

Shared Memory: John Hampden, New World and Old

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English subjects in the old world and colonists in the new shared their history and collective political experience for more than 150 years before the Americans declared independence. In the decades preceding that declaration, the historic memory of the Stuart monarchy in England came to play a formative part in the political dialogue of the new world and the literature of the old. This paper is about the manifestation of the seventeenth-century stories and legends of John Hampden and the English civil wars within the historic memory of eighteenth-century England and the colonies. It is about events of the seventeenth century informing the eighteenth.

John Hampden occupied a major place in that shared history. His life spanned the years of the reigns of James I and Charles I, what John Palfrey, a historian in America in the nineteenth century, chose to call the Stuart Dynasty.¹ Born in 1594, Hampden was just nine when James came to the English throne and he died in 1643 only six years before the execution of Charles. As well as Hampden's peripheral interest in one-twelfth share of a patent for land in Connecticut, his name was linked to the early colonial period through two stories that were perpetuated in literature for years to come. Later, and quite separately from those colonial legends, Hampden became an icon of the revolutionary period for his stand against the unjust taxation by the Crown that culminated in his trial in the ship-money case in 1637.

The story of how the public memory of Hampden was transmitted, and sometimes corrupted, is a complicated one, and the earlier legends particularly need to be set straight. They were, to use the words of Henry Cabot Lodge, myths 'which masquerade as history'.² In discovering how the legends involving the colonies developed we can put to rest the recurring question of whether Hampden himself ever visited the new world. The second part of the story, that of Hampden's place in the public memory of the eighteenth century at the time of the break with Britain, is less complicated but more compelling.

Let me begin at the beginning, with ship money. John Hampden became famous in England in 1637 the moment he challenged the king's right to collect the ship-money tax, and it was sustained over generations in the hearts and minds of the people, first by contemporary news accounts and letters, and later through the great literary histories of David Hume and Lord Macaulay.³ In the mid-seventeenth century, when many Englishmen believed

that Charles I was overstepping the bounds of the statutory powers vested in the Crown, Hampden became an instant national hero for seeking a judicial determination regarding the powers of taxation. It was an act of supreme courage for a little-known Calvinist country gentleman to confront the king in a court of law. Ultimately the ship-money case was about far more than the 20 shillings of ship-money tax that Hampden refused to pay. It was about the nature of government, the powers of the Crown and the authority of parliament – all issues with which England and the colonies would wrestle in succeeding years. It became a landmark case in English constitutional practice and ensured Hampden's place in history for all time.

Five years after the ship-money case, when the Civil War broke out, Hampden fought for Parliament, raising a troop of foot soldiers, the Greencoats, in Buckinghamshire. That Colonel Hampden was revered and loved by his men is clear in a contemporary account of one of the battles. It describes him as one of 'those colonels and commanders that were at an instant willing to hazard their lives upon this design'.⁴ It singles out Hampden as 'a gentleman that has never been wanting to adventure his life and fortunes for the good and welfare of his King and Country'. It was reported that common soldiers 'freely and unanimously consented, and proffered to adventure their lives with this noble gentleman'.⁵ Neither the number of the king's troops nor their spirit could equal 'the courage of noble Colonel Hampden and his resolute Buckinghamshire militia'.⁶ In June 1643 the Greencoats clashed with the Lord General's troops at Chalgrove near Thame. The fighting was fierce and casualties were heavy on both sides. Hampden was shot in the shoulder and died at Thame six days later, on 24 June 1643.⁷ The country grieved at this hero's death. In only the time it took to write them, elegies appeared in manuscript with printed versions hastily following.⁸ More than one verse linked Hampden to Achilles and Homer, and raised to him the crown of immortality.⁹ Readers were enjoined to 'Go and write thus on this hero's tomb: Hampden rests here approv'd in everything, upright to heaven, his country and his King.'¹⁰

It is an irony of history that, alongside his stance on ship money, Hampden's early death was critical to his later fame. It spared him participation in the trial of the king. He was never confronted with the question of whether to sign the death warrant of Charles, and thus escaped the political accusations directed at the regicides in particular and the Roundheads in general during the Restoration period.

The ship-money case, his martyr's death on the battlefield, and his absence from the trial and execution of the king were all factors that combined to create the image of a man of heroic proportions. It was that image in the popular mind that gave rise to two stories or legends connecting Hampden with the colonies, the first involving Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1622-1623, the second concerning passage to the new world around 1637.

Briefly, the first story is this. In 1622 Massasoit, the Chief of the Wampanoag Indians, visited the English plantation at Plymouth, where he

