

THE MYSTERY OF THE GREEN DRAGON TAVERN AND THE BOSTON TEA PARTY



An artist drew a picture of the Green Dragon Tavern. Below it he wrote these words: "Where we met to Plan the Consignment of a few Shiploads of Tea, Dec 16, 1773" In the upper left hand corner of his drawing he put a square and compass. To this day no one knows for sure who planned the Boston Tea Party.

The building had been purchased by the St. Andrews Lodge in 1764. There was a square and compass over the front door and a copper Dragon that had turned green through the weather. It was a community center. Downstairs was the Tavern. Upstairs was the St. Andrews Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts (Ancients). It was the largest place for meetings in the north east end of Boston. Historians have called it "headquarters of the American Revolution."

Here the Boston Committee of Correspondence was formed after a few initial meetings at Brother Joseph Warren's house a few doors away. Here the Sons of Liberty held secret sessions. They wore a jewel around their necks and were known to have a separate language for recognition. The jewel had a picture of the Liberty Tree on it.

The North End Caucus formed the guard here that publicly guarded the tea ships so no tea could be unloaded. Brother Edward Proctor (St. Andrews Lodge) was known to be leader of this guard. Brother Paul Revere served with this guard. Later Brother Paul Revere served in another guard called the Selectmen who walked the streets of Boston, two by two, and observed the movements of British troops before he went off on his famous ride to Lexington. The Selectmen guard met at the Green Dragon Tavern and took an oath of secrecy over a Bible.

Dr. Joseph Warren, a 33 year old physician is the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts that meets upstairs. Paul Revere is the Senior Grand Deacon. Both are Past Masters of the St. Andrews Lodge. They are close friends and had come to the St. Andrews Lodge in the same year. It is Joseph Warren who sends Paul Revere to Lexington with a coded message for Brother John Hancock (also of St. Andrews Lodge). Warren and Revere met at the Green Dragon Tavern with the North End Caucus that sang the "Rally Mohawks" song. The song tells us that Warren and Revere are there, but no one ever tells us who the "Chiefs" are. And we'll never know who the "Mohawks" are.

Rally, Mohawks - bring out your axes!
And tell King George we'll pay no taxes on his foreign tea!
His threats are vain - and vain to think To force our girls and wives to drink His vile Bohea!
Then rally boys, and hasten on
To meet our Chiefs at the Green Dragon.
Our Warren's there, and bold Revere,
With hands to do and words to cheer For Liberty and Laws!
Our country's "Braves" and firm defenders
Shall ne'er be left by true North-Enders, Fighting Freedom's cause!
Then rally boys and hasten on to meet our Chiefs at the Green Dragon.

The "vile Bohea" is another name for the tea of the East India Company. It has been rotting in their warehouses in England. This is cheap tea and the Company needs to get rid of it. The British Parliament has given the East India Tea Company a monopoly on tea. The Colonies are not supposed to buy any other tea. Parliament has kept a tax on tea just to prove that they have the power to tax. And taxation without representation, along with a tea monopoly, is tyranny!

On the night of the Boston Tea Party there were men who called themselves "Mohawks" and put lamp black and paint on their faces as a disguise. Some of these "Mohawks" met at the Green Dragon Tavern. Some met in homes. Some wrapped themselves in blankets and sat in the balcony of the Old South Meeting House mixing with the crowd. Some came from the Edes Printing Office.

Two thousand people stand on Griffin's wharf and watch the Boston Tea Party. The crowd is silent as sixty men dump 90,000 pounds of tea into the salt water.

There are secret signs and countersigns for recognition.

One "Mohawk" says "Ugh!"

A second raises his hatchet and says, "Me know you."



The first then counters by raising his hatchet and gives another "Ugh!"

In that entire crowd no one wanted to identify a "Mohawk." One man said he would be a witness provided the trial would be 3,000 miles away in London. There never was a trial. Governor Hutchinson wouldn't have a trial in Boston because he thought the jury would turn out to be "Mohawks" or their sympathizers. The "Mohawks" remain one of the mysteries of the American Revolution.

The events leading up to the evening of the December 16th Tea Party might shed a bit of light.

October 23rd

Brother Warren and Brother Revere meet at the Green Dragon Tavern to publish the Resolution of the North End Caucus: "To oppose the vending of any tea sent by the East India Company . . . with our lives and fortunes."

November 3rd

Brother William Molineux, a member of St. Andrews Lodge, acts as spokesman for the Sons of Liberty. A notice was placed on the Liberty Tree that the Consignees of the Tea were to report and publicly resign their commissions as tea agents for the East India Company. "Ignore this at your peril." The Consignees do not appear. A crowd of 300 people follow Brother Molineux and Brother Warren to the Customs House to confront the Consignees. The crowd tears the doors off the hinges and Brother Molineux confronts the Consignees. Will they resign as Consignees so the tea ships can turn around and carry the tea back to England? No. The Consignees would not resign. In fact they then moved to Fort William under military protection.

In New York, Philadelphia and Charleston, the Consignees for the tea had resigned their Commissions at the request of the Sons of Liberty. Those tea ships had sailed back to England with the tea.

There were no Consignees to pay the tax and sign for the tea. But not in Boston! Governor Hutchinson and his family were in the tea business. Two of Governor Hutchinson's sons and a son-in-law were Consignees. The Tea Act stated that if the tea was not sold by December 17th, it could be seized by the custom house and sold for nonpayment of duties. Once the tea was in the Governor's hands, he could dispose of it secretly to local merchants. No. The Consignees would not resign. Steps had to be taken before December 17th.

November 5th

The Town Committee of Selectmen try another approach to the Governor and the Consignees. These Selectmen are leading tradesmen in Boston. They are led by Brother John Hancock, a member of the St. Andrews Lodge. He is the richest man in New England. He is the Colonel of the Governor's Cadet Corps. He has been given special orders by the Governor to maintain order around the Tea Ships.

Also on the Committee of Selectmen is Brother John Rowe. He is the Grand Master of the St. John's Grand Lodge of Massachusetts (Moderns). The St. John's Lodge meets upstairs over the Bunch of Grapes Tavern and most of the members are Tory in their sympathy. Brother Rowe is the owner of one of the tea ships, the Eleanor. He has promised to use his influence with the Governor to return the tea ships and the tea to England.

It is a matter of trade with the Selectmen and they use a different appeal: "The Selectmen meet to wait on the Consignees and request them from a regard of their own characters and the peace and good order of this Town and