ministry, from Governor Bernard, General Gage, and Commodore Hood, (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1769), p. 33.

55 Boston Evening-Post, June 23, 1766.


57 Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, p. 108.


60 Hutchinson to Pownall, March 8, 1766, Hutchinson Papers, 26: 203.


62 Hutchinson, History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay, III, p. 120.

63 Boston Evening-Post, February 16, 1766.

64 Newport Mercury, March 10-17, 1766.

65 Boston Gazette, November 3, 1766.


69 BTR, 16: 155. For Hutchinson’s opinion, see Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to Richard Jackson, April 21, 1766, as quoted in Richard D. Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772-1774, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 32.

*BTR*, 16: 221.

*Newport Mercury*, November 2-9, 1767.


Tyler, *Smugglers & Patriots*, p. 110.


*Letters and Diary of John Rowe*, p. 145.

For a description of the day’s events, see *Boston Gazette*, November 9, 1767.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.
In May of 1768, Bostonians began preparations for their annual Election Day celebrations, a time for the residents to rejoice in their constitutional rights and honor their political leaders. Such gatherings had assumed added importance in recent years as Americans found their liberties threatened by Parliamentary reforms. The day’s events typically concluded with a procession to Faneuil Hall followed by a feast attended by the town’s first citizens and top officials, including the royal governor. But this year the commander of the Governor’s Company of Cadets, John Hancock, announced that he would not escort Governor Francis Bernard to the building if, as was rumored, the Governor intended to invite the recently arrived customs commissioners.¹

The commissioners had not endeared themselves to the community since their arrival the previous fall, despite their efforts to charm local leaders with balls and banquets. In February, club-wielding, war-whooping ruffians were seen stalking around Commissioner Charles Paxton’s house and, later, that of William Burch, prompting him to send his wife and children out the back for safety. Even moderates, Bernard complained, seemed anxious to ship the commissioners out of the community. “Populus” urged readers of the Boston Gazette not to physically harm the interlopers, but to treat them with contempt. “The time is coming,” the piece concluded, “when they shall lick...
the dust and melt away."\textsuperscript{2} "This is the Talk used to prevent Riots," the Governor lamented.

As one of Boston's leading merchants and patriots, Hancock had developed an especially tense relationship with the commissioners by 1768. He and nearly a hundred of his fellow merchants met on March 1\textsuperscript{st} at the British Coffee House in King Street and resolved "that every Legal Measure for freeing the Country from the present Embarrassments should be adopted & among, the stopping the Importation of Goods from Great Britain under Certain Limitations."\textsuperscript{3} "If this was all," Governor Bernard declared, "we Crown Officers should be well Content: but it is given out among them that they will not submit to the Laws in the Mean Time; & violent Methods of Opposition are every Day expected."\textsuperscript{4} In April and again in early May, tidewaiters were physically intimidated by Hancock's men and prevented from searching his vessels.

Hancock's disdain for the customs commissioners was matched only by his affection for the people of Boston-- a sentiment learned from his uncle Thomas, from whom he had inherited his fortune.\textsuperscript{5} Thomas Hancock had been extremely active in both local and provincial politics, and upon his death in 1764 he left the town a substantial bequest to found a hospital for the mentally ill. Although the ensuing Revolution prevented the structure from being built, inhabitants expressed their gratitude by voting "that the Name of Hancock be Recorded and enrolled among those of Faneuil and other worthy Benefactors of this City."\textsuperscript{6} For the infernal customs commissioners to thus be entertained at Faneuil Hall-- the embodiment of community spirit and political liberty in Boston-- deeply offended John Hancock.
Inspired by Hancock's stand, the town meeting subsequently voted to deny Governor Bernard entrance to the Hall if he brought the commissioners. It was a symbolically powerful and unprecedented decision. Since Faneuil Hall's completion in 1742, no royal governor had been explicitly threatened with exclusion from the annual Election Day dinner. This was ostracism of the first order and it succeeded. After consulting with the Governor's Council, Bernard backed down and agreed not to invite the commissioners, thus keeping them marginalized and avoiding a potentially nasty confrontation before the building.

The Election Day incident in May presaged the rapid radicalization of Faneuil Hall and the patriot movement in 1768. Looking back at events later, the exiled Tory Peter Oliver judged 1768 to be the year, and Boston the place, in which rebellion turned to revolution. At the center of this transformation stood Faneuil Hall. As relations between the Crown and the community deteriorated over the course of the summer, the Hall became an increasingly important means to legitimate extralegal associations and bolster their influence while discrediting royal officials. In so doing, however, such groups also threatened to undermine the orderly and objective façade that made the building politically effective.

**Faneuil Hall, Liberty Hall, and the Liberty Riot**

If the Election Day incident revealed the future direction of Faneuil Hall protests, then the response to the *Liberty* riot the following month demonstrated the persistence of its more moderate functions. Having repeatedly been shown up by Hancock, the customs commissioners were able to exact a measure of revenge when the British man of war *Romney* arrived in Boston Harbor, just over a week after the Election Day incident. Prior
to this point, as a frustrated Thomas Hutchinson readily admitted, imperial officials had lacked the resources to confront the powerful merchant in any meaningful way. One British officer witnessing the situation concluded that “if the Servants of the Crown and the Friends to Government were less timid,... the Faction would be less bold.”

Hancock’s sloop *Liberty* had arrived from Madeira on May 9th, but was not vigorously searched despite suspicions of smuggled cargo and the suspicious death of its captain from overexertion.

Shortly after the *Romney*’s arrival, however, royal officials pounced, accusing Hancock of violating Navigation Acts and seizing the entire ship. While a crowd of Bostonians watched in disbelief, the *Liberty* was cut away from the wharf into the waiting arms of the man of war. In his analysis of the incident, O.M. Dickerson has suggested that the seizure demonstrates the political animus and personal greed of Governor Bernard and other authorities, whom he accuses of racketeering. Yet it also exhibits the impact of a military presence on the conduct of royal officials and the friends of government. With a warship at their backs, they were ready to challenge the opposition and take back the town.

In her contemporary account of the event, Mercy Otis Warren argued that the dramatic seizure of Hancock’s sloop was meant to bait Bostonians into a physical confrontation that justified the introduction of troops, something that the commissioners had been suggesting for some time. “It had what was thought to be the desired effect; the inconsiderate rabble, unapprehensive of the snare, and thoughtless of consequences, pelted some of the custom-house officers with brick-bats, broke their windows, drew one of their boats before the door of the gentleman they thought injured [Hancock], and set it
on fire," she wrote. The reports that royal officials sent back to England about the riot portrayed a people who had lost all sense of reason and order. Governor Bernard’s account to the Earl of Hillsborough contained shockingly graphic details of barbarous acts, such as one official being "knocked down and left on the ground covered with blood" and the son of another dragged through the streets by his hair. Joseph Harrison likewise gave the Marquis of Rockingham a particularly damning account of the Bostonians’ behavior, noting that he "was so much hurt by the Mob that I had been obliged to keep my Bed Two Days…"

In order to counter such impressions, local leaders tried to dismiss the incident as "a trifling affair" while redirecting popular protest away from the streets and into Faneuil Hall, much as they had done following the Stamp Act riots. There was great concern over a "violent and virulent paper stuck up upon Liberty tree containing an invitation to the sons of liberty to rise that night, to clear the county of the Commissioners and their officers, to avenge themselves of the officers of the Customhouse…" Fearing for their safety, several of the commissioners fled the town for Castle William, where they again appealed for troop support. Their removal may have relieved resentment and prevented further rioting, but it did not convey the image of order that would ward off military intervention. Accordingly the Sons of Liberty gathered inhabitants at Liberty Hall, known for its radicalism, to show that Bostonians "wish well to, and would promote the Peace, good order, and security of the Town and Province…"

At the appointed time, thousands of people from Boston and surrounding towns turned out at Liberty Tree only to be paraded in orderly fashion to Faneuil Hall. Perhaps this was done simply to escape the rainy conditions. However, Hiller Zobel has
suggested that Sam Adams calculated the move to draw the people past those buildings most associated with royal authority: "The crowd moving from Tree to Hall would pass through the center of Boston, past the Province House, the Town House (where the Council sat), and within a block of the Custom House."\textsuperscript{16} Dirk Hoerder has taken Zobel to task for a lack of evidence; but, while there is no direct proof that Adams was behind it, the change of venue fits the established function of Faneuil Hall in the opposition campaign.\textsuperscript{17} It countered the more radical implications of Liberty Hall and demonstrated the community's commitment to order and good government. If the Sons of Liberty or Sam Adams wanted to portray the people's tact, nothing could have done so better than to remove them from Liberty Hall to Faneuil Hall by peacefully parading past the symbols of British oppression.

Once the inhabitants had reassembled at Faneuil Hall, they dissolved themselves and reappeared at three o'clock for a "legal" town meeting, a move that further legitimized their conduct. When several tidewaiters, whose job it was to assist with customs inspections, were discovered at the meeting, some townsmen motioned to have them excluded—just as the town had earlier excluded customs commissioners from the Hall. But to have done so would have belied the town meeting's objective image and "'twas objected to as having no right to such a proceeding, and that it would be best, every one should hear what was to be offered."\textsuperscript{18} Objectivity went out the door, however, when James Otis entered the overcrowded Hall and was met with a thunderous round of applause from the assembly, which by one account contained a substantial number of non-residents.\textsuperscript{19}
With the crowd ominously spilling back out into the streets, the meeting was moved again to the more spacious Old South Meetinghouse, which could better contain it. Tory accounts of the subsequent meeting suggest that it was filled with bluster and wild accusations, including the proposition that anyone who countenanced the use of troops in Boston should be branded as a traitor to his country.20 A double-talking Otis was said to have preached order from the pulpit, yet urged inhabitants to resist further encroachments on their town and their liberties “even unto blood.”21 By contrast, William Cooper, the town clerk and noted opposition leader, described the debates as “very cool and deliberate...”22 The truth probably lies somewhere in between, but given the careful orchestration of events and the measured response of the meeting it would appear that cooler heads prevailed for the moment. Even after describing the “[m]any wild and violent proposals made” at the meeting, Governor Bernard admitted to metropolitan officials that “nothing was done finally but to pass a petition to the Governor, and to appoint a committee of twenty one persons to resort to his country house... and to appoint a Committee to prepare instructions for their representatives, and a letter to Mr. De Bert...”23

For all of its activity, Faneuil Hall and the Boston town meeting still stood at the epicenter of political controversy in June of 1768; its true center was the Town House, where the House of Representatives was then considering the Crown’s request to rescind its February circular letter. Royal officials considered the letter, which urged other colonial legislatures to unite with Massachusetts against the Townshend Duties, to be an unconstitutional affront to their authority. But led by Sam Adams and James Otis, the legislature felt otherwise and overwhelmingly refused to retract it. Such open defiance
infuriated the Earl of Hillsborough, who had recently been appointed American secretary
and was charged with administering the colonies for Parliament. Unaware of the
profound impact that it would have on the political struggle in Boston, he ordered
Governor Bernard to prorogue the Assembly as punishment.

The unintended consequence of dissolving the General Court was to unbalance
the sensitive scales of opposition, throwing the defense of Massachusetts's honor and
liberties fully into the laps of local town meetings and, in Boston, placing it squarely
within Faneuil Hall. As a result, the image of the building rapidly lost its former poise
and assumed an immoderate air, leading critics to proclaim that "[e]very act of a Boston
Mob will, for the future, be considered as the result of a Faneuil-Hall meeting." Echoing
William Clarke over the Albany Plan, they protested that town officials were
appropriating powers not formally designated to them. "The greatest imposition of this
kind, and, indeed, the bane of America, are the select-men at Boston; who," wrote one
Rhode Island antagonist, "at first, were appointed to regulate the police of the Town, not
to arrogate any power of legislation..." Peter Oliver was also convinced that the
selectmen "were determined to have more last words with great Britain." This new
posture was evident as early as July when they ordered the town's arms, about 400
muskets, to be removed from storage in Faneuil Hall and promptly cleaned. Once the
cleaning was complete, however, the weapons did not return to storage, but remained
openly on display in the meeting hall for months.

Also moving Faneuil Hall into the center of controversy were the merchants'
meetings that managed the non-importation movement in Boston. In an effort to better
appeal to public sentiment and recruit support for the faltering movement, Hancock and
his colleagues moved their meetings out of the cramped coffee houses and into the airy Hall, which offered them a more authoritative environment. Thereafter, their gatherings increasingly acted like public town meetings rather than private assemblies. “The Merchants now hold their meetings in Faneuil Hall,” complained Thomas Hutchinson, “and its difficult to distinguish them from a Town meeting for every master of a Sloop & broker shopkeeper or Huckster is admitted & has a vote...”27 Critics charged that these meetings not only lacked official sanction, but also attracted the worst sorts of characters who had no business being there.