was met by Miles Standish, William Brewster and Governor John Carver.¹¹ They dined together and concluded a peace treaty of mutual advantage. In future, they agreed, when they met together the Indians would not bring their bows and arrows and the pilgrims would leave their guns behind. One year later, in March 1623, news was received at Plymouth from friendly Indians that Massasoit was gravely ill. The English, hearing of Massasoit's illness, and bearing in mind the Indian custom of visiting the sick, sent a delegation to his village. Governor Carter of Plymouth chose Edward Winslow, who had come with him on the *Mayflower*, as an emissary. Winslow knew the way, having been there before. The governor gave him medicinal cordials for Massasoit and provided him with a consort: 'one master John Hamden, a gentleman of London (who then wintered with us, and desired much to see the country)'.¹² Hobbamock, an Indian, also went along as a guide. When they arrived in the Indian village they found Massasoit gravely ill with 'his tongue swelled in such manner as it was not possible for him to eat such meat as they had, his passage being stopt up'.¹³ Winslow administered the cordials that he brought and the following day Hamden and Winslow set out to make additional medicines with local herbs, Winslow noting that his consort was 'as ignorant as myself in these matters'. They shot and prepared a goose, careful to skim off the fat after boiling it. Massasoit ate the de-fatted goose, threw up, had a nose bleed, defecated and slept for six or eight hours. Well purged, he woke up a new man. There was great jubilation about his recovery which had practical implications important to the village although of no importance to our story. It was decided by all present that since eating the goose had cured Massasoit's illness, there was no need to kill the remaining few chickens and, mercifully, they could be kept for breeding.

It is the sentence about John Hamden, Gentleman, that interests us. There are only two contemporary accounts of the story that include the name. The first is the record written by Edward Winslow himself.¹⁴ He had been in Plymouth since 1621 but left Massachusetts on 10 September 1623, the autumn following the Massasoit incident.¹⁵ On his arrival in England in early 1624 Winslow immediately published his narrative of two years in the colonies entitled *Good Newes from New England*. The second account that named Hampden was not published until 1662. It was written by Phenehas Pratt, who had gone to New England with Thomas Weston in 1622 to set up a plantation near Plymouth. Pratt never returned to England, having by 1648 secured a good parcel of land at Charlestown 'in the wilderness, on the east of Merrimack river'. Pratt died in the new world at some ninety years of age. Before his death, however, in 1662, he had presented to the General Court of Massachusetts 'An History' called 'A Declaration of the Affairs of the English People that First inhabited New England', which was subsequently published.¹⁶

The other contemporary accounts that chronicle the period – William Bradford's *Journal of Plymouth Plantation* (1620-1647), the *Brief Relation* for 1622, and the *Historical Discovery* – do not mention Hampden.¹⁷ Winslow and

Pratt, then, are the only contemporary accounts of the story. In 1624, John Hamden, Gentleman, was of no interest to readers: Hampden the future 'patriot', as he came to be called, was a name barely known outside Buckinghamshire. By the 1640s, however, only twenty or so years after the founding of the Plymouth colony, Hampden's name was known throughout the colonies in connection with the ship-money case. In that regard it is significant that in Winslow's second edition of *Good Newes*, printed in England in 1648, he did not identify Mr Hamden, Gentleman, as 'ship money' Hampden – as he arguably would have done had that been the case.¹⁸

The larger general early histories also either omit the name or do not identify the gentleman who accompanied Winslow. Nathaniel Morton's history issued in 1669, although heavily based on Winslow's account, does not include Hampden's name.¹⁹ William Hubbard, whose general history was written around 1677 but not published until 1815 also not unsurprisingly omits the incident.²⁰ He was using Winthrop's journal for the early period. Cotton Mather in 1702 related the incident but named only 'that good man, Mr. Winslow' as chosen to visit 'this poor sachim'.²¹

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the story changes. Abiel Holmes, the father of Oliver Wendell Holmes, attempted 'to trace facts' and to arrange them in a 'natural and lucid order'. History, he said, 'without chronology is dark and confused; chronology without history is dry and insipid'.²² That said, however, without further investigation he included the Massasoit incident in his *Annals of America*, published in 1805.²³ In so doing he provides the first real clue for the modern historian as to the origin of the story: in a footnote he indicates to his readers that he is relying on Jeremy Belknap, whose first volume of the *American Biography* was published in 1794 and the second in 1798.²⁴ Belknap's *Biography* appears to be the source of the subsequent myth of Hampden's presence in Plymouth colony. There is some confusion, however, about the sequence of events in Belknap (apparently overlooked by Holmes in his quest for correct chronology) as he speaks of the incident of stopping the ship in the Thames as having occurred before the death of Massasoit. Belknap relied on Winslow's Journal as authoritative, but in his biography of Bradford he added a footnote conflating the story of Massasoit and Plymouth with the later one of the sailing in 1637, telling us that:

In Winslow's Journal Mr. Hamden is said to be 'a gentleman of London, who then wintered with us, and desired much to see the country'. I suppose this to be the same person who distinguished himself by his opposition to the illegal and arbitrary demands of King Charles I. He had previously (1637) [*sic*] embarked for New England with Oliver Cromwell, Sir Arthur Hasilrig, and others; but they were prevented from coming by the King's 'proclamation against disorderly transporting his Majesty's subjects to the plantations in America'. Hamden was born in 1594 and was 29 years old at the time of his being at Plymouth, in 1623.

