

***Created for the National Geographic Educational series "The American Experience."***

*This animated series presents brief capsules of American history for middle school students. My script was in the form of an imagined letter from a young Colonial woman to her English cousin touching on the underlying causes of the American Revolution. The challenge was to give her letter a sense of authenticity, a young woman's perspective, and include key issues that would foreshadow the coming battle for liberty.*

Dec. 16, 1774  
Boston

My Dear Cousin Jeremy,

Father rushed out to a meeting at Old South Church, so I thought I'd take this opportunity to write.

I am sure living in England you must hear terrible things about the colonies. I know they accuse us of being backward, stubborn and lazy. While we remain loyal subjects of His Majesty, George III, our words are not heard. I fear, dear cousin, that the vast ocean that separates us gets wider every day.

The Sons of Liberty have been holding open meetings and you would not believe the crowds of common folk pushing and straining to hear those educated gentlemen. I, myself, heard the most exciting speech from Sam Adams. He cried: "No taxation without representation," and believes England seeks to enslave us all.

Although he's a fiery speaker, there are still those who argue for the Crown. But I must tell you their voices grow faint, for those who dare support the tax man get rough treatment at the hands of the mob.

Father says that Parliament rightfully deserves our anger for, after we won the fight with the Indians and French, we only wanted to be left alone. But the Proclamation of '63 decreed we could not settle beyond the Appalachian Mountains.

Now dear cousin, I don't know what your Parliament was thinking, for there already were colonists living in Indian Territory. Father says that land is "an emerald forest laden with God's bounty, wanting willing hands to tame and farm it." I think leaving it to the natives would be a wasteful sin.

Still, Parliament continues to oppress and burden us. It's not just the taxes, dear cousin, but their insistence upon telling us what to do. Now redcoats patrol our streets, stopping whomever they please, and their rude words have more than once assaulted my ears.

How long can we remain loyal subjects and suffer these humiliations? I hear this thought from the lips of gentlemen and ladies, from farmers and tradesmen, from those who work for wages, from indentured servants, even from the mouths of African slaves. Our growing discontent is uniting us all.

My dear Jeremy, you will be surprised to learn that I, too, have taken a stand for the colonies. Your "little cousin Emily" joined the Daughters of Liberty. Often we sit out on the Commons spinning our good colonial homespun. And while we work, we tell the crowd: "Support the colonies and do without English cloth."

You would have thought you were dreaming to see all the well-to-do ladies eating only local foods and drinking herbal tea. But it was no dream, cousin, for cheers and huzzahs filled the air around us as we spun.

Father's just returned from the meeting with the most amazing tale. He said that 5000 people, nearly a third of the city, met to protest the customs tax on tea. And when the Governor rejected our pleas dozens of men left the meeting shouting "Boston Harbor a tea pot night." Father said they were dressed as Indians.

Well, I do not know what will happen but I know change must come. We are a determined people, cousin, and we will prevail.

Your loving cousin,  
Emily