So many artisans and laborers began attending the Faneuil Hall meetings that they were soon referred to as merchants’ and tradesmen’s meetings. Ordinary Bostonians who would have felt out of place in urbane coffee houses could comfortably attend the meetings in familiar surroundings. At the same time, gentlemen merchants did not sacrifice their social standing by attending a place they, too, patronized. In this way the building proved a more effective place than Boston’s diffuse and diverse taverns in which to build and showcase a broad patriot coalition.28 Hutchinson was particularly irritated by the attendance of James Otis and Sam Adams at the Faneuil Hall merchants’ meetings, since neither had any direct commercial interests. “Otis attend[s] & comes away smiling...,” he glumly noted.29

After moving into Faneuil Hall, the symbolic center of the local community, these unofficial meetings became noticeably more resolute and their resolutions more compulsory.30 So too did the rhetoric emanating from the official town meetings held there. By September, it was being hinted in the Boston Gazette that the people of the province ought to consider their relationship with Britain dissolved and convene together...
to draft a new plan of government for Massachusetts. In response, Governor Bernard began dropping hints that an invading army might be on its way. On Saturday the 10th, a tar barrel appeared atop the recently repaired beacon tower, customarily used to warn the town of impending attack. When requested by the Governor to remove the cask, the selectmen refused. Convening at Faneuil Hall on September 12th, the town meeting likewise chose not to act on the issue of the tar barrel and countered with a petition requesting Bernard to reconvene the General Assembly, which he insisted was a matter for the King only to decide. The following day a dissatisfied town meeting, declaring a peacetime standing army to be inimical to their political liberties and charter rights, sanctioned the use of arms to defend the town (under the guise of a possible war against France over Corsica). Voters also approved the idea of a convention with other towns, to be held, of course, at Faneuil Hall on September 22nd.31

Though most of the "principal Gentlemen," as Bernard described them, chose to stay away from these charged meetings, the few who did attend reported a scene so carefully managed by radical opposition leaders "that it appeared as if they were acting a play, every thing both as to matter and order, seeming to have been preconcerted beforehand."32 The weapons still displayed prominently in the middle of the Hall reminded everyone what was at stake in such meetings: nothing less that the "total distraction of our invaluable natural, constitutional and Charter Rights."33 "There are the arms," Otis was purported to have said, "when an attempt is made against your liberties, they will be delivered; our declaration wants no explanation!"34 By the fall of 1768, then, the constitutional crisis in Boston was rapidly moving toward a physical confrontation.
"Faneuil Hall, the celebrated School for Catalines, & of Sedition"

If there was still any doubt that Faneuil Hall was being radicalized and emerging as the seedbed of sedition in Boston, it was removed when the building hosted what was, even by some patriot accounts, a treasonous "convention" on September 22. With the General Assembly dissolved, the Boston Town Meeting had invited communities throughout Massachusetts to send representatives to a meeting about the current crisis. Defending their right to popular assembly, participants denied they were essentially reconvening the House of Representatives or otherwise defying Governor Bernard, the King, and the provincial charter. In fact, one of their first orders of business was to send Bernard a petition requesting that the General Assembly be reconvened.

Critics were unconvinced, however. "It must be allowed by all, that the proceedings of this meeting had a greater tendency toward a revolution in government, than any preceding measures in any of the colonies," Thomas Hutchinson later wrote. "The inhabitants of one town alone took upon them to convene an assembly from all the towns, which, in every thing but in name, would be a house of representatives; which, by the charter, the governor had the sole authority of convening." Bernard refused to entertain their petition, which he believed might have countenanced the convention. He was convinced that the intent of the assembly was to restore the still-cherished 1629 charter, "which has no ingredient of Royalty in it" and would have marginalized him politically. The following day, he sent conventioneers a thinly veiled threat to disperse from Faneuil Hall lest he be forced "to assert the authority of the crown in a more public
manner..." With rumors of imminent invasion running rampant, few could have missed his meaning.

The tense situation was also aggravated by the fact that the meeting coincided with Coronation Day, a day traditionally meant to demonstrate the people’s deference toward and affection for the monarch. But as historians have shown, such holidays were increasingly appropriated and transformed into days of protest by opportunistic patriot leaders during the Revolution, for they provided a conventional means to achieve unconventional ends. As an integral part of past Coronation Day celebrations in Boston, Faneuil Hall was therefore an attractive place in which to pursue this policy and enhance the efficacy of the extralegal assembly. The episode also demonstrates the way in which the building’s ceremonial usages were being exploited in 1768 to resist royal authority.

Historians have traditionally accepted the Tory view of the Faneuil Hall convention as an informal reconvening of the dissolved House of Representatives, but Richard D. Brown’s analysis of the membership rolls indicates that such an assessment is misleading. Although Boston sent its entire slate of representatives to the convention, some towns sent many new delegates and others none at all. The cumulative effect was to create an assembly that was more thoroughly “Whiggish” and radical than any the House had produced. Moreover, Brown argues, “participation measured the degree to which imperial and constitutional issues were penetrating local affairs, becoming matters appropriate for widespread public consideration, not merely the concern of legislators.” This was also evident in the convention’s use of Faneuil Hall, the symbolic center of local sovereignty that lay politically beyond the reach of metropolitan authorities. Short
of calling in the troops, there was nothing the Governor or other officials could do to stop
the meeting. The convention defied Bernard’s order to desist and continued to meet,
albeit with trepidation. For all its revolutionary implications, however, the meeting
produced little more than a meekly worded petition of relief to the King. The convention
also sent a letter to its agent in London requesting him to “prevent any misrepresentations
of our meeting and proceedings, which our enemies may be ready to make.”

The looming shadow of British soldiers did not allow for more definitive
measures and compelled the Faneuil Hall convention to break up. As delegates returned
to their respective towns on September 28th, six of His Majesty’s warships appeared in
Nantasket Roads with elements of the Fourteenth and Twenty-Ninth Regiments bound
for Boston. More arrived the following day and maneuvered into position near Castle
William. By September 30th, they had pushed closer to the community in what one
witness described as “[t]he greatest perade perhaps ever seen in the Harbour of Boston.”

Having been warned to expect physical resistance, “[t]he men of War and Troops
approached the Town with the same precautions as they would a city they were about to
besiege,” Thomas Cushing observed. The regiments disembarked on October 1st and by
the end of the day elements of the Fourteenth occupied Faneuil Hall. After standing
outside the building for nearly two hours while their officers haggled with recalcitrant
selectmen, the doors were finally opened and the men grudgingly admitted for temporary
quarters. In what was the most dramatic and affecting example of Boston’s changed
political landscape, Faneuil Hall had gone from hosting sedition to housing soldiers in
less than a week.
The sight of the troops marching into Faneuil Hall, the pride of their community and source of political strength, clearly unnerved many Bostonians, who felt violated. "The 14th Regiment, commanded by Lieut. Colonel Dalrymple... are to have the State-House and Faenuil-Hall for Barracks!," exclaimed John Boyle. "We now behold the Representatives' Chamber, Court-House, and Faneuil-Hall, those seats of freedom and justice occupied with troops, and guards placed at the doors," locals ruefully reported to the New York Journal. Noting that the barracks at Castle William had been bypassed and stood empty, another resident (possibly Sam Adams) was astonished "that the City Hall [Faneuil Hall] and even the SENATE HOUSE should be for more than a week past put to an use, so ABHORRENT from the original and true intent of them..." Peter Oliver went so far as to attribute subsequent squabbles between townsmen and troops to the occupation of Faneuil Hall. For its striking and suggestive language, Oliver's opinion is worth quoting at length:

The Governor was now obliged to provide the Quarters himself, in the only Places where he could quarter them; one of which places was Faneuil Hall, the celebrated School for Catalines, & of Sedition. This was a great Shock to them. It was a Prophanation of their Sanctum Sanctorum. It must not be forgiven. They accordingly exerted their selves to pick Quarrells with the Soldiers; they insulted & abused them.

Conversely, opposition leaders tried to pass off the occupation of Faneuil Hall as a particularly poignant example of local hospitality and fidelity. As Sam Adams explained, "[t]he People in general as you may naturally suppose are utterly averse to their continuing among them, yet such was their humanity towards them that they were content to shelter them from the open air for a Night or two even in their City Hall." Moreover, he attributed the town's calm, if icy, reception of the troops to the controversial Faneuil Hall convention. "The Troops are hitherto orderly, the Inhabitants preserve their Peace and patience," Adams told Dennis De Berdt. "The late Convention

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has no doubt contributed much towards it...."48 Similarly, Thomas Cushing, who had also attended the meeting, insisted that "the late Convention has been attended with happy consequences, the Design of it was to promote peace and good order, and their meeting has effectually answered that good design; by their seasonable and good advice, they prevented much disorder and confusion...."49 Having spoken with fellow Pennsylvanians lately returned from Boston, the Philadelphian Thomas Wharton confidently reassured Ben Franklin in London that "the real Disposition and temper of the People [of Boston] in general, is Quite peaceable and Agreeable to What every true Lover of the British Interest would desire."50

But underneath this calm façade, opposition leaders worried that perhaps the Faneuil Hall convention had crossed a line. "They are not without apprehension that the P[arliament] will shew some mask of displeasure for their behaviour... in the late Convention," Hutchinson wrote to Thomas Pownall.51 Indeed, the friends of government seized the opportunity to lobby Crown officials hard for charter reform and censure of the conventioneers. As Governor Bernard reported, "They say that the late wild Attempt to create a Revolt & take the Government of this Province out of the Kings into their own Hands affords so fair an Opportunity for the Supreme Power to reform the Constitution of this subordinate Government, to dispel the Faction which has harrass this Province for 3 Years past, and to inflict a proper & not a severe Censure upon some of the Heads of it, that, if it is now neglected, they say it is not like soon perhaps ever to happen again."52 Lord Barrington, for one, was receptive to such suggestions, being himself "convinced the Town Meeting at Boston which assembled the States of the Province against the King's Authority, & armed the People to resist his forces, was guilty of high Crimes &
Misdemeanors, if not of Treason; And that Mr. Otis the Moderator (as he is improperly called) of that Meeting together with the Selectmen of Boston who signed the Letters convoking the Convention, should be impeach'd.\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{The Hall of Justice}

The British occupation of Boston altered the political implications of Faneuil Hall in contradictory ways, reinforcing both its orderly and disorderly images. In this respect, it reflected the uneasy calm that had settled over the community. "Short quiet succeeded long disturbance," was how Thomas Hutchinson described it. "Troops at first carried terror."\textsuperscript{54} The merchant John Rowe, a regular at Faneuil Hall town meetings, was accosted by a British officer who told him, "You are an Incendiary & I hope to see you hanged yet in your shoes."\textsuperscript{55} The incident may have cowed Rowe, for shortly thereafter he began to cozy up to the officer corps. In fact, a number of opposition leaders seemed strangely quiescent in the days following the troop deployment. On October 4, 1768, just two days after Rowe's confrontation, Lieutenant-Colonel William Dalrymple wrote to Commodore Hood: "I am... visited by Otis, Hancock, Rowe, ect., who cry peccavi, and offer exhortations for the public service."\textsuperscript{56}

Whatever his private dealings with British officers in the wake of the occupation, James Otis continued to publicly criticize them, especially for their treatment of the Town House. As the symbol of royal authority in Massachusetts, the building was among the first places to be secured, so that it looked more like a garrison house than a government center. "[E]ven the Merchants Exchange is picquetted, and made the spot where the main guard is placed and paraded, and their cannon mounted," complained residents, "so that instead of our merchants and trading people transacting their business, we see it filled
with red coats, and have our ears dinn'd with the music of drum and fife." British officers also used the building as a jail for inhabitants accused of encouraging desertion.

When the General Assembly reconvened for its annual meeting in the spring of 1769, one of its first orders of business was to request removal of the troops from before the building, arguing that they were offensive and inhibited free speech and honest deliberation. "The House regard... a guard of soldiers, with cannon planted at the doors of the State House, while the General Assembly was held there, as the most pointed insult ever offered to a free people, and its whole Legislative," the representatives informed Bernard.

At a session of the Superior Court, James Otis became so annoyed by the situation that he motioned "that the court would adjourn to Faneuil-Hall, not only as the stench occasioned by the troops in the Representative Chamber, may prove infectious, but as it was derogatory to the honour of the court to administer justice at the mouths of cannon and the points of bayonets." Of course, the Hall had served as a seat of justice before, but after 1768 it assumed new meaning as a political tribunal that publicly humiliated the town's enemies. The first such instance occurred less than a month after the arrival of troops. After an evening of hard drinking, Captain John Willson of the Fifty-Ninth Regiment allegedly tried to persuade several local slaves to slit their masters' throats.

Several alarmed inhabitants overheard the boisterous officer and alerted local authorities. Such talk was taken seriously in provincial Boston, where slaves were looked upon as a disorderly element in the community. Willson's inflammatory remarks, town officials worried, threatened to undermine their efforts at keeping blacks under control.
Willson was accordingly arrested for disturbing the peace and taken to Faneuil Hall for a very public trial. A throng of spectators watched as the humbled officer blamed the incident on alcohol, whereupon Justices Dana and Ruddock bound him for four hundred pounds to appear at the next Superior Court session in March. Although little was ultimately done to punish Willson—thanks in part to the work of the King’s attorney at Superior Court—he had been publicly exposed as a scoundrel and was carefully watched by the community thereafter.

A second and even more consequential Faneuil Hall hearing occurred the following year when William Browne was accused of beating James Otis at a coffee house brawl on King Street. The incident reflected the community’s increasingly violent character after the arrival of troops in 1768. Commodore Hood had already locked up one Marine who insulted Otis and challenged him to a duel. Verbal assaults were becoming physical attacks, as evidenced by the confrontation between Private John Riley and the Cambridge victualer Jonathan Winship at Faneuil Hall marketplace in the summer of 1769. The cause of the altercation is unclear, but what started out as a verbal dispute ended with Riley throwing a punch that floored Winship. “[T]he soldiers instead of preserving peace among us, are the violators of it,” concluded Richard Cary after the scuffle.