George Bancroft, the first great and widely popular historian of America, whose book was published almost thirty years after Holmes's, omits the story of Hampden and Massasoit's illness in his ten-volume history published in 1834.²⁵ Fewer than ten years later, in 1841, Alexander Young compiled in a single edition all of the extant accounts of the early colonies. On Hampden's name in his edition of the Winslow text Young included a long and learned note on the improbability of Winslow's consort being *the* John Hampden.²⁶ He attributed the perpetuation of the legend to Belknap. John Gorham Palfrey followed suit in dismissing the story. The first historian to attempt to systematically describe the colonial experience concurrently with events in England, Palfrey entitled his book the *History of New England, during the Stuart Dynasty*. It was published between 1858 and 1875. Palfrey would like to have believed the Hampden story. 'It is a natural feeling', he said, that drives historians 'to identify this person with the great statesman of the civil war.'²⁷ He continued, however, by saying that

such a supposition will not bear scrutiny, John Hampden could not have spared the time to be absent from England at the critical juncture of affairs between King James's third and fourth parliament; when afterwards he became conspicuous, our early writers could not have failed to notice the fact of a visit from him, had it been made; and the name borne by the stranger is inconsistent with the idea of an incognito of the illustrious patriot. Dr. Young (*Pilgrims*, 314 note) has suggested other considerations which alone would seem decisive against the supposition of a visit to Plymouth by the John Hampden of history.²⁸

But the story persisted despite Bancroft and Young, I would argue, not because of its inclusion in Belknap but because Americans embraced it, as John Palfrey had said historians might. There was a hint of plausibility in the tale, too. If the winds had been right, the seas calm, it is just possible that he could have made it to Plymouth and back to England in a year. The man in question 'wintered' in Plymouth, arriving in the autumn of 1622. The Parliament of 1621 in which Hampden sat for Grampound had been dismissed in February 1622. The episode with Massasoit occurred in spring 1623. And although the date of his appointment is not clear, we know that Hampden served as a Justice of the Peace in Buckinghamshire in 1624.²⁹ There is no hard evidence, however, of Hampden's ever having left the shores of England – we find no licence to travel mandated from the Privy Council and no mention of such a journey in any correspondence or in any of his subsequent parliamentary speeches in 1625, 1626, 1628 or the early 1640s. Nineteenth-century Americans simply wanted to believe, as Palfrey said, that John Hampden the patriot, a man of God and country, a fellow Englishman who had stood against the king, had trodden the soil of Plymouth and healed the great Chief Massasoit. Henry Cabot Lodge wrote in the twentieth century that 'The historical myth, indeed, would not exist at all if it did not profess to tell something which people, for one reason or another, like to believe.'³⁰ As late as 1890, for example, on Tuesday, 28 January, we read in the minutes of

the meeting of the Rhode Island Historical Society in Providence that there was a motion made by one Wilfred H. Monroe,

That the authorities of the Old Colony railroad change the name of the station lying nearest to the village of the Indian Chief Massasoit to Hampden, in the confident hope that future research will establish it as a fact that 'John Hampden, a gentleman of London' who accompanied Edward Winslow in 1623 in the visit to the great sachem was the English patriot John Hampden.

A committee was appointed to investigate the matter.³¹

And who was the 'Mr. Hamden, Gentleman from London' mentioned by Winslow and Pratt? More likely it was John Holmeden, who was cast out from the Berkeley plantation by William Tracy, and travelled northwards to seek his fortune with countrymen in other areas – a journey that saved his life because while he was in New England most of the Berkeley plantation was wiped out in an Indian attack. It is possible that Holmeden, or Holden, as he appears in the captain's list, went first to Weston's colony and then moved on to Plymouth sometime in late 1622, where he 'wintered', and in the spring of 1623 went with Winslow to Massasoit.³² Apparently over the years the name Holmeden has been read as Hampden. The Guide to the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) name index, published in 1966, notes the problem in having transcribed the name 'Hamden' for 'Holmedon' in various papers of the HMC collection.

The second story linking Hampden to the colonies varies in the telling, sometimes naming four or sometimes five men, sometimes taking place in 1637 and sometimes in 1638. Very simply it is this: eight ships sailing from London to Massachusetts were stopped in the mouth of the Thames by order of the Crown. On board one of those ships were John Hampden, Oliver Cromwell, Sir Arthur Hesilrig, John Pym and/or Sir Henry Vane. They were put off the ship by order of the Crown and prevented from journeying to the new world.

The story does not appear in the account closest to being contemporary, *The History of the Rebellion*, begun by Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, in the late 1640s but not published until 1702.³³ Nor does it appear in the widely read *History of England* by Paul Rapin that was printed in 1733 and benefited from Clarendon's earlier history.³⁴ We first find the story in one of the most influential and important books in colonial historiography, Cotton Mather's *New-English History* printed in 1702.³⁵ Some fifty years later, in 1754 David Hume includes the story in his *History of England* citing Cotton Mather, George Bate and Sir William Dugdale as sources.³⁶ Bate and Dugdale can be discounted here as they are general commentaries and do not carry the specific story of the ship. Hume clung to Mather and embellished the account with his own words, telling us that on the eight ships were Sir Arthur Hesilrig, John Hampden, John Pym and Oliver Cromwell ready to 'fly to the other extremity of the globe where they might enjoy lectures and discourses of any

length or form'³⁷ – a serious dig at Mather, well known for his interminable puritan sermons and a far cry from the reality of the near starvation in the colonies and the Indian wars of Massachusetts and Virginia. Lord Nugent later picks up on Hume's remark and writes, 'No vindication this for detaining them from that enjoyment, if such were their sober and innocent taste.'³⁸

