

## Boston Tea Party

### PRIMARY SOURCE: Eyewitness Account of George Hewes, American Patriot

There were three ships of tea next to each other in Griffin's dock. The three ships were surrounded by armed war ships of war. The commanders of the armed ships said that if the rebels (Bostonians) did not let the tea be unloaded by December 17, 1773, they would force it on shore with cannons.

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, Boston citizens met at a local church. The purpose of the meeting was to decide how to keep the tea from being unloaded. The rebels wanted keep the citizens of Boston safe from the tea tax. The committee tried to get the Governor's help, but he was out of town. Rebels left the meeting crying out, "Let every man do his duty, and be true to his country." They had decided to take action!

That night, I dressed up like an Indian and carried a small hatchet. My friends and I called it the tomahawk. I also carried a club. I painted my face and hands with coal dust from the blacksmith's shop. Then, I headed to Griffin's dock, where the ships with tea were docked. When I first stepped into the street in my costume, I found myself around a lot of people dressed like me. We were all marching toward the same place!

When we arrived at the pier, there were three Bostonians in charge. These commanders were directing the rebellion. They divided us into three groups, one for each ship. The commanders told us to board the ships at the same time. So, we did! I was told to go to the British captain of my assigned ship and force him to give me the keys to the ship. The captain gave me what I asked for, but he asked me to please not damage the ship.

Our commander ordered us to take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard. We followed his orders. First, we cut and split the chests open with our tomahawks. That way, when they fell into the sea, they would be exposed to the water.

Three hours later, we had broken and thrown every tea chest we could find on the ship overboard. The same thing was taking place on the other two ships in the harbor. We were surrounded by British armed war ships, but they never tried to stop us.

While we were throwing the tea overboard, some of the citizens of Boston tried to steal some tea for their families. They would snatch up a handful from the deck, where some tea fell, and put it into their pockets. Captain O'Connor, whom I well knew, came on board to steal tea for his family. When he thought no one was looking, he filled the pockets on the inside of his coat. But I saw him and told the captain what he was doing. We were told to take him into custody. Just as he tried to sneak away, I grabbed him by his coat.

A tall, older man with a large hat and white wig, which was fashionable at that time, tried to steal some tea, too. He had slipped a little into his pocket, but when someone saw him, they grabbed him! They threw his hat, his wig, and the stolen tea into the water. Because he was so old, he was allowed to escape with only a small kick here or there as he ran off past other rebels.

When the work was done, we all quietly made our ways back to our homes. We never spoke to each other and took off our disguises. I do not know the name of a single person involved that night, except for Leonard Pitt. Pitt was the leader of my group. It seemed like there was an understanding that each person would volunteer his services, keep the secret, and risk the consequence for himself. Not a single person gave away the secret.

The next morning, after we had dumped all of the tea, we found a lot of it floating on top of the water. To keep it from being saved by anyone, some Patriots were sailing around in small boats to beat the tea down with their oars. This soaked the tea so it could not be saved.