Written discourse also reflected the confrontational character of the local political culture. In September of 1769, Otis declared in the pages of the Boston Gazette that he had a “natural right” to break Commissioner John Robinson’s head for suggesting his disloyalty and slandering his good name. Such charges had been leveled against Otis and other opposition leaders before, but they had become especially sensitive about them
after acquiring a cache of Governor Bernard’s private letters criticizing the colony earlier in the year. Robinson in turn interpreted Otis’s words as an affront to his honor and a personal challenge, particularly after the audacious orator appeared the next day at the royal officials’ well-known hangout— the British Coffee House on King Street. After a verbal confrontation between the two men, the usually orderly establishment burst into chaos as Robinson’s Tory friends and British officers began beating Otis, despite the attempts of his compatriot John Gridley to interfere. Gridley grabbed Robinson by the coat, but was in turn attacked by Representative William Browne from Salem. The ruckus attracted the attention of passersby, and a crowd quickly assembled outside the Coffee House, forcing Otis’s assailants to scatter. While a battered and bleeding Otis was attended to by physicians, Browne ensconced himself in an officer’s quarters upstairs until the following day.

The sheriff apprehended Browne on the afternoon of September 6th and marched him over to Faneuil Hall in the evening to answer to local authorities. Though he was not the main perpetrator of the beating, Browne was politically an easier target than Commissioner Robinson. Besides, Bostonians had their own beef with him. Browne had been one of only seventeen representatives to vote in favor of rescinding the House’s 1768 Circular Letter. That bold stance had earned him a special place as an enemy to his country.

Faneuil Hall’s association with the public welfare reinforced both the notion that Browne himself was inimical to the town’s interests and that the attack on Otis represented an attack on the entire community. “[T]he general cry being that it is not the cause of Mr. O[tis] but the cause of the Publick,” noted Thomas Hutchinson. The
setting at Faneuil Hall also juxtaposed the civility of Bostonians with the barbarous acts of Crown officials. "[I]n a high stage of civilization, where humanity is cherished, and politeness is become a science, for the dark assassin then to level his blow at superior merit, and screen himself in the arms of power, reflects an odium on the government that permits it, and puts human nature to the blush," declared Mercy Otis Warren.66

But not everyone understood the Faneuil Hall hearing in such terms. The thought of it made Justice James Murray concerned for Browne's safety in such a hostile environment. Taking a walk near the Town House when he heard about the meeting, Murray rushed over to Faneuil Hall to help ensure Browne a fair hearing. The Tory merchant could well imagine Browne's predicament, for he too had faced popular resentment after helping house British troops in the community. Upon arriving at the Hall, Murray was almost immediately recognized by some in the crowd, who tried to manhandle him out of the building. But Selectman Jonathan Mason, a moderate politician and social acquaintance of Murray's, cried out, "For shame, gentlemen, do not behave so rudely" and lifted him into one of the selectmen's seats. Refusing to sit with Justices Dana and Pemberton on the bench and repeatedly hissed by the crowd, Murray replied with dignified bows and posted Browne's bail, publicly declaring that his gesture in no way countenanced Browne's behavior. Few in the crowd were convinced, however. As Murray left the noisy scene at Faneuil Hall, someone pulled off his wig to reveal his baldness. With a heckling crowd at his heels, trying to trip him and bearing his now-rumpled wig on a staff above them, the harried Murray was escorted home by friends and colleagues, who cautioned the crowd, "No violence, or you'll hurt the
cause. Once the mob had been channeled into Faneuil Hall to contain it, now the building seemed to be spawning mob activity.

Such mixed signals were evident in the events surrounding the shooting death of young Christopher Seider in February of 1770, which stemmed from the increasingly confrontational character of Boston’s non-importation movement. Since convening in Faneuil Hall, the merchants’ and tradesmen’s meetings had grown bolder and more brazen, to the extent that Thomas Hutchinson (now acting Governor after Bernard’s departure in August of 1769) considered them more dangerous to good order than actual riots. "For particular persons to forbear imports cannot be deemed criminal," he wrote to Thomas Whatley, "but it is quite another thing for numbers to confederate together & compel others to join them..." As if they were some kind of town committee, the body of merchants would occasionally leave the Hall en masse to openly confront incompliant colleagues at their homes or shops. William Jackson was paid a pair of such unpleasant visits in January of 1770, as were Thomas Hutchinson’s sons. When importers buckled under their pressures, the meetings publicly praised them and their “voluntary,” patriotic compliance with non-importation. A disgusted Hutchinson compared their tactics to that of highwaymen and actually sent the sheriff to break up one meeting unsuccessfully.

Even some opposition leaders were uncomfortable with the growing boorishness of the Faneuil Hall meetings, which were getting bad press in England and prompting influential merchants to avoid them altogether. As Robert Treat Paine reported, “the Merchants of more note who did not attend were desirous that something might be effected tho they were not fond of going into those measures which the urgency of the Affair Seem’d to make necessary." When it was proposed that the meeting physically
rise up and march against the vexatious importers, Josiah Quincy was shocked. Such crowd action coming from Faneuil Hall, he protested to those present, was tantamount to treason. Hancock, Otis, and William Phillips also expressed concern and backed away from the march, which was led by more radical elements of the meeting, including William Molineux and Thomas Young.

The actions of the Boston town meeting seemed to sanction such aggressive tactics. Following up on a motion by a merchants’ and tradesmen’s meeting in late January, the town met at Faneuil Hall and voted to publish the names of non-importation violators, thereby encouraging the public to ridicule them. Theophilus Lillie became one of the targets, and residents set up a wooden sign outside his shop informing passersby of his importer status. Those who tried to remove it were subjected to harassment. One British soldier was shooed away, while a crowd sent Lillie’s neighbor Ebenezer Robinson scurrying into his house for safety after he also attempted to remove the sign. A native of Woburn, Massachusetts, Robinson had already angered Bostonians by acting as a customs informer, but when he appeared from his upstairs window with a gun and fired into the crowd—killing Christopher Seider—his alienation from the community was complete.

Before the enraged crowd could exact revenge on Robinson, he and a supposed accomplice were seized by cooler heads and whisked away to Faneuil Hall to answer for their crime before a judge. Thus the very place that had encouraged popular enforcement of community compacts was again used to counteract the crowd, much as it had done after previous riots. Even Governor Hutchinson understood Faneuil Hall’s value in this regard. A convicted Robinson languished in jail for two years before receiving a royal
pardon, which Hutchinson, fearful of mob violence, prudently waited to execute until the inhabitants were assembled inside Faneuil Hall for annual elections.\textsuperscript{72}

As was the case with William Browne, taking Robinson to Faneuil Hall also signaled the seriousness of his crime, which had galvanized the community. Seider’s death was treated much like Otis’s beating, as an affront to Boston and its commitment to liberty. Seider’s emotional and well-attended funeral, remarked John Adams, “Shews... that the Ardor of the People is not to be quelled by the Slaughter of one Child and the Wounding of another.”\textsuperscript{73} The merit of the patriot cause was reinforced for many Bostonians just a week later on March 5\textsuperscript{th}, when British troops fired upon a crowd of protestors—killing four outside the Customs House on King Street. But at that moment the community also stood on the edge of anarchy and was brought back only by the swift and resolute actions of local leaders.

Faneuil Hall played a central role in sustaining the community in the wake of the Boston Massacre. As they had done on so many other occasions, town officials and patriot leaders immediately called for a town meeting the next morning to channel popular anger away from the streets and into a more controlled environment. But not even spacious Faneuil Hall could contain the crowd that arrived, forcing the meeting to adjourn to the Old South Meetinghouse— as had happened after the \textit{Liberty} riot almost two years earlier. There the town made forceful and ultimately successful demands upon the Governor and British officers to remove troops from Boston. A public watch was also established to keep order, while witnesses to the Massacre were encouraged to come forward with their accounts. So many did so, however, that the meeting was forced to
appoint a committee to meet later at Faneuil Hall for the expressed purpose of taking
down the depositions, which numbered ninety-nine in all.

In the meantime, the bodies of the four victims were prepared for a public funeral
that reinforced the bonds of community. Young Samuel Maverick was taken to his
grieving mother’s house on Union Street just north of Faneuil Hall, while Samuel Gray’s
brother watched over his lifeless body. But as transient sailors, neither James Caldwell
nor Crispus Attucks had family in town, presenting a dilemma that was solved by taking
the two strangers to Faneuil Hall. The move was both practical and political, for the Hall
was a civil sanctum that connected the men with the community as well as the cause of
liberty and justice that Faneuil Hall had come to symbolize. On the day of the funeral,
their bodies were borne from the building to the site of the Massacre. In the shadow of
the Town House they were reunited with Maverick and Gray for the solemn procession to
their collective final resting place in the Granary Burying Ground near Boston
Common.74 (Days later, when a fifth and final victim of the Massacre, Patrick Carr, was
laid to rest, he was likewise borne from Faneuil Hall to Old Granary.75) The procession
could not have made the political distinction between Faneuil Hall and the Town House
any starker. As if to emphasize the point, Paul Revere’s engraving of the Massacre took
the Town House as its focal point and renamed the nearby Customs House “Butcher’s
Hall.”

Yet when it suited their political purpose, opposition leaders were just as likely to
associate Faneuil Hall and the Town House as they were to dissociate them. They could
do so because the two buildings, especially the Town House, existed betwixt and between
the local community and the imperial order. In the wake of the Massacre, Governor
Hutchinson forbade the General Court from convening at the Town House for its annual spring session, ordering them instead across the Charles River to Cambridge. Bostonians rightly saw this move as a blatant attempt to strip their town of its political influence. The Sons of Liberty protested by sponsoring alternative Election Day celebrations in Boston rather than Cambridge. After the Reverend Charles Chauncy's fiery sermon in which he condemned "those, beyond the atlantic, who, as we have reason to think, wish not well to our Sion," the people were treated to an ox roast on Boston Common while local leaders invited country clergy to share their traditional Faneuil Hall feast, now recast as an act of Puritanical defiance. Days later representatives could still be found lingering about Boston, and when they finally convened in Cambridge, their first order of business was to suspend business until the General Court was returned to Boston's Town House.

Cracks in the Foundation

Such symbolic shows of unity at Faneuil Hall would not last for long, however. When Parliament decided in April to repeal all the Townshend Duties but that on tea, the colonists were forced to reconsider their controversial non-importation campaign. Calls for its end were heard almost immediately; everywhere uncertainty and equivocation reigned. Philadelphia's merchants sent a courier to find out Boston's position, prompting a divisive merchants' and tradesmen's meeting at Faneuil Hall that finally voted to continue the campaign until all of the offensive duties were repealed. But it became apparent over the course of the summer that the movement was faltering badly as friction increased between moderate merchants wishing to resume importation and artisans who favored the domestic manufacturing campaigns spurred by the boycott.
The rift was visible in the reconfiguration of meeting space. Whereas merchants had once welcomed local tradesmen to their meetings, even moving into Faneuil Hall to accommodate their ranks, by September the two groups were increasingly holding separate, though not mutually exclusive, meetings. Many merchants were back at the British Coffee House, leaving the Faneuil Hall meetings largely to the artisans and their leaders, who had begun referring to their gatherings as meetings of “the Body.” “The infamous Molineux & Young with Cooper Adams and two or three more still influence the Mob who threaten all who import, but it seems impossible that it should hold much longer many who, at first were zealous among the Merchants, against importing are now as zealous for it,” Thomas Hutchinson confidently reported at the end of August.77 Others concurred with his conclusion. Of the non-importation combinations James Murray wrote, “These they are now heartly sick of, & the Trade will probably be quite open by the Spring.”78

Even those merchants who continued to attend the Faneuil Hall meetings were increasingly disillusioned with the direction they were taking. In early September it was revealed that Hutchinson had quietly handed the keys to Castle William over to British troops, which people throughout the province saw as an underhanded betrayal and an obvious threat to their liberties.79 “[F]rom the Instances of the surrender of Castle William into the hands of the King’s regular Troops, and the removal of our General Assembly from its ancient and legal Seat the Town House in Boston, merely by force of ministerial Mandates and against the declared Opinion of the Governor of the Province,” opined one inhabitant, “we can be under no apprehension as to what Parliament or Chancery may do respecting our Charter, for the Ministry seem to take it upon them to
slice it as they please, and a few more Instructions... will leave no Part of it remaining."80 However, when Sam Adams tried to raise the alarm at a Faneuil Hall merchants' and tradesmen's meeting, he was stifled by a number of irritated merchants, who reminded him that they were there to discuss non-importation. It was a telling moment, illustrating just how divided the meetings had become.

The final break came in October when a merchants' meeting held at the Coffee House voted to resume importation of British consumer goods, excepting tea and any other items taxed for revenue.81 Heartened by such news, Hutchinson hoped that when the movement finally collapsed Parliament would take steps to prevent such dangerous combinations in the future, for he knew that "those fellows, having had power so long in their hands, will resume it upon the lightest pretense."82 Indeed, opposition leaders were already redirecting their efforts toward other objectives. "I am very sorry that the Agreeemt was ever entered into as it has turnd out ineffectual," Sam Adams wrote to Peter Timothy. "Let us then ever forget that there has been such a futile Combination...."83

Such infighting prompted Adams and his cohorts increasingly to look beyond Boston and appeal to the country towns for support. They were accordingly extended an invitation to send representatives to convene at Faneuil Hall, where they could join with Bostonians in a symbolic show of strength and unity. To reinforce this notion, the meeting was scheduled for September 22nd, two years to the day after the first such assembly had been held in anticipation of British occupation. Much about the current crisis was reminiscent of the earlier one. In 1768, for instance, the Faneuil Hall convention had been called after Bernard dissolved the General Court for failing to rescind its circular letter; now the towns met while the General Court refused to conduct
business in protest against its removal to Cambridge. Many inhabitants also believed that the Customs Commissioners were up to their old tricks again. After being chased onto Castle Island in the wake of the *Liberty* riot, the commissioners had clamored for troop deployment and eventually got it. During the summer of 1770, as James Bowdoin noted, “they have again betaken themselves to the Castle, and are playing ye same farce over again as was played off in 1768.”