By 1754, then, there existed in print two accounts of the story, one by David Hume and the other by Cotton Mather; one in a popular format that went through a multitude of editions, the other in a heavy history laced with ecclesiastical remarks and sermonising, but nevertheless popular. It is certainly likely that the more widely read Hume rather than Mather became the source for subsequent authors. John Adams, no doubt, relied on Hume when writing in Boston in 1775 that James I and Charles I, hating parliaments more than the Pope, would not allow every Tom, Dick and Harry there to censure the royal prerogative and 'Pym, Hamden, Sir Henry Vane and Oliver Cromwell', he said, 'did not surely wish to subject a country which they sought as an asylum to the arbitrary jurisdiction from which they wished to fly'.³⁹ Hume's account was also the likely source for Lord Nugent writing in 1831,⁴⁰ as well as for Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1877, who explained that the cousins (Hampden and Cromwell) 'were actually on board when an order of council appeared by which the ship was prohibited from sailing. Seven other ships, filled with emigrants were stopped at the same time.'

The perpetuation of the legend by Hume and Macaulay is interesting because they both had access to the historical record and each one of them could have easily corrected it. Let us look more closely at the story. The factual frame is a simple one. As the Church of England grew more Catholic in its theology, and more proselytising in its policy of uniformity under the Arminian archbishop William Laud during the early 1630s, people chose to leave; not only separatists but also independents and many of Presbyterian bent who were uncomfortable with Laudian politics. Enough people by then had made the transatlantic crossing, and survived to tell the tale, that colonising appeared to be a promising possibility. Separation from the Church of England, it seemed, could be combined with the commercial and economic interests of the trading companies.

But by the mid-1630s the Church and Crown were concerned about the great out-migration that increased dramatically after 1628. The Crown, in particular, was concerned about the loss of revenue. The ship-money levies that brought Hampden to the King's Bench had signalled economic desperation on the part of the Crown. Without Parliament to refill the coffers they stood empty for almost a decade. In 1637 a royal proclamation complained about and forbade the sailing of subsidy men, that is, those who were taxpayers.⁴¹

On 30 March 1638, 'for reasons importing the state', the Privy Council ordered that the Lord Treasurer should stay eight ships in the Thames that were prepared to go into New England.⁴² The following day, 1 April 1638, the

Lord Treasurer also issued an order to stay the ships, and herein is the source of the tale of eight ships stayed in the Thames by government order.⁴³ But that was not the end of the story. Five days later, by order of the Privy Council, the ships and their passengers were free to sail. There is absolutely no indication that there were some on board who were taken off and prevented from sailing: 'His Majesty and Board [...] upon the humble petition of the merchants, passengers, and owners of ships now bound for New England [...] his Majesty was graciously pleased at this time to free them from a last restraint and to set them at liberty to proceed on in their intended voyage.' It was with these orders of the Privy Council, then, that the second legend regarding Hampden and the new world began. By the 1660s the verbatim record of these orders was widely available in John Rushworth's *Historical Collections*.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the first writer of history to include the full story of the ships, giving the orders for both staying and sailing, was John Forster in 1837, writing more than 170 years after Rushworth was published. Forster wrote in his work on Pym that 'In fact there is no reason for supposing that all who had embarked for New England on board the eight ships alluded to did not proceed to New England. No doubt they did so.'⁴⁵ The parliamentarians simply had not been on board.

David Hume's *History* was wildly popular and quickly published in ever newer editions. Hume was himself no slouch and kept up with history and literature in general. Sometime around 1764, soon after it appeared on the bookstalls, he read Thomas Hutchinson's *History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*.⁴⁶ Hutchinson, born in Boston, served as the last royal Governor of Massachusetts. Although he was a servant of the Crown, he was at the same time a first-generation Bostonian and graduate of Harvard College. His history was written to describe the process of colonisation, and more importantly to advertise that the foundations of the new world were laid by strong and noble people. He concludes the story of the stopping of the ships by adding a further dimension, what he believes is a confirmation of the fact. Hutchinson tells us that although the story is 'questioned by some authors, it appears plainly by a letter from Lord Say and Seale to Mr. Vane' that those gentlemen in question clearly wanted to leave England.

Hutchinson's research skills, however, were flawed. He was talking about a letter written much earlier, when the men in question, with a number of others, had not only expressed interest in the new world, but had drafted a patent for the purchase of land as a place of refuge for Puritans. Apparently there is no evidence that the patent was ever issued and by the autumn of 1632 the plan seems to have been abandoned.⁴⁷ He provides no date or source for the letter but includes the whole account of it with the story of the parliamentarians on the ships in his section for 1635. The reason for its inclusion there may be that Hutchinson was confusing Sir Henry Vane, Sr, a courtier who joined the parliamentary leaders by 1641, with his son, Sir Henry Vane, Jr, who, along with John Winthrop, Jr, went to the colonies in 1635.

What did Hume make of Hutchinson's tale? Before he died in 1776, the very year of independence, Hume added 'corrections and improvements' to his history. In his revised edition he again cites Mather for the story of the staying of the ships but this time adds to his note: 'Thomas Hutchinson's *History of Massachusetts Bay*, I, p.42.' This last quoted author 'puts the fact beyond controversy'.

The legend, then originated with Mather, was substantiated by Hutchinson and confirmed and transmitted by Hume and Lord Macaulay. Interestingly, Hume also used Rushworth as a source but apparently either overlooked or chose to disregard the order for the release of the ships later cited by Forster. Did Macaulay know Rushworth's work? It is hard to believe that he did not, but nevertheless chose to maintain the legend that Forster himself had labelled 'a very popular rumor of history'.⁴⁸

Why was the story so popular? For one thing, it is dramatic and had its roots in the issues of the day and, as was the Massasoit story, it was plausible. People were going to America; Hampden, Vane, Pym and Hesilrig were known to have had an interest in land in the colonies (although not Cromwell); they were Puritans, and they were all engaged to one degree or another in opposition politics at home. Generations of readers in England and the colonies recognised in this story the names of the leaders of the Long Parliament that they had heard about on their grandfathers' knees or read about in their schoolbooks. What they apparently failed to consider was that in 1637 or 1638, several years before the opening of the Parliament, Vane, Pym and Hesilrig, although they were familiar names, were not heroes to an age – that would only come later. And as for Hampden, in the spring of 1637 he was awaiting the beginning of the ship-money trial, opened in August of that year. In the long run the two stories connected with the colonies became quiescent legends of history and the world of literature. In contrast, the historic memory of Hampden's stand against ship money, dramatically heightened by his martyr's death on the battlefield, provided an example that informed revolutionary thought with regard to taxation and representation.

In England after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 there remained many who had served in the Long Parliament and had fought shoulder to shoulder in the Civil War, who remembered retrospectively the passion and commitment of parliamentarians to the idea of government based on rule of law without special powers for the Crown. They met in coffee houses and inns and reminisced about 'the good old cause'. As country gentlemen, commonwealth men and Whigs, they wrote about republicanism and mixed government. After the debauchery of Charles II and the Catholicism of James II, by 1688 their Whiggish voices were welcomed.

The Glorious Revolution of that year established limits for the Crown and defined the parameters of Parliament's place in government. Under the Bill of Rights the king became, to a great extent, a servant of the state. And the Crown and Parliament, the executive and legislative branches, together shared in a new balance of sovereign power.

Within a decade, however, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the reality of that balance began to shift as political parties solidified and found new means to ensure the increase of the number of seats they controlled in Parliament. Their corruption of the electoral process was not lost on the colonists. Nor was what the colonists saw as corruption in England limited to the issue of parliamentary seats. It was seen to stretch well beyond government into the whole social fabric of the entire nation. It was entangled with the rapidly increasing wealth of the country whose foreign trade and shipping had nearly doubled between 1700 and 1750.⁴⁹ Life at every level except the poorest was affected. Living standards rose as production, exports and imports increased. The burst of the South Sea Bubble only demonstrated the new breadth of investor society. Sir Robert Walpole, the Whig Prime Minister in 1721, had set his policy to foster commerce, as he said, upon which the riches and grandeur of England depended – and he had succeeded.⁵⁰ In short, as the colonies grew in economic importance, as Edmund Morgan writes, English interest in exercising authority over them also grew.⁵¹

As news of corruption scandals in England became more regular, colonists in the new world began speaking of a ‘conspiracy’ against them in the ministry, and they became suspicious of local English governors ‘to the point of paranoia’.⁵² Even a moderate such as John Dickinson, later a member of the Continental Congress, could write in 1768, ‘Ought not the people therefore to watch? To observe the fact [...] to investigate [the] designs?’⁵³ Thomas Jefferson stated outright that there appeared to be ‘a deliberate, systematical, plan of reducing us to slavery’.⁵⁴ In the words of Gordon Wood, ‘Every successive step by the Crown under the guise of a corrupted and pliant parliament only confirmed American fears of a despotic conspiracy against freedom.’⁵⁵ Tyranny had become a by-word in everyday conversations.

There was, then, a general outcry against the English Parliament, its corrupt practices and its mandates for greater taxation of the colonies to feed a luxury market in London. Wasn’t the luxury made possible by parliamentary taxation schemes built on the backs of the colonists? Wasn’t it possible through the patterns of clientage and patronage in parliamentary elections, and favouritism in government appointments? In Connecticut, the Reverend Ebenezer Baldwin spoke for many when he wrote in 1774 that ‘notwithstanding the excellency of the British constitution, if the ministry can secure a majority in parliament [that] will [...] vote as they bid them, they may rule as absolutely [...] The great thing the ministry is driving at [is]’, he said, ‘to establish an arbitrary government [in the colonies] with the consent of parliament’.⁵⁶

By the mid-1770s newspapers, pamphlets and letters poured into Boston and Philadelphia from opposition forces in England led by Joseph Priestly, Richard Price and James Burgh, advertising that Parliament and country had abandoned the true principles of liberty. According to one colonial pamphlet that went through seven print editions the first year it came out, they had abandoned not the principles of ‘certain modern Whigs’ but of ‘Whigs before

the [glorious] revolution and at the time of it' – the principles which John Locke and others 'maintained with their pens, Mr. Hampden and Lord [William] Russell with their blood and Mr. Algernon Sidney with both'.⁵⁷