Though Bowdoin was confident that the Ministry would not order the reoccupation of Boston, others were less certain. The 1768 convention had seemingly prompted military reprisals from metropolitan officials, and few Bostonians in the fall of 1770 had the stomach for another occupation after the massacre earlier that year. While the “seizure” of Castle William roused some locals, most notably Samuel Adams, it disheartened many others and cooled their enthusiasm for the September 22nd convention. “Some of the heads or rather the encouragers of the Opposition to Government but not of the Violences committed, have owned to me that as soon as they saw the Castle garrisoned by the King’s Troops and the Harbour in possession of the King’s Ships they gave up their cause,” Thomas Hutchinson reported. Unlike its predecessor, the 1770 Faneuil Hall convention did not receive open endorsement from the Boston town meeting, garnered nary a word in the local press, and was later left out of Mercy Otis Warren’s account of the Revolution, despite the fact that representatives from over ninety towns had attended.

By the same token, the convention elicited less enduring criticism from the Governor’s faction than had the original assembly. Some of this reflected a change in tactics developed after the Boston Massacre. Whereas in 1768 they had overtly...
threatened conventioneers, in 1770 they subtly tried to divide town and country "by employing their Understrappers to whisper, that the Town has by its rashness bro’t all this Mischief upon us." The message may have had the desired effect, thus mitigating the need for more vocal criticism of the Faneuil Hall convention; less than a month after the convention’s dissolution, Thomas Hutchinson informed the Ministry that he had "frequent intimations from most of the Counties in the Province that the People are much altered & express themselves freely that they have been misled & deceived by the faction in the Town of Boston."

Above all else, however, Hutchinson credited the transfer of Castle William (a plan he had personally opposed) with quieting the province. "I must give the Ministry the credit of the wisest measure it was possible for them to have taken," he conceded. "The withdraw of the Garrison at Castle William & placing the King’s Troops there, of which there was no suspicion until it was executed struck the whole Province with amazement. From that time I date the revival of government." This was more than a constitutional issue about royal prerogative and charter rights; Castle William was the key to Boston’s physical security and a source of immense local pride. To see it so suddenly and effortlessly wrested from them humiliated Bostonians. "[T]hose very Cannon, Mortars, &c. which under the Direction of the Province retook Annapolis and Port Royal, saved Nova Scotia more than once from a French Enemy, and contributed to the Conquest of Louisbourg by General Pepperrell, which Conquest gave Peace to Europe, are now like to remain in shameful duress," lamented one resident. With the opposition’s internal unity already cracking under the pressure of non-importation, the timing for such a bold maneuver by the Ministry was propitious.
Conclusion

As 1771 dawned, Faneuil Hall's extralegal meetings had lost much of their political efficacy, prompting a moderation of the building's image. The combined effect of the Boston Massacre, the collapse of non-importation, and the transfer of Castle William had not only rendered the once-formidable merchants' and tradesmen's meetings moribund, but also frustrated the Faneuil Hall convention's efforts to unite town and country. Indeed, after Boston's Congregational ministers sent native son Thomas Hutchinson a brusque congratulatory address upon his becoming Governor in March of 1771, some of their colleagues in the country were so offended that they composed their own more respectful address, much to the chagrin of Sam Adams. Hutchinson was also invited by Boston's selectmen to dine with them at Faneuil Hall as part of the annual school visitation committee for the first time since the Revolutionary crisis began. Such gestures led a flattered Hutchinson to believe it "very probable" that "the major part of the people of the province was not displeased" with his appointment as their governor. But as Sam Adams tried to remind them, "the tyrants of Rome were the natives of Rome."
CHAPTER NOTES


2 *Boston Gazette*, March 14, 1768.


5 On John Hancock’s relationship with his uncle and with the community, see Letter from John Adams to William Tudor, June 1, 1817, reprinted in *Old South Leaflets: Volume 8*, (Boston: Directors of the Old South Work, n.d.), pp. 65-68.

6 *Sixteenth Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston: Boston Town Records, 1758-1769*, comp. William H. Whitmore, (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1886), pp 139. (Volumes of the Boston town records and selectmen’s minutes will hereafter be referred to as BTR.)


13 For efforts to downplay the riot, see Boston Gazette, June 13, 1768; Letter from James Bowdoin to Thomas Pownall, May 10, 1769, in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 6th ser., 9 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1897), p. 141.


15 Sons of Liberty Broadside, June 13, 1768, reprinted in Papers Relating to Public Events in Massachusetts Preceding the American Revolution, p. 71.


18 Letter from G------, June 14, 1768, reprinted in Papers Relating to Public Events in Massachusetts Preceding the American Revolution, p. 89.

19 Letter from Joshua Henshaw to William Henshaw, June 15, 1768, reprinted in Journal of American History, 18 (July-August-September, 1924), p. 246. Henshaw was specifically describing the reassembled Old South town meeting, but it is not unreasonable to conclude that many of these non-residents had been at Faneuil Hall, or even Liberty Hall, beforehand.

20 Letter from Francis Bernard to the Earl of Hillsborough, June 16 and 18, 1768, in Letters to the Ministry, from Governor Bernard, General Gage, and Commodore Hood, p. 34.

21 Copy of a Letter from the Customs Commissioners to General Gage and Colonel Dalrymple, June 15, 1768, in Papers Relating to Public Events in Massachusetts Preceding the American Revolution, p. 89; Letter from G------, June 14, 1768, Ibid.
22 *BTR*, 16: 253.

23 Letter from Francis Bernard to the Earl of Hillsborough, June 16 and 18, 1768, in *Letters to the Ministry*, p. 34.


25 Ibid.

26 *Oliver's Origins & Progress of the American Rebellion*, p. 68.

27 Letter from Thomas Hutchinson, August 8, 1769, Massachusetts State Archives, 26:361.


29 Letter from Thomas Hutchinson, August 8, 1769, Massachusetts State Archives, 26:361. In his history of the colony, Hutchinson dates such meetings to the summer of 1768 and implicates both Otis and Adams. See Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, Vol. III*, p. 145.


33 *BTR*, 16:263.

34 Letter from Francis Bernard to the Earl of Hillsborough, September 16, 1768, in *Letters to the Ministry*, p. 73.


37 Letter from Francis Bernard to the Earl of Hillsborough, September 16, 1768, reprinted in Papers Relating to Public Events in Massachusetts Preceding the American Revolution, p. 105.


43 Letter from Thomas Cushing to Stephen Sayre, October 7, 1768, reprinted in Papers Relating to Public Events in Massachusetts Preceding the American Revolution, p. 106.


46 Oliver’s Origins & Progress of the American Rebellion, p. 71.


48 Ibid., p. 248.


51 Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to Thomas Pownall, December 2, 1768, Massachusetts State Archives, 26:331.

52 Letter from Francis Bernard to --------, December 23, 1768, reprinted in *The Barrington-Bernard Correspondence*, p. 253. Thomas Hutchinson added that if Parliament did not act to secure the dependence of Massachusetts, then “it is all over with us. The friends of government will be utterly disheartened, and the friends of anarchy will be afraid of nothing, be it ever so extravagant.” Letter from Thomas Hutchinson, January 20, 1769, reprinted in Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., *American History told by Contemporaries, Volume II: Building of the Republic, 1689-1783*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), p. 422.

53 Letter from Lord Barrington to Francis Bernard, February 12, 1769, reprinted in *The Barrington-Bernard Correspondence*, p. 184.

54 Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, Vol. III*, p. 157. As Dirk Hoerder notes, they also carried money and there was a real financial incentive to associate with the troops, particularly the officer corps. See Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts*, p. 183.

55 Rowe recounts the exchange in *Letters and Diary of John Rowe*, p. 176.

56 As quote in Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts*, p. 184. The customs commissioners’ balls at Concert Hall, once mocked by local residents, also suddenly became fashionable. See Letter from Richard Cary to --------, February 7, 1769, reprinted in *Papers Relating to Public Events in Massachusetts Preceding the American Revolution*, pp. 106-115. Conversely, reporting on a Concert Hall ball sponsored by royal officials in December of 1768, *A Journal of the Times* declared that so few ladies attended “that the most precise Puritan could not find it in his heart to charge said assembly with being guilty of the crime of mixt dancing.” Given its role as a patriot propaganda vehicle, the *Journal* may have been exaggerating for effect. See Dickerson, *Boston Under Military Rule*, p. 39.


58 For an example, see Ibid., p. 5.

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Address of the Massachusetts House of Representatives to Governor Bernard, June 19, 1769, in The Writings of Samuel Adams, Vol. I, p. 346. Citing a lack of authority over the military, the Governor refused the legislature’s request to remove the troops. One British officer was reported to have quipped, “if the mouth of the cannon was offensive to the Assembly, they would turn its breech to them.” See Dickerson, Boston Under Military Rule, p. 20. Bostonians would not long forget the incident, which John Hancock later used to stir their resentment in his 1774 Boston Massacre oration. See John Hancock, “Boston Massacre Oration, 1774,” reprinted in David Potter and Gordon L. Thomas, eds., The Colonial Idiom, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), p. 264.

Dickerson, Boston Under Military Rule, p. 20.

Ibid., p. 16.

Ibid., p. 17; Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to Thomas Pownall, December 2, 1768, Massachusetts State Archives, 26:331.

Letter from Richard Cary to ------, July 24, 1769, reprinted in Papers Relating to Public Events in Massachusetts Preceding the American Revolution, p. 122; for another account of the incident, see Dickerson, Boston Under Military Rule, p. 119.

Letters to the Ministry, from Governor Bernard, General Gage, and Commodore Hood, (Boston, 1769).

Letter of Thomas Hutchinson, September 6, [1769], Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 26: 373.


This account of events in Faneuil Hall is derived from a detailed letter from James Murray to ------, September 30, 1769, in Nina Moore Tiffany, ed., Letters of James Murray, Loyalist, (Boston: Gregg Press, 1972), pp. 159-162. Also see Letters and Diary of John Rowe, p. 192, for a shorter description.

Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to Thomas Whatley, August 24, 1769, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 26: 368.

Letter of Thomas Hutchinson, October 1769, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 26: 387.

On English coverage of the meetings, see Boston Weekly News-Letter, October 4, 1770.


*Boston Evening-Post*, March 12, 1770.

Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts*, p. 233.


Letter from Thomas Hutchinson, August 28, 1770, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 26: 540-541.


Hutchinson had been urged to take this step for some time, but resisted for fear of galvanizing the opposition. See Letter from Thomas Gage to Lord Hillsborough, August 18, 1770, in *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763-1775, Volume I*, p. 265; and Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, Vol. III*, p. 222.

*Boston Evening-Post*, September 24, 1770. Also see *Boston Gazette*, September 24, 1770.

*Boston Gazette*, October 15, 1770; *Letters and Diary of John Rowe*, p. 208.

Letter of Thomas Hutchinson, August 28, 1770, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 26: 540-541.


I find no mention of the convention in the following newspapers between September 22 and the end of October, 1770: the *Boston Gazette*, the *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, the *Boston Evening Post*, the *Boston Post-Boy*, and the *Massachusetts Spy*. It should be noted that the death of Reverend George Whitefield shortly after the convention became the leading local story and may have overshadowed interest in events at Faneuil Hall. However, even in the issues printed before Whitefield’s passing, there is no mention of the convention.

*Boston Gazette*, September 24, 1770.


Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to General Mackay, February 3, 1771, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 27: 113.

*Boston Evening-Post*, September 24, 1770.


CHAPTER VI

"HOW OUR BOSTON BUILDINGS ARE DESECRATED BY THE BRITISH SOLDIERS!":
FANEUIL HALL, THE SIEGE OF BOSTON, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL COMMUNITY, 1772-1776

On the afternoon of May 14th, 1773, Bostonians filed into Faneuil Hall to continue a local town meeting adjourned from a few days earlier. William Phillips moderated the meeting, since the usually indomitable Samuel Adams had taken ill. After debating repair costs for Boston Neck, townsman heard from the committee charged with cleaning up the messy finances of the Linen Manufactory Company, a failed part of Boston’s domestic manufacturing campaign. The meeting then turned its attention to the sensitive subject of Election Day celebrations, which were traditionally capped by a feast for the town’s finest at Faneuil Hall. The royal governor was a regular invitee; however, rumor had it that, like his predecessor in office, Governor Hutchinson intended to invite the Customs Commissions and British military officers as guests at his table, an idea that many inhabitants considered highly offensive and that the town meeting moved to prevent.

Their reaction reflected the growing tensions between Governor Hutchinson and the Boston town meeting over the past several months, much of which revolved around the controversial creation of a correspondence committee. Designed to organize and strengthen political resistance within the province, the committee was the town meeting’s response to renewed attempts to alter the colonial court system. It resolved many of the shortcomings that had saddled earlier coordinating efforts by providing a consistent
communications network that initially operated through legitimate institutions. To Hutchinson and his faction, however, the town meeting had clearly exceeded its legal authority in empowering a committee that would soon come to dominate it. Indeed, even many moderates became uncomfortable with the committee’s growing influence.