During the years preceding the American Revolution 'an extraordinary display of the writing of contemporary history' and the analysis of men and states throughout all time was produced by colonists to educate themselves about tyranny and its enslavement of peoples. Much of this writing drew on classical antiquity and the history of the great republics (and coincidentally reinforced the neo-classical period of architecture and design). Much of it, however, turned on the experience embedded in the memories of transplanted English men, the experience of mid-seventeenth-century England under the Stuart monarchs when for the first time coherent resolutions on the liberty of the subject were hammered out in Parliament and tested in the courts of law.⁵⁸ It was then, in the 1640s, Morgan correctly argues, that 'the English parliament affirmed or invented the sovereignty of the people'. And, in the end, he states, 'it was American representatives in provincial congresses and the Continental Congress, who threw off the mantle of subjects and assumed all authority to themselves, just as parliament had done in the 1640s'.⁵⁹

In pamphlets, newspapers and public and private correspondence, colonists turned again and again to the examples of the great defenders of liberty of the seventeenth century: men uncorrupted by political parties and the patronage of rotten boroughs whose actions they found compatible with their own spirit of republicanism. Here was the inspiration and herein a principle reason for America's embracing of John Hampden.

Between 9 December 1765 and 27 January 1766 a series of weekly articles appeared in the *Boston Gazette* written by no other than John Hampden in response to a column in a London paper by one William Pym (note that the writer got the first name wrong!) who was himself writing in response to an article by Clarendon (a pseudonym, in fact, for John Adams, the second president of the United States). Here, in the middle of the eighteenth century, we have John Hampden, Clarendon and Pym corresponding with each other about the growing tensions between the Crown and the people. It reads like mid-seventeenth-century England except for the fact that the ogre here who devised the sugar and tea taxes was Parliament, not the king. Hampden's name was also assumed by James Otis, a popular and important American pamphleteer with a brilliant mind but a rather turgid prose style.⁶⁰

Another to take up the pen in the colonies was Ben Franklin, who questioned the use of such words as 'rebellion' and 'sedition' by English gentlemen writing about the colonists' refusal to pay taxes: 'It would be curious to know', he wrote, 'those gentlemen's opinion[s] of the conduct of the brave Hampden, who thought it his duty to resist the lawful sovereign's illegal demand of [...] the tax of ship money. Do the Grenvillians hold this glorious patriot Hampden to be a "seditious" and "rebellious" person?'⁶¹

Franklin later wrote from Boston as a Supplement to the *Boston Independent Chronicle* that

You will tell me that we forfeited our estates by our refusal to pay the taxes your nation would have imposed on us without the consent of colonial parliaments. Have you then forgot the *incontestable principle* which was the foundation of Hampden's glorious lawsuit with Charles the First, that 'what an English King has no right to demand, an English subject has a right to refuse'.⁶²

John Adams wrote to a friend in 1774 before the meeting of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia that the Congress would be a school for political prophets, 'a nursery of American Statesmen [...]. Our policy, he said, must be to improve every opportunity and means for forming our people, and preparing leaders for them. There is only one ugly reflection', he added, 'Brutus and Cassius were conquered and slain. Hampden died in the field. Sidney on the Scaffold, Harrington in jail.'⁶³ This is cold comfort', he said. 'Politics are an ordeal – a [narrow] path among red hot ploughshares.'

In any age few are courageous enough to suffer the ordeal. John Hampden was one. His name was linked with Newton, Locke, Bacon and Shakespeare by Thomas Jefferson when he wrote to England for a portrait of the patriot for Monticello. It is interesting to note that the other three members of the Long Parliament that were supposed to have embarked for the colonies, Hasilrig, Vane and Pym, soon became names in history books: the compilations of Rushworth, for example, and the texts of Rapin and later Hume. Outside Parliament, however, their careers were less noteworthy and their names, while not forgotten, had little relevance to a new age. As we saw, only a generation later Pym was called William rather than John – and nobody commented. Although the first ship in the Connecticut navy was named the *Oliver Cromwell*, his rule was too complicated an issue for Americans to latch on to. The founding fathers were little interested in monarchy and while some of the regicides found sanctuary in the colonies,⁶⁴ the idea of regicide itself remained an open debate. The confusion between espoused republicanism and the Lord Protector's government was too particular to warrant discussion related to the colonial problem. Nathaniel Hawthorne understood, though. He created 'New England's hereditary spirit' from the Cromwellian image of the Gray Champion and 'the old soldiers of the parliament'. 'And should domestic tyranny oppress us,' he wrote, 'or the invader's step pollute our soil, still may the Gray Champion come!'⁶⁵

Hampden never lived in the commonwealth; he had escaped all of that. He was dead long before the decision was made to try to execute the king in 1649. As a result he was unconnected to the corruption scandals of the eighteenth century and held no seat in the parliaments responsible for taxing the colonists. It was the nobility of his stand against the tyranny of the Crown and his willingness to die fighting for subjects' rights that was remembered and endeared him to the new world. The legends of his travel remained in the literature that generated them. The histories of the ship-money trial and Hampden's death, in contrast, became formative public memories that shaped American political positions during the period of revolution and the

subsequent years of state-building. And finally, the principle of no taxation without representation, part of the bedrock of American national consciousness, had its roots in the shared memory of John Hampden's refusal to pay ship money.

NOTES

1. John Gorham Palfrey, *History of New England during the Stuart Dynasty*, 4 vols (Boston, MA, 1890). For an account of Hampden's life, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* article by Conrad Russell; and John Adair, *A Life of John Hampden the Patriot* (London, 2003).

2. As cited in Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory, the Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, 1991), p.484.

3. For a full account of the ship-money trial, see *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason...*, ed. T. B. Howell, 21 vols (London, 1816), iii.825-1316.

4. Thomason Tracts, E. 55 (11), *A True Relation of a Great Fight between the King's Forces and the Parliament's at Ghinnor near Tame on Saturday Last, With the Manner how the King's Forces Made the Assault, and by What Means they Were forced to Retreat. Also in What Manner Colonel Hampden is Wounded, with the Names of the Chief Commanders that were Killed and Taken Prisoners on both Sides. As also the Firing and Burning of the Town of Chinnor by the King's Forces and Many other Remarkable Passages Concerning the Said Fight.*

5. Thomason Tracts, E. 55 (11), *A True Relation of a Great Fight.*

6. Thomason Tracts, E. 129 (12), p.5. *A True Relation of the Proceedings of His Excellence the Earl of Essex with his army, since his departure from these parts in pursuit of the cavaliers, with the taking of Redding by Colonel Hampden and Colonel Hurry with their regiments, with the departure of the King's forces by Worcester towards Shrewsbury.* By H.G.

7. Thomason Tracts, E. 55 (11), p.5. *It is certain that Captain Hampden received a shot with a bullet behind in the shoulder; which stuck between the bone and flesh, but is since drawn forth, and himself very cheerful and hearty, and is (through God's mercy) more likely to be a badge of honour than any danger of life ...*

8. See, for example, *Elegies on the Death of that Worthy and Accomplisht Gentleman Colonel John Hampden, Esquire* (London, October 1643); Wing, E339.

9. *Elegies on the Death*, p.1.

10. *Elegies on the Death*, p.4.

11. Miles Standish was the military captain of New Plymouth and a brother of the Long Parliament diarist Thomas Standish. William Brewster and John Carver were founders of New Plymouth.

12. Edward Winslow, *Good Newes from New England; A True Relation of things very remarkable at the Plantation of Plymouth in New England* (London, 1624). Two editions: STC, nos. 25855 and 25856; the second edition appends a section titled 'Whereunto is added a brief relation of Virginia' (London, 1624). Winslow's account is also included in Alexander Young, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth from 1602 to 1625* (Boston, MA, 1841), p.271-374.

13. Winslow, *Good Newes from New England* (1624), p.29.

14. See above, n.12.

15. Young, *The Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, p.314, n.1.

16. Printed in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, IV, 4th series (Boston, MA, 1858), p.475.

17. *Governor Bradford's History of Plimouth Plantation 1620-164*, 2 vols (Boston, MA, 1912). For a history of the manuscript account and its late publication, see Michael Kraus and Davis D. Joyce, *The Writing of American History* (Norman, OK, 1985), p.17-20; *A Brief Relation of the Discovery and Plantation of New England* (London, 1622); STC 18483; and *An Historical Discovery and Relation of the English Plantations in New England* (London, 1627); STC 18484.

18. [Winslow], *Good Newes from New-England* (1648); Wing G1062.

19. Nathaniel Morton, *New-England's Memorial* (Boston, MA, 1669); Wing M2827. Regarding Morton, see Kraus and Joyce, *The Writing of American History*, p.24.

20. William Hubbard, *A General History of New England* (Boston, MA, 1848). See also Kraus and Joyce, *The Writing of American History*, p.25-6.

21. Cotton Mather, *The First Book of the New-English History ...* (London: for Thomas Parkhurst, 1702). Later published under the title of *Magnalia Christi Americana; or the*

Ecclesiastical History of New England from its first planting in the year 1620 unto the year of our Lord 1698 ... (London, 1702), p.11. See also, Kraus and Joyce, *The Writing of American History*, p.3.

22. Abiel Holmes, *The Annals of America from the Discovery by Columbus in the Year 1492 to the Year 1826* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), p. iii, 180, n.4.

23. Holmes, *The Annals of America*, p.iii.

24. Jeremy Belknap, *American Biography or an Historical Account of those Persons who have been Distinguished in America ...*, 2 vols (Boston, MA: Isaiah Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1794), ii.229-30n.

25. George Bancroft, *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent*, 10 vols (Boston, MA, 1834).

26. Young, *The Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, p.314.

27. Palfrey, *History of New England*, i.201n.

28. Palfrey, *History of New England*, i.201n.

29. *Calendar State Papers Domestic [CSPD] 1623-1624*, p.145.

30. Cited in Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, p.484.

31. *The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register ... for the Year 1890*, vol. 44 (Boston, MA, 1890).