Operating largely out of Faneuil Hall, the Boston Committee of Correspondence effectively forged a sense of common interest and identity between the seaport and many inland communities, no mean feat given their traditional animosities. Royal officials unwittingly aided in this effort by attempting to put the committee out of commission, which only prompted proliferation of committees throughout the province. Indeed, the more political pressure the authorities applied directly against Boston, the more resistance spread elsewhere. As its actual power dissipated, Boston’s symbolic significance grew until the city became a martyr to the larger cause of American liberty. In the process, inhabitants imagined Faneuil Hall not only as the embodiment of the local community, but increasingly of the incipient national community as well. “[I]t being utterly against the inclination of the Town, that even one Person who has rendered himself enemical to the Rights of America should be admitted into the Hall upon such an Occasion,” the town meeting voted to ban native son Thomas Hutchinson and his cronies from the Election Day dinner.¹

The Boston Committee of Correspondence

In the eyes of Sam Adams, Faneuil Hall’s Revolutionary fame was forged in the months following the creation of the correspondence committee. Bostonians had been hearing rumors throughout the summer and fall of 1772 that royal officials intended to grant Superior Court Justices independent salaries drawn from customs revenues. What
the Governor dismissed as a non-issue and refused to discuss, Adams saw as a serious
charter violation, and he determined to rouse the populace. "Let us converse together
upon this most interesting Subject, and open our minds freely to each other," he
proposed. The result was the Boston Committee of Correspondence, which Adams
spearheaded.

As Richard D. Brown points out in his study of the Committee, the tactics used to
create it in November of 1772 mirrored those that had given rise to the Faneuil Hall town
convention four years earlier. In each case the Governor had been asked to confirm or
deny specific rumors; earlier they regarded troop deployment, now the judges' salaries.
When information was not forthcoming, a formal call went out for the General Court to
reconvene, which was rejected in both instances. "The strategy was intended to
demonstrate Boston's desire to meet the threat by conventional constitutional means,"
Brown concludes.\(^2\) With the onus on the Governor for refusing its requests, the town
proceeded to send out appeals to the countryside.

As a standing committee, the Boston Committee of Correspondence scheme had
distinct advantages over the episodic Faneuil Hall conventions for creating consistent
communication with the Massachusetts interior. Rather than relying on a lone
representative to travel to Boston and carry the information home to his neighbors like
some itinerant, Boston would take its case directly to the people at their local meeting
halls. The effect was to localize the crisis for otherwise remote communities. In its role
as the political and commercial capital for the province, of course, Boston had often felt
the issues of the Revolution as local, and subsequent events personalized them even
further. But, as Robert A. Gross notes, "Opposition to British policies outside Boston
was at best an intermittent event in the life of most towns."³ Now Boston’s fight would be their fight too. And by politicizing the Massachusetts countryside, Adams hoped the Committee of Correspondence scheme would also revitalize resistance in Boston. "[O]ur timid sort of people are disconcerted, when they are positively told that the sentiments of the country are different from those of the city," he complained to Elbridge Gerry.⁴

Royal officials looked no more favorably upon the proposed Committee of Correspondence than they had past Faneuil Hall conventions. As illegitimate offspring of the impudent Boston town meeting, neither had any legal standing in their eyes. An indignant Governor Hutchinson rebuffed the town’s demands for information on the salary issue, regarding them as a transgression of town meeting authority and an insult to his office.⁵ Earlier in the year his allies had mustered their forces at Faneuil Hall in a vain attempt to turn the town meeting against radical leaders such as Sam Adams and William Molineux.⁶ According to Hutchinson, the attack backfired and served to embolden the opposition.⁷ Attendance at the town meeting vote on the correspondence committee might similarly antagonize inhabitants and inadvertently legitimate the proposal. Critics therefore steered clear of Faneuil Hall and encouraged others to do so as well. Because this avoidance strategy did not prevent-- and in many respects cleared the way for-- the creation of the committee by removing opposition, historians have judged it an utter failure. But it succeeded in casting doubt upon the committee’s integrity.

As one of Boston’s most capacious buildings and the embodiment of both the local community and popular sovereignty, Faneuil Hall acted as a gauge by which to measure support for the Revolution in part simply according to the size of its town
meetings. Poorly attended town meetings, critics figured, would signal that the Committee of Correspondence was unrepresentative of the community and undermine its legitimacy. The efficacy of this strategy became apparent after a November 20th town meeting to consider the committee's statement of rights and grievances. Unlike the town's earlier statements, this one was aimed primarily at a provincial rather than metropolitan audience, and, among other things, sought to justify the correspondence committee's existence.

According to detractors, who made the point publicly, Faneuil Hall was virtually empty during the meeting, which had approved the committee's statement after some debate and revision. Six hundred copies of the controversial *Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders of Boston* were subsequently printed for distribution throughout Massachusetts, and it was likewise printed in the local papers for those who had not attended the meeting. Steeped in the language of conspiracy, the pamphlet urged united action to protect the people's liberties from despotic Crown officers. But opponents argued that the committee's work counted for little because the meeting that approved it was so small as to be unrepresentative. Attendance had not exceeded twenty persons in a hall that could hold nearly a thousand, they claimed. And of those individuals, fewer than half had actually voted for sending the committee's pamphlet and accompanying letter into the countryside. How could this handful of men presume to speak for the entire town of Boston?

The composition of the committee was also considered unrepresentative of the community. "Some of the worst of them one would not chuse to meet in the dark and three or four at least of their corresponding Committees are as black hearted fellows as
any upon the Globe,” Governor Hutchinson told Secretary Pownall. One member who proved particularly problematic was Dr. Thomas Young, an Irishman from Ulster County, New York. Not only was he a non-native, but also he espoused an evangelical brand of deism that seemed incongruous with the town’s proud Puritan heritage. Patriot leaders had heretofore exploited popular affection for the founders to stir up opposition to the Crown; now it was turned against them. “Strange that a Govt which within a century was so pure as to suffer no person to be free of their Commonwealth who was not one of their Church members should now take from there leaders men who openly condemn all Religion...,” noted the historically-minded Hutchinson, whose lineage went all the way back to Boston’s beginnings. Aaron Davis, Junior similarly observed, “[D]on’t it look quite ridiculous for a Set of Puritans, deeply concerned for their religious as well as civil Privileges... to set up such men... to be the leaders, guiders and managers in public affairs.” It seemed preposterous and hypocritical that a committee composed of men like Young should circulate a pamphlet espousing “The Rights of the Colonists as Christians.” Even some supporters of the committee found such wording offensive.

Sam Adams immediately appreciated the doubt that had deftly been planted in people’s minds about the legitimacy of the correspondence committee and about the popularity of the patriot movement in Boston. “The conspirators are very sensible that if our design succeeds, there will be an apparent union of sentiments among the people of this province, which may spread through the continent,” he wrote to Arthur Lee. “You cannot then wonder that their utmost skill is employed to oppose it.” No one knew better than Adams how important Faneuil Hall and the town meeting were to public
perception, so he set out to reassure them that the opposition remained strong by verbally refilling the building with hundreds of participants in his private letters and public articles. He assured Lee that the meeting had been “rather fuller than the last.”\textsuperscript{17} The Selectmen were encouraged to go on record saying that, by their estimate, over three hundred people had attended the latest town meeting. Taking his case to the Boston Gazette, Adams defended the Selectmen’s estimate and questioned the character of those who would circulate lies that abused the community so. Attrition at the meeting occurred only after the vote on sending the committee letter into the countryside had been taken, he argued. Yet even if only a few townsmen had shown up (which, Adams assured, was not the case), it was still a legal town meeting and no less legitimate than a Governor’s Council meeting in which but a quarter of its members attend.\textsuperscript{18}

Confused about Boston’s commitment level and concerned about their own reputations, many communities hesitated to heed the call to select counterparts to the Committee of Correspondence, prompting anxious observers to wonder “whether the last Noble exertion of those truly Patriotic Spirits who have formed a newly established Correspondence will meet with the desired Success. What a spirit of contradiction and Toryism do we see prevailing!”\textsuperscript{19} The incident became an object lesson in the symbolic significance of Faneuil Hall for judging Boston’s political climate. Thereafter, patriot leaders made a particular point of publicizing unusually large assemblies that exceeded the building’s capacity, especially during the tea crisis the following year. “On Monday last this and neighbouring Towns as one Body convened at Faneuil-Hall, ‘till the Assembly were so numerous as occasion’d an Adjournment to the Old South Meeting-
House, where it was computed there was upwards of 5,000 Persons,” the Boston Committee of Correspondence announced of one such meeting.  

Adams’s campaign to rehabilitate the town meeting’s image seems to have borne fruit, for over the course of December towns throughout the province cautiously began to answer Boston’s call. Governor Hutchinson watched the development with growing trepidation and finally decided to intervene in early January. In a speech before the General Court, he leaned heavily on legislators to acknowledge Parliamentary sovereignty by both repudiating theCommittee of Correspondence and condemning the Boston town meeting for overstepping its authority. “So many Towns had met and adopted the principles of Boston that I was obliged to call upon the Assembly to join with me in discountenancing such irregularities,” he told William Jackson. Yet instead of alienating Boston, his bold words effectively rallied support for its town meeting and correspondence committee.

At issue were the principles of freedom of speech and assembly, which Faneuil Hall had come to embody for Bostonians. “[I]t is clearly our opinion,” the House told Hutchinson, “that it is the indisputable right of all, or any of his Majesty’s subjects, in this province, regularly and orderly to meet together, to state the grievances they labor under; and, to propose, and unite in such constitutional measures, as they shall judge necessary or proper, to obtain redress.” From Faneuil Hall itself, a similar cry went forth. “The Inhabitants of this or any other Town had certainly an uncontrovertable right to meet together, either in the Manner the Law has prescribed, or in any other orderly Manner, joyntly to consult the necessary Means of their own Preservation and Safety,” proclaimed the Boston town meeting. It was a defining moment that not only
vindicated the Committee of Correspondence, but also established Faneuil Hall as a symbol of two sacred American values later enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Looking back on it in 1776, Sam Adams was filled with pride for the building. "There I have seen the Cause of Liberty & of Mankind warmly espoused & ably vindicated," he told Selectman John Scollay, "and that, at Times when to speak with Freedom had become so dangerous, that other Citizens possessed of less Ardour, would have thought themselves excusable in not speaking at all." As a show of support for Boston and its position, committees of correspondence proliferated throughout the Massachusetts countryside in the late winter and early spring of 1773.

Hutchinson's assault against their revered town meeting system also stirred the people's native pride and forged greater unity within the province. "[T]he more openly and Strenuously He exerts himself, his Influence and ability to promote such a Purpose becomes the less," observed Samuel Cooper. "This is obvious from the Una[n]imity of both Houses as well as the Towns." As a native Bostonian and student of Massachusetts history, the Governor might have been expected to anticipate such a reaction. But his own prejudices against the town meeting system seem to have blinded him to the prospect. Furthering the sense of betrayal many locals felt toward Hutchinson was the patriots' timely publication of his private letters casting aspersions on Boston and its political leaders. "... I am inclind to think he never will be able to recover so much of the Confidence of the people as to make his Administration easy," wrote Sam Adams after reading some of the correspondence.

The growing consensus that Thomas Hutchinson had completely lost touch with his community was reinforced by the confrontation over Faneuil Hall on Election Day.
Still smarting from the Governor's unkind words, opposition leaders and town officials warned him against inviting offensive British officials to the annual dinner. Faced with a similar situation years earlier, Francis Bernard had backed down and attended without the hated customs commissioners. But Hutchinson was so indignant about the town meeting's recent challenges to his authority that he chose instead to hold an alternate dinner for imperial officials at Concert Hall, where the customs commissioners regularly met. Under the circumstances, the Governor's actions seemed to make a mockery of Boston's traditions and its commitment to popular sovereignty as represented in the annual Faneuil Hall dinner; inhabitants responded to such flouting of community norms with crowd action, as was customary in Anglo-American culture. Customs commissioners leaving Concert Hall after the dinner were confronted with a heckling crowd that hurled dirt and mud at them. Among the reported participants were William Mollineux and Paul Revere, both of whom served as important liaisons between opposition leaders feasting at Faneuil Hall and ordinary people in the streets. Even members of the Cadet Company, which usually acted as the Governor's Guard, got in on the action against the commissioners. In fact, the situation grew so severe that one of the commissioners reportedly drew out his sword in self-defense.27

Protests against the Governor's indignity continued days after the Faneuil Hall Election Day dispute in a different, but no less dramatic guise as Boston celebrated the King's Birthday on June 4th. Historians of colonial ceremonial culture have noted that New England's Puritan heritage somewhat tempered the celebration of such royal holidays compared to other regions of the Empire, though they were still lively affairs.28 Boston's commemoration in 1773 proved unusually festive, however, and featured a
striking display of local pride and solidarity centered on the militia muster, a traditional community gathering with increasingly political connotations.