32. Mr Holmeden sailed on the *Supply* in September 1620 with the Berkeley plantation party under the leadership of William Tracy. They arrived in January 1621. Apparently Mr Holmeden was 'disposed of by Tracy'. It is not clear what this means but I would suggest that Holmeden left the Berkeley plantation by April 1621. See 'A list of men now sent for plantation in Virginia', 3 September 1620. Susan Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 3 vols (Washington, DC, 1906-1935) www.packrat-pro.com/supply.htm. Table of Contents. The document has a note at the end suggesting a marriage between Holmeden and Isable Gyfford, which may be in error. Gyfford is listed as 'married to Adam Reymer at Sea'. In January 1625 the list of the few survivors of the original Berkeley Company regrouped in Shirley hundred was read to the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia. The name there appears as Mr Hamden. See H. R. McIlwaine, *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia* (Virginia: State Library, 1979), 3 January 1624/1625, 42; Smyth of Nibley Papers, Smith 34. Document in New York Public Library, List of Records, no. 28. See also Eric Gethyn-Jones, *George Thorpe and the Berkeley Company, a Gloucestershire Enterprise in Virginia* (Gloucester, 1982), p.204-5.

33. Edward Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England begun in the Year 1641* (Oxford: at the Theatre, 1702).

34. Paul Rapin de Thoyras, *The History of England*, trans. by N. Tindal (London: J., J. and P. Knapton, 1732-1733).

35. Mather, *The First Book of the New-English History*, chap. 5, sect. 7.

36. Sir William Dugdale, *A Short View of the Late Troubles in England* (Oxford: for Moses Pitt, 1681); Wing, D2492. George Bate, *A Compendious Narrative of the late Troubles in England or Elenchus ...* (London, 1652); Wing, 1077. I have combed the works of Bate and Dugdale and have not found the story itself but only the historical milieu from which it sprang. The sentiments of the Royalists of the Restoration were clearly that parliamentary opposition constituted regicide not only in the narrow meaning of the word but in the broadest sense. See Royce Macgillivray, *Restoration Historians and the English Civil War*, International Archives of the History of Ideas 74 (The Hague, 1974). See also Arthur Percival Newton, *The Colonizing Activities of the English Puritans, the Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1914), p.172.

37. David Hume, *The History of England*, 6 vols (Philadelphia, PA: Edward Parker, 1822), iii.462.

38. Lord Nugent, *Some Memorials of John Hampden, His Party and His Times*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1832), i.257.

39. John Adams, *Novanglus and Massachusettensis or Political Essays published in the years 1774 and 1775* (Boston, MA: Hews & Goss, 1819).

40. Nugent, *Some Memorials of John Hampden*.

41. James F. Larkin, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1983), ii.555-6, no. 237.

42. Acts of the Privy Council, Facsimile, 3:46 (30 March 1638).

43. Acts of the Privy Council, Facsimile, 3:62-3 (April 1638).

44. John Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State, Weighty Matters in Law, Remarkable Proceedings in Five Parliament* (London, 1659).

45. Dionysius Lardner, *The Cabinet Cyclopaedia ... [of] Eminent British Statesmen* (London, 1837), iii.82.

46. Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (Boston, MA: I. Thomas, 1764).

47. Newton, *The Colonizing Activities of the English Puritans*, p.173-4. Newton wrote (p.172-3) that the story of the actual embarkation of the parliamentarians was 'certainly untrue' but he believes that the story was a 'fair interpretation of the plans of Pym, Hampden, and others'. The reader is left to wonder when those plans might have taken shape. Certainly in 1637/1638 the outbreak of the Civil War could not have been predicted. For the story of the patent, see also *The Saltonstall Papers 1607-1815*, ed. Robert E. Moody (Boston, MA, 1972), 1:113-14.

48. Forster, in Lardner, *The Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, iii.82.

49. *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Boris Ford, Cambridge History of Britain (Cambridge), v.27-8, 116.

50. *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Ford, p.116.

51. Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York, 1988), p.131.

52. Morgan, *Inventing the People*, p.144.

53. Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1969), p.39.

54. Thomas Jefferson cited in Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, p.39.

55. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, p.42.

56. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1967), p.129; *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, ed. L. H. Butterfield, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1961), i.273, 286, 287-8, 289, 308.

57. Cited in Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, p.132.

58. The resolutions passed in the Parliament of 1628 and the Petition of Right. See Johnson et al., *Commons Debates 1628* (New Haven, CT, 1977), ii.276, 285, 291.

59. Morgan, *Inventing the People*, p.244.

60. *Papers of John Adams*, ed. R. J. Taylor et al., 3 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1977), i.155-77; *The Works of John Adams ... with a Life of the Author*, ed. C. F. Adams (Boston, MA, 1851), iii.469-77; *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, ed. Butterfield, i.273, 286, 287-8, 289, 308.

61. George Grenville was the minister under whose government the Stamp Act was passed in 1765. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. William Wilcox (New Haven, CT), xvii.14-16. 'The Colonist's Advocate: II', printed in *The Public Advertiser*, 8 January 1770. Also included in Verner W. Crane, *Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press 1758-1775* (Chapel Hill, NC, n.d.), p.170-3.

62. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. E. Cohn, xxxvii.184-95.

63. Sir Algernon Sidney and James Harrington, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

64. Edward Whalley, William Goffe and John Dixwell, for example, found refuge in New Haven and later Massachusetts. To a certain extent they were incognito and when the king's ships arrived after the Restoration they hid in the caves outside of New Haven, known now as the 'Three Judges Caves'.

65. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, 3 vols (Philadelphia, PA: The Nottingham Society, 190[?]), 'Twice-Told Tales: The Gray Champion', i.9.

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