Ever since the arrival of British regulars in 1768, Bostonians had acquired a renewed appreciation for their local militia. Gone were the days when the Reverend Oliver Peabody could stand before townsmen wondering “where ever was there a People that appeared less concerned about their own Defense and Safety, than we in general are?” Now the Boston town meeting railed against standing armies and hailed the colony’s militia as its “natural and best defence.” John Hancock was elected Colonel of the Cadet Company in 1772 and transformed it into a serious military outfit. When inclement weather prevented the Company from training on the Common, they met at Faneuil Hall instead. Mustering on Boston Common the morning of June 4th, the Cadets and local militia units all seemed so disciplined and dignified that they stirred the pride of those who saw them. “From making the most despicable appearance they now vie with the best troops in his majesties service,” proclaimed John Andrews. “[A]nd I assure, were you to see ‘em, you’d scarcely believe your eyes, they are so strangely metamorphos’d.” John Rowe was more amazed by the scores of citizens that turned out to watch them perform. “Such a Quantity or Rather Multitude of People as Spectators I never saw before,” he remarked. Thomas Newell considered it “the grandest appearance ever known in these parts.”

More than a salute to the King, this show was first and foremost an expression of native pride in the community and its connection to the revolutionary movement. Indeed, local festivities increasingly assumed extralocal, even proto-national connotations as the deepening crisis with Britain transformed traditional royal holidays into political protests.
As David Walstreich notes, "the Anglo-American politics of celebration tethered popular sovereignty, resentment against aristocratic privilege, and the idea of American unity to everyday issues and local public life." But the process also manifested itself in ways other than festival. The month after the King's birthday celebration, for instance, Boston's Brattle Street congregation unveiled their impressive new church to the community. The church's minister, Samuel Cooper, had been implicated in the procurement and publication of Hutchinson's letters and was ridiculed by the Governor's allies for his cunning. According to his biographer, Cooper and his congregation "faced the imperial problem with every desire to preserve the social structure and local institutions they enjoyed." Such resolve was evident in their new church, a stirring structure that one observer proudly judged "as grand a house as our native materials will admit of."^

Boston's disputes with the Governor in the spring of 1773 also transformed the Town House. Between 1769 and 1772, with the General Court barred from the building, it had acted as a Tory refuge and symbol of British tyranny-- a development that consequently augmented Faneuil Hall's role for the opposition. But the legislature's return to the Town House in the late summer of 1772 restored its importance to the patriots and helped take the onus of resistance off of Faneuil Hall. Significantly, Boston's inaugural Committee of Correspondence meeting was held in the assembly room of the Town House. By the spring of 1773 some Bostonians began proudly referring to the Town House as the State House, a sign of increasing solidarity with other Massachusetts communities as well as alienation from England. The painter Thomas Crafts, Jr., whose family was heavily involved in the opposition movement and who
would later serve in the Continental Army, presented a bill in May for freshly painting what he called the "State House." John Andrews believed the handsome building enhanced the effect of Boston’s inspiring show of unity during the King’s Birthday celebration in June. “In addition to all this the Town House is fitted up in the most elegant manner, with the whole of the outside painted of a stone color, which gives it a fine appearance,” he wrote. As Boston’s surging local pride and revolutionary fervor accentuated such structures as the Town House and Brattle Street Church, however, Faneuil Hall began to fade into the background.

**From Faneuil Hall to Old South Meetinghouse**

Nowhere was Boston’s shifting political landscape in 1773 more evident than at the (Old) South Congregational Meetinghouse, which by the end of the year had supplanted Faneuil Hall as the locus of opposition to royal authority. Located opposite the Royal Governor’s official residence on the corner of Milk Street and Marlborough, the balconied Old South was physically more spacious than the Hall and it also evoked memories of the town founders and the early days when meetinghouses served both civic and religious functions. As Stephen Becker notes, the original 1669 building had been replaced in 1729 with a larger structure intended architecturally to reinforce the town’s Puritan heritage. “Through the design of its new meetinghouse,” he argues, “the community updated its Puritanism to keep it alive.” Old South therefore proved the perfect combination of form and function to help transform local pride into patriotic resistance during the Revolution.

Old South Meetinghouse adopted Faneuil Hall’s role in simultaneously empowering and constraining popular sentiment at especially volatile moments. John
Adams proudly recalled the way in which town officials headed off further violence after the Boston Massacre by steering inhabitants into the building and away from the streets. “The people assembled first at Faneuil Hall, and adjourned to the Old South Church, to the number, as was conjectured, of ten or twelve thousand men, among whom were the most virtuous, substantial, independent, disinterested, and intelligent citizens,” he told William Tudor. “They formed themselves into a regular deliberative body, chose their moderator and secretary, entered into discussions, deliberations, and debates, adopted resolutions, appointed committees.” Such resolute, yet restrained action had helped secure the removal of British troops from Boston, Adams concluded.42

Another example of Old South’s growing significance to the patriot movement in the 1770s involves its use for the annual Massacre orations, which, Sandra Gustafson suggests, enabled opposition leaders rhetorically to consolidate their control over the townspeople and encourage nationalist sentiment.43 Faneuil Hall proved too small to accommodate the impressive crowds that attended these momentous events, prompting the move to Old South. There speakers such as John Lovell not only called forth the victims’ shades to spirit resistance, but also exploited the setting to stir native pride and sanctify the occasion. Standing on the spot where their ancestors had bravely resisted the encroachments of Edmund Andros, Lovell invoked their blessed memory in 1771 to commend the current generation of Bostonians: “You showed upon the alarming call for trial that their brave spirit still exists in vigor, tho’ their legacy of rights is much impaired.”44 Joseph Warren exemplified this steely fortitude when he delivered his 1775 Massacre oration in the face of taunting British troops. Peter Oliver complained that such performances “kept the Minds of the Rabble in constant Irritation; there being enough
thrown out, at one Oration, to keep the Flame alive until the next Orator blew his Bellows to make it Rage with greater Fury. Yet they likewise both physically and rhetorically contained popular passions.

The standoff over East India tea in November and December of 1773 served to temporarily displace Faneuil Hall’s political authority onto Old South, with important consequences for the Revolution in Boston. Preoccupied with trying to oust Governor Hutchinson over the summer, patriot leaders gave little sustained attention to reports that Parliament would soon allow direct importation of inexpensively taxed East India Company tea to the colonies. Not until the alarm was already sounded in Philadelphia and New York did Bostonians become consumed with the issue. Afraid that compliance with the measure would simultaneously concede Parliamentary political sovereignty and undercut American trade, the Boston Committee of Correspondence urged united resistance as personal threats against local tea consignees mounted by late October.

In the early stages of the crisis, Faneuil Hall functioned much as it had in the days of the Stamp Act. When the tea consignees refused to resign their offices at Liberty Tree on November 3rd, they sparked a minor riot that threatened to escalate into greater violence, especially with Boston’s traditionally rowdy Pope’s Day celebrations right around the corner. The local newspapers hinted as much. “Perhaps it is not too late to free ourselves from popes, devils, and locusts,” proclaimed one inhabitant in the pages of the Boston Gazette. “The fifth of November had been for two centuries celebrated in commemoration of such deliverance.” Hoping to forestall possible mob activity, a regular town meeting was held at Faneuil Hall on November 5th to legitimize the request for resignation. There was a certain irony in all of this, since Peter Faneuil’s nephew was
among the controversial consignees targeted by the town. But if the strategy successfully staved off a riot against them, then it failed to secure their resignation and actually raised popular resentment. When the meeting was informed of the consignees’ continued dissemblance, it declared their conduct “Daringly Affrontive to the Town.”

The atmosphere inside Faneuil Hall thereafter grew increasingly reminiscent of its radical phase in 1768, especially after a vessel arrived on November 17th carrying consignee Richard Clarke’s son Jonathan—whom locals assumed brought his father information about the tea. News of his arrival prompted Sam Adams, Joseph Warren, and other opposition leaders to petition the selectmen for a town meeting on the 18th. The selectmen, whose numbers included John Hancock, not only approved the meeting, but also removed restrictions on membership and explicitly encouraged “a general attendance of the Inhabitants upon this very important Occasion.”

They moreover ordered inspection of the Town Arms while recalling weapons out on loan, a move that harkened back to the summer of 1768, when the Town Arms had been taken out of storage at Faneuil Hall to be cleaned in anticipation of another “detestable” landing, that of British regulars. With rumors of troop movements at Castle William and surrounding towns running rampant, the threat of violence was very real and soon manifested itself, as inhabitants impatient for the town meeting protested before the Clarkes’ home that evening, prompting someone inside the house to fire into the crowd. Despite such harassment, however, neither the Clarkes nor the other consignees would give in to the town meeting’s demands, and the stalemate continued.

Opposition leaders looked to break the standoff by convening massive, intimidating meetings of the “Body,” which were less constrained than town meetings but
still more restrained than street protests. Thus could they appease both the radical and moderate wings of the Revolutionary movement. Moreover, by incorporating opposition from all ranks and from neighboring towns, these meetings displayed a degree of unity that regular town meetings could not hope to match. Indeed, the meetings proved so large that they could not fit inside Faneuil Hall, and they were moved to Old South, which assumed center stage in the subsequent controversy over the tea.53

The growing size and radicalism of the meetings evinced by the change of venue greatly concerned both royal officials and the consignees. When Governor Hutchinson sent Sheriff Greenleaf into Old South to disband one such “unlawful” assembly, he was booed and hissed out of the building, and the meeting continued.54 For their part, the consignees agreed to store the tea until further notice before taking flight to Castle William, prompting concern that, as James Bowdoin explained, they “intend to act a third time the same farce they acted in June, 1768, and immediately after the massacre in March, 1770.”55 Even authorities back in Britain realized the seriousness of the situation. “The account they first received of our Opposition to the East India Act as it is called, particularly the Transactions at Liberty Tree, they treated with Sneer and Ridicule,” Sam Adams told James Warren, “but when they heard of the Resolves of the Body of the People at the Old South Meeting house, the Place from whence the Orders for the Removal of the troops from this Town in 1770, they put on grave Countenances.”56 By early December popular resistance was so widespread that Bostonians began bypassing Faneuil Hall altogether, going straight to Old South for their public meetings.57

If the shift from Faneuil Hall to Old South, and the growing resistance it indicated, intimidated royal officials, it only seemed to embolden opposition leaders. The
usually spacious meetinghouse was so packed on the evening of December 16th that John Andrew and other spectators were unable to get into the building.58 Inside, Josiah Quincy, Jr and other speakers warned the crowd not “to flatter ourselves that popular resolves, popular harangues, popular acclamations, and popular vapor, will vanquish our foes.”59 Shortly thereafter, other protestors outside marched down to Griffin’s Wharf and defiantly dumped East India tea into Boston Harbor, the ripples from which eventually reached all the way across the Atlantic.60 The immediate effect of the so-called Boston Tea Party was to shock the Governor’s faction into action. In Middleborough, Massachusetts, the family of Chief Justice Peter Oliver called on the town meeting to publicly censure Boston, but failed to secure enough votes.61 Marshfield, Massachusetts, where tea consignee Joshua Winslow maintained a home, did openly condemn Bostonians for their behavior.62

Yet such pressure often served to stiffen opposition rather than undermine it. For instance, efforts to oust Oliver from office for supporting an independent salary from the Crown intensified after his family’s failed attempt to turn their town against Boston.63 And on January 25th, Bostonians viciously tarred and feathered a low-ranking customs official in an attack that disturbed people of all ranks and political persuasions.64 Along with the Tea Party, the incident further polarized relations between the Crown and its colonists. While Henry Conway complained about the difficulty of defending American interests in Parliament amidst such tumult and violence, Governor Hutchinson confided that his administration was powerless to protect royal officials.65 “There is no spirit left in those who used to be friends of the government to support them or any others who
oppose the prevailing power,” he told Lord Dartmouth. As if to emphasize the point, Bostonians freely staged a second Tea Party on March 7, 1774.

While Bostonians were busy dumping more tea into their harbor, Parliament was preparing punitive legislation designed to make the town a pariah, but instead effectively transformed it into a martyr for freedom. As Edmund Burke explained to New York’s General Assembly, these Coercive Acts were meant to humble a proud people “not only for the purpose of bringing that refractory Town [Boston] and province [Massachusetts] into proper Order, but for holding out an Example of Terror to the other Colonies...”

The Boston Port Act suspended commercial trade to the seaport after June 1, 1774, pending payment for the ruined tea. Moreover, the Massachusetts Government Act significantly altered the provincial charter and placed the town meeting under the royal governor’s control beginning August 1st. In April, General Thomas Gage was commissioned to replace the discredited Hutchinson as royal governor, an appointment that seemed but little improvement to some Bostonians. “We suspect studied insult, in the appointment of the person who is commander-in-chief of the troops in America to be our governor,” Sam Adams told Arthur Lee.

John Hancock shunned Gage’s inaugural banquet at Faneuil Hall, which erupted in loud hisses when the new Governor offered up a toast to his predecessor. The next day the town meeting gathered in the Hall and rejected proposals to pay for the tea, choosing instead to prepare inhabitants for impending disaster.

A Symbol for a Nation

As the Coercive Acts took effect over the summer of 1774, Faneuil Hall’s political value to the Revolution in Boston— and Boston’s value to the American
Revolution generally became increasingly more symbolic than actual. Opposition leaders consciously cultivated the town's image as a martyr, so that its every act was understood as a patriotic sacrifice to the altar of "American liberty." "The single question, then is, whether you consider Boston as now suffering in the common cause, and sensibly feel and resent the injury and affront offered to her," asked the Committee of Correspondence. The answer was a resounding yes, especially after the advent of the British blockade on June 1st created widespread sympathy for and identification with the community. The very day that the blockade went into effect, Sam Adams consoled an anxious William Checkley about the state of the seaport. "Your native Town which I am persuaded is dear to you, is now suffering the Vengeance of a cruel and tyrannical Administration; and I can assure you she suffers with Dignity," he wrote. A few days later a doleful Eunice Paine wrote from Newton, Massachusetts, "I durst not indulge myself as my spirit dictateth, but I mourn over Boston & feel anxiously concerned for my friends that are inhabitants." Quoting from the Old Testament Book of Lamentations, she continued, "how doth that fair City sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that sat as Princess among the Provinces, how is she become tributary!..."

Reports of Boston's plight even distressed those more distant from the community, signaling a growing nationalist sentiment within the colonies. Tiny Farmington, Connecticut, which otherwise would have had little in common with the Massachusetts seaport, proclaimed, "we, and every American, are sharers in the insults offered to the town of Boston." Philadelphians called for a continental congress and, in words that echoed the Boston Committee of Correspondence, likewise declared, "we
consider our brethren at Boston as suffering in the common cause of America.” Landon Carter successfully convinced Virginians “that the case of the Bostonians was the case of all America...” Parliament had obviously badly miscalculated the mood of the colonists, but it was an understandable mistake. As David Ramsay noted, “That a people so circumstanced, should take part with a distressed neighbour, at the risque of incurring the resentment of the Mother Country, did not accord with the selfish maxims by which states, as well as individuals, are usually governed.”

Such a tremendous show of support did not translate into increased political power for Boston, however. Its Committee of Correspondence could not convince other Massachusetts towns to back an aggressive boycott of British imports that it deemed “the last and only method of preserving our land from slavery without drenching it in blood.” Termed the “Solemn League and Covenant,” the scheme reflected a growing identification with the province’s austere Puritan founders, whom Sam Adams proudly proclaimed “were contented with Clams & Muscles.” Yet it proved too presumptuous for towns awakening to their own political authority, forcing the Bostonians to relent and assure them “that the committee, neither in this or any other matter mean to dictate to them...” Thereafter the Boston Committee of Correspondence increasingly focused its attention on local affairs.

The once formidable Boston town meeting also found its influence compromised by the Coercive Acts. Just days before the Massachusetts Government Act was set to take effect, inhabitants gathered inside Faneuil Hall to relinquish the town’s leadership to the countryside. Governor Gage considered the meeting part of a conscious rebel strategy and told British officials as much. “By the Plan lately adopted, forceable
Opposition and Violence is to be transferred from the Town of Boston to the Country,” the Governor wrote to Lord Dartmouth, “the Copy inclosed of a Letter from the Boston Committee of Correspondence to the several Countys will sufficiently evince the Intention of those Leaders.” The British blockade and growing troop presence had prompted a steady exodus out of the seaport all summer long, leaving those who remained increasingly reliant upon outside assistance. In a narrow sense, the town meeting’s motion sought merely to succor the community. “To you, therefore, we look for that Wisdom, Advice & Example which, giving Strength to our Understandings & Vigor to our Actions, shall with the Blessing of God save us from Destruction,” it explained. To this same end the meeting established a Ways and Means Committee to meet at Faneuil Hall and more effectively manage Boston’s relief.

As power flowed away from the community, Faneuil Hall no longer represented the political threat that it once had to royal officials. Town meetings were but a shadow of their former selves after August 1st, so much so that Governor Gage made virtually no attempt to prevent them, despite their illegality. Many of the leading patriots were too preoccupied with other business to attend what had necessarily become rather mundane debates about relief efforts. On August 10th, Sam Adams and Thomas Cushing left Boston, along with Robert Treat Paine and John Adams, to attend the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Paul Revere was increasingly on the road delivering correspondence to Revolutionary leaders outside of Boston. On September 28th, Josiah Quincy, Jr. sailed for England to meet with royal officials, while a month later William Mollineux took ill and died. Moreover, with fewer inhabitants electing to remain in beleaguered Boston as winter approached, it became more and more difficult to fill seats.
Though the Coercive Acts had cost Faneuil Hall some of its political clout, the building retained its symbolic significance to the Revolution. After Governor Gage unceremoniously discharged him as Colonel of the Governor’s Company of Cadets in August, an outraged John Hancock called for the Cadets to meet at Faneuil Hall, where he broke the news. The Cadets had become a crack outfit under his leadership, but they now seemed more threatening than useful to the Governor, who was being protected by British regulars. Since they traditionally elected their leaders, Hancock’s men considered his discharge a personal insult and yet another attempt to squash popular sovereignty and local custom, a perception likely reinforced by their immediate surroundings. They accordingly resigned en masse and returned the Company’s standard (but not their arms) to Gage.79

As the Cadet meeting there suggests, Faneuil Hall’s use reflected the increasingly militaristic character of Boston’s political crisis in 1774 and 1775. The Crown’s appointment of General Gage as Governor of Massachusetts encouraged this trend, though its intent was to restore order. Unable to act without civil sanction, the army’s role as a peacekeeping force had been hampered by the timidity of past governors fearful of political reprisals. “Governor Bernard informed me of the Tumults, and of his Fears about the Stampt Papers when they should arrive, and seemed to wish for Troops, tho’ afraid to demand them,” Gage had told metropolitan officials in 1765.80 Thomas Hutchinson, recall, had been equally anxious about turning Castle William over to British officers in 1770. With the consolidation of civil and military authority in the figure of Gage, however, such hesitation ceased.
Yet overall Gage proved remarkably restrained in his relations with Bostonians, failing to contest their continued use of Faneuil Hall for political meetings and even military training. His leniency perplexed and frustrated his subordinates and superiors alike. Captain Lieutenant Harry Farrington Gardner was astonished to find that "the Heads of these Rebels were actually drilling their men on Boston Common, and in the face of our Encampment; Nay they carried their impudence so far as to exercise them by Candle Light in their public Halls &c." To him, it seemed a dangerous affront to British military and political authority. Back in England, Thomas Hutchinson dined with one official who expressed his displeasure "with Gen. Gage’s not putting a stop to the military exercises in Fan. Hall, and said they would not be suffered here." The estranged Bostonian defended his hometown and Governor Gage, politely asking his host "to consider whether a number of persons meeting in London, merely to gain an acquaintance with the manual exercise, could be deemed an offence?" 

Though Gage indulged Bostonians at Faneuil Hall, they often refused to reciprocate. On Wednesday, November 9th, 1774, the chaplain of the Fourth Regiment, Reverend Burch, requested and initially received permission from the selectmen to hold service for his men at Faneuil Hall. But the idea apparently did not go over well with some in the community. Known as the King’s Own Regiment, the Fourth had been among the first regiments of British troops in Boston after the blockade commenced. This distinction likely earned it the special ire of inhabitants, as did the fact that a detachment of the Fourth guarded the Province House when Governor Gage was in town. November 9th also happened to be the day in which Bostonians welcomed Sam Adams and the other Congressional delegates back from Philadelphia, an event that may have
prompted the selectmen's decision to reconsider Reverend Burch's request. Allowing agents of tyranny inside the hall of liberty was simply intolerable.

The next day the selectmen informed Burch that his application for Faneuil Hall was denied, citing possible "disorders" and "offence" that the intended service might provoke among the people. They assured the Reverend that he and his men would be accommodated by the local Anglican churches, none of which, of course, could seat the numbers that Faneuil Hall could. Lieutenant John Barker of the Fourth Regiment was disgusted by the selectmen's conduct, which he partly blamed on Gage's conciliatory stance toward the community. "Is it not astonishing that the daily instances of the opposition of the People shou'd tend to make him more earnestly attentive to them," he remarked privately. Even Bostonians were surprised by the Governor's benign response. "General Gage's conduct has been so very unexceptionable of late that the most flaming Sons among us can't but speak well of him," observed John Andrews. All of this changed after April 19, 1775, when the Battles of Lexington and Concord prompted General Gage to completely seal off Boston by land and sea.

Over the next week, a melancholic scene was played out at Faneuil Hall. Anxious inhabitants gathered inside the building on April 22nd to consider their collective predicament and call on Governor Gage to ease the blockade, allowing them to leave Boston with what belongings they could carry. Few were in a fighting mood, so when Gage demanded that they relinquish their arms and admit loyalist refugees in exchange for permission to leave the town, they readily agreed. For days afterward, weary Bostonians walked their weapons over to Faneuil Hall and delivered them to the selectmen, who duly made note. It was a cruel irony. Several years earlier James Otis
had stood defiantly in the same hall and decreed, "There are the arms; when an attempt is
made against your liberties, they will be delivered!"86 Surely he had not envisioned such
as scene as unfolded in 1775. A town committee informed Governor Gage on April 26th
that the people had surrendered their weapons and many now requested his permission to
depart. The following morning Colonel Robinson began issuing the requisite passes, but
warned applicants that they would not be allowed to return and could not take anything
beyond the bare necessities. Any valuables that they wished to have safeguarded could
be deposited at Faneuil Hall, which again assumed its role as clearinghouse.

As summer faded into fall, Faneuil Hall— the very symbol of community in
Boston— was made to bear witness to the town’s near dissolution. “The misery they are
already reduced to in the Town is great,” reported James Warren, “and may be seen
described in the Joy of the Countenances of those who get out.”87 Grass grew up
between the pebbles of Boston’s proudly paved streets as commercial traffic diminished,
hampering business at Faneuil Hall market and leaving inhabitants low on provisions. As
Peter Oliver wryly described the scene, “The very rats are grown so familiar they ask you
to eat them, for they say that they have ate up the sills already, and they must now go
upon the clapboards.”88 Actually, desperate soldiers and civilians were responsible for
consuming scores of fences and wooden buildings for firewood, including the Old North
Meetinghouse— once the pulpit of the indomitable Mathers. British officers gutted the
interior of Old South Meetinghouse to make room for a riding school, prompting popular
outrage. “[W]hat do the regular troops of a Christian prince fight, who wantonly destroy
inoffensive towns by fire, and invade the rights of religious worship, contrary to the
practiced by all civilized nations," asked the Constitutional Gazette. "Even infidels have
held churches sacred."89

Inhabitants were equally upset about the desecration of Faneuil Hall, which many
considered hallowed ground. Since the Boston town meeting had left for the safety of
Watertown, the building was increasingly utilized by the British military. Officers and
their guests occasionally gathered at the Hall to take in an evening of theater and relieve
the tedium of occupational duties. In September of 1775 they staged a version of The
Tragedy of Zara to benefit the widows and children of British soldiers stationed in
Boston.90 The playbill on January 6, 1776, included The Blockade of Boston, a farce
penned by General John Burgoyne. Known as "Gentleman Johnny" for his courtly
manners and patronage of the arts, Burgoyne ridiculed the provincialism of Americans
and mercilessly mocked their martial skills.91 Boston, he believed, could use some
culture.

The use of Faneuil Hall for a theater offended Bostonians on a number of levels.
Their Puritan ancestors had abhorred playacting as impious behavior destructive of the
public order. To permit performances in a place dedicated to preserving the public order,
such as Faneuil Hall, seemed especially egregious. Recall Samuel Sewall's reaction to
rumors of theater at the Town House. Moreover, a 1750 Massachusetts law made it
illegal to stage a play in Boston, in order to protect the public morality. But in 1767 the
ban was revised to better reflect the Revolutionary disdain for British imports
characterized by economic boycotts.92 The Continental Congress adopted a similar
position in 1774, declaring theater to be inconsistent with republican virtue as the aim of
the Revolution.93 "Just as the Puritans feared the theater would draw attention from the
pulpit, so committed revolutionaries feared the stage would diminish, even subvert, the providential glory of their actions,” notes Jeffrey Richards.  

In this context, the performances at Faneuil Hall, particularly Burgoyne’s farce, seemed to mock and undermine the republican spirit of the building and, by implication, both Boston’s Puritan heritage and the Revolutionary movement in general. When she heard of the goings-on at Faneuil Hall, Dorothy Dudley exclaimed, “How our Boston buildings are desecrated by the British soldiers! Faneuil Hall, which has rung with the eloquence of patriots, is used as a theatre, where ridiculous plays are performed and our army and its commanders turned into sport.” The town was ultimately vindicated, however. While British officers relaxed and enjoyed Burgoyne’s production on January 6th, gritty American forces launched a raid on positions near British-occupied Bunker Hill, destroying several homes and capturing a few prisoners in the process. Hearing reports of gunfire across the Charles River, soldiers sounded the alarm in Boston and sent word to their officers assembled at Faneuil Hall, some of whom apparently mistook the sudden announcement as part of the performance. When they finally realized the situation, the play was abruptly cancelled. It was, by all accounts, a farcical scene that was gleefully recounted in patriot circles. Not only did it refute British notions of American military impotence, but also redeemed the Hall a symbol of the Revolution.

Conclusion

With the British army having recently evacuated their city, Bostonians gathered triumphantly before the Town House on July 18th, 1776, to witness a remarkable transformation. Earlier that month their fellow townsmen John Hancock and Samuel Adams had joined with other Revolutionary leaders in Philadelphia formally to declare
American independence from the British Crown. But for many locals the break only became a reality upon watching and hearing the Declaration of Independence read from the balcony of the Town House; the building that had stood as a constant reminder of royal sovereignty in Massachusetts now became the scene for its ultimate dissolution. As the final words fell from the orator’s lips, the crowd on the streets below burst into celebration. Church bells tolled and cannon boomed in the harbor. While patriotic toasts were made throughout town to honor the new nation, old symbols of British authority were demolished in a ritual that historians have suggested signaled “the symbolic transfer of sovereign power from the king to the people of the American republic.”

But Bostonians knew that no such transfer had truly taken place without the inclusion of Faneuil Hall, their symbol of popular sovereignty. They accordingly held a second reading of the Declaration inside the great hall to honor its role in securing American freedom. “Independence, it is true, was declared in Congress in 1776,” explained the Tory exile Peter Oliver, “but it was settled in Boston, in 1768, by Adams & his Junto.” With the center of Revolutionary resistance having shifted south, Faneuil Hall already began to assume its place in the historical imagination and collective memory as the “Cradle of Liberty.” John Lovell’s wish that the building would convey fidelity to the king was quickly forgotten after he and other loyalist refugees sailed for the safety of Nova Scotia. Indeed, as Dorothy Dudley reentered the liberated city and gazed upon the venerated structure, she could only recall “the burning words of Otis, and Adams, and Warren” that still reverberated against its walls.

As Bostonians entered into a new national covenant, Faneuil Hall became a touchstone of their identities both as New Englanders and Americans. It enshrined a new
set of founders who had fulfilled the community’s legacy as a chosen people charged
with the sacred duty to reform a corrupt world. “In this Hall was first heard the
eloquence of an HANCOCK, the two ADAMSES, a BOWDOIN, a MOLLINEUX, and a
WARREN,” proudly proclaimed the Massachusetts Magazine. Portraits of patriot
leaders replaced those of Hanoverian monarchs to express the community’s gratitude for
their sacrifices. At the same time, the building was itself mythologized as part of a
providential plan to spread the blessings of liberty, thus making Faneuil Hall and Boston
the spiritual center of the new nation. “MARK the place! ‘tis holy ground!,” exclaimed
Lucius Sargent in an Independence Day tribute to the Hall, “Here lisping Freedom first
was heard, And heroes caught the magick word.” Sargent and other New Englanders
celebrated the building as a shrine where inspired Americans could go to worship the
founders and reaffirm their faith in freedom.

It is a testament to the appeal of that myth that Faneuil Hall subsequently attracted
votaries of liberty from across the nation and around the world. For instance, the
Marquis de Lafayette was honored with a banquet there in 1784 and visited it again as
part of his patriotic tour of the United States in 1824, which inspired James Fenimore
Cooper to begin writing Lionel Lincoln. Upon returning to the community, the
Frenchman spoke of his “sense of religious reverence” for Boston as the cradle of liberty,
and at the Exchange Coffee House he offered a toast to Faneuil Hall as an eternal
monument to freedom. Later, after a tour of the Charlestown Naval Yard, Lafayette
made a pilgrimage to Faneuil Hall, which had been extensively renovated since his last
visit. Yet its façade remained recognizable, and as he entered the building, he
exclaimed, "This is indeed the Cradle of American Independence," whereupon his vast entourage let out three hearty cheers.\textsuperscript{104}

For some individuals, Lafayette's visit was truly a mystical experience. It reminded Henry Ware of a Massachusetts man who many years earlier had described a dream in which he stood before a beautiful temple. As he went to enter the building, however, its bell began to chime, and he looked up to find the name "FAYETTE" emblazoned in gold letters across the edifice. Another woman from nearby Hingham recounted a similar dream in which she faced what she described as a "vast and venerable building." Suddenly the structure began to boil and churn, dissolving before her very eyes only to be replaced by a vision of the Goddess of Liberty.\textsuperscript{105}

Both stories are evocative of Lafayette's Faneuil Hall visit and suggest the spirituality of the building for many visitors.\textsuperscript{106} "I know not how it is, but there is something that excites me strangely, deeply, before I even begin to speak," said Daniel Webster of the building.\textsuperscript{107} Ralph Waldo Emerson believed that the \textit{genius loci} of Faneuil Hall was stronger than anyplace else in America.\textsuperscript{108} The Hungarian freedom fighter Lajos Kossuth certainly sensed it and was inspired by the vision of Boston's past that it conjured in his mind's eye. "I feel the spirit of olden times moving through Faneuil Hall," he declared during a visit in 1852, "... Let me bear with me the heart-strengthening conviction that I have seen Boston still a radiating sun, as it was of yore, but risen so high on mankind's sky as to spread its warming rays of elevated patriotism far over the waves."\textsuperscript{109}

Professor Larrabee, a traveling correspondent for the Cincinnati-based \textit{Ladies' Repository}, was singularly unimpressed with Faneuil Hall when he visited "the City of
the Puritans’ in the 1850s. As he wandered the city streets, he wondered if Boston still deserved such a title. Urban expansion, Irish-Catholic immigration, and industrial development had combined to transform the local landscape, prompting Larrabee to conclude, “It is fast losing the characteristics which the old Puritans marked on it.” Yet his description of ‘time-honored and world-renowned’ Faneuil Hall suggests that Boston’s Puritan traditions had found refuge inside the genteel structure: “The ‘associations’ that inspire so much eloquence in that Hall must be purely ethereal, for there is woeful absence of all external paraphernalia [save a few portraits].” The Cradle of Liberty, it would seem, had also nursed the New England Way into the nineteenth century.
CHAPTER NOTES

1 *Eighteenth Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston: Boston Town Records, 1770-1777*, comp. William H Whitmore (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1887), p. 139. (Volumes of the Boston town records and selectmen’s minutes will hereafter be referred to as *BTR*.)


4 Letter from Samuel Adams to Elbridge Gerry, November 5, 1772, in *The Writings of Samuel Adams, Vol. II*.


6 On the attempt to defame Molineux in the town meeting, see *BTR*, 18: 73; On the attempt to unseat Sam Adams from office, see Ibid., p. 78.


9 *Boston News-Letter*, November 26, 1772. Similar tactics were used to impugn the Marblehead town meeting, which had expressed its concurrence with Boston. See Letter from Samuel Adams to Elbridge Gerry, December 23, 1772, in *The Writings of Samuel Adams, Vol. II*, pp. 387-389.

10 Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to Secretary Pownall, November 13, 1772, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 27: 412. The Governor was especially critical of the committee’s chairman, James Otis, who had made a career of denigrating Hutchinson. Writing to Francis Bernard, an unforgiving Hutchinson said of his ailing nemesis, “You may judge of this Committee by their Chareman who is but just now discharged from his guardian and is still once in a few days as mad as ever the effect of strong drink.” Letter

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On Young, see Pauline Maier, "Reason and Revolution: The Radicalism of Dr. Thomas Young," American Quarterly, 28 (Summer 1976): 229-249.

Posing as "A Puritan" in some of his writings, Samuel Adams proved particularly adept at this practice. See, for instance, Boston Gazette, April 11, 1768.

Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to Secretary Pownall, November 13, 1772, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 27: 412.


Elbridge Gerry complained about the choice of words to Sam Adams, who replied that it was meant as a protest against the Church of England and its bishops. See Letter from Samuel Adams to Elbridge Gerry, November 14, 1772, in The Writings of Samuel Adams, Vol. II, pp. 348-350.


Ibid., p. 379.


21 Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to William Jackson, February 23, 1773, Hutchinson Papers, Massachusetts State Archives, 27: 455.

22 Address of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts to the Governor, March 2, 1773, in *The Writings of Samuel Adams, Vol. II*, pp. 431-432.

23 Report to the Town of Boston, March 23, 1773, reprinted in *The Writings of Samuel Adams, Vol. III*, p. 6. Adams was particularly upset about the false impression of lawlessness that Hutchinson's accusations gave the community. In the pages of the *Boston Gazette* he wrote of the controversial Faneuil Hall meetings as being conducted "calmly and dispassionately." In fact, Adams argued that it was their very rationality that bothered critics and made the "regular Assembly of the People" an effective bulwark against arbitrary, outside authority. See *Boston Gazette* article signed "Candidus," April 12, 1773, reprinted in *The Writings of Samuel Adams, Vol. III*, p. 31.


27 For accounts of the incident, see "Diary of Thomas Newell, 1773-1774," pp. 338-339; "Boyle's Journal of Occurrences in Boston, 1759-1778," p. 364; and *Letters and Diary of John Rowe*, p. 245.


30 BTR, 18: 133.


33 Letters and Diary of John Rowe, p. 246.


39 “Bill presented from painter Thomas Crafts, Jr.,” May 1773, Boston Public Library/ Rare Books Department. For another example, see “Extracts from the Diary of Dorothy Dudley,” April 10, 1776, Theatrum Majorum, p. 63. Thomas Hutchinson blamed Samuel Adams for such changes in political nomenclature. See Thomas Hutchinson, The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, Vol. III, (London: John Murray, 1828), p. 413.


44 James Lovell, An Oration Delivered April 2, 1771 at the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston; to Commemorate the bloody Tragedy of the Fifth of March, 1770, (Boston, MA: Edes and Gill, 1771), 7.

Contemporary accounts of this incident are found in "Boyle’s Journal of Occurrences in Boston, 1759-1778," 367-368; Letters and Diary of John Rowe, 252-253; "Diary of Thomas Newell, 1773-1774," 343.

Boston Gazette, October 18, 1773, as quoted in Labaree, The Boston Tea Party, p. 106.

_BTR_, 18: 146.

Petitions for Town Meeting, November 17, 1773, Mellen Chamberlain Collection, Boston Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division.

Notification of Town Meeting, November 17, 1773, Evans Index 42415.


In his analysis of the shift from legal town meetings to extra-legal meetings of “the Body” in 1773, Benjamin Labaree emphasizes the greater flexibility of the latter for opposition leaders as well as its greater ability to protect the town from punishment, a strategy that we have also seen applied to meetings held at “Liberty Hall” as far back as 1765. See Benjamin Woods Labaree, _The Boston Tea Party_, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 124-125. Labaree’s book remains the best and most thorough account of the events leading up to the Boston Tea Party.


60 Although royal officials suspected a connection between the Old South meetings and the subsequent Tea Party, they were unable to prove the link. See Letter from Lord Dartmouth to General Thomas Gage, April 9, 1774, reprinted in Merrill Jensen, ed., English Historical Documents: American Colonial Documents to 1776, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955), p. 787. Historian Benjamin Labaree suggests that the Tea Party was planned in an all-day Committee of Correspondence meeting held at Faneuil Hall three days earlier, although his evidence is circumstantial. See Labarree, The Boston Tea Party, p. 142; Richard D. Brown, Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts, p. 164.

61 For an account of this town meeting, see William G. McLoughlin, ed., The Diary of Isaac Backus, Vol. II: 1765-1785, (Providence: Brown University Press, 1979), p. 896. It is worth noting that Governor Hutchinson’s eldest son and his family were also in Middleborough after the destruction of the tea.

62 Boston Gazette, February 7, 1774; Massachusetts Spy, February 24, 1774.


64 For contemporary accounts of the incident, see Hulton, Letters of a Loyalist Lady, 70-71; “Diary of Thomas Newell, 1773-1774,” 348; Letters and Diary of John Rowe, 261. Alfred F. Young has detailed the response of one “tea party” participant, George Robert Twelves Hewes, to Malcom’s tarring and feathering in his The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999), 46-51.

65 Letter from William Bollan to the Council of Massachusetts, March 11, 1774, reprinted in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, Sixth Series. Vol. IX, (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1897), 355-356.


For accounts of the Governor’s reception at Faneuil Hall, see “Letters of John Andrews,” 328; *Letters and Diary of John Rowe*, 270-271; “Diary of Thomas Newell, 1773-1774,” 352.


Boston Committee of Correspondence Circular Broadside, June 10, 1774, Evans Index 13158. In his analysis of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, Richard D. Brown has argued that the towns’ criticism of the Solemn League and Covenant evinces their growing political influence in Revolutionary Massachusetts and reflects the progressive localization of the crisis. See his *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Town’s, 1772-1774*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 208-209.


The relevant documents for this incident have been collected in *The Historic Hancock-Gage Confrontation and the Independent Company of Cadets*, (Boston: Veteran Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


82 Diary Entry, January 17, 1775, in The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq., Vol. I, p. 351.

83 Selectmen's Minutes, 1769-1775, p. 231. It would be another month before the regiment secured a place to worship.


86 Letter from Francis Bernard to the Earl of Hillsborough, September 16, 1768, in Letters to the Ministry, p. 73.


88 Letter from Peter Oliver to Elisha Hutchinson, June 10, 1775, in The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq., Vol. I, p. 469.


90 The Tragedy of Zara broadside, Evans Index 13841.


95 “Extracts from the Diary of Dorothy Dudley,” January 16, 1776, reprinted in *Theatrum Majorum Dorothy Dudley*, p. 53.


98 “Extracts from the Diary of Dorothy Dudley,” p. 87. Faneuil Hall continued to host annual Fourth of July celebrations. For examples, see *Columbian Centinel*, July 4, 1796, and *Boston Gazette*, July 5, 1804; On the meaning of Independence Day and the Declaration of Independence in the new nation, see Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).


100 “Extracts from the Diary of Dorothy Dudley,” p. 65.


103 In 1805, Boston architect Charles Bulfinch was commissioned to enlarge Faneuil Hall to accommodate the city’s growing population. Mindful of the building’s meaning to New Englanders and the nation, he was careful to preserve its familiar façade. For Bulfinch’s description of the renovation, see Ellen Susan Bulfinch, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch, Architect*, (1896; reprinted, New York: Burt Franklin, 1973), pp. 119-121. For an analysis of Bulfinch’s impact on Boston’s built environment, see Harold and James Kirker, *Bulfinch’s Boston, 1787-1817*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
Lafayette’s 1824 tour of Boston is described in *Boston Evening Gazette*, August 28, 1824, and *Columbian Sentinel*, August 28, 1824.


Ibid., p. 18.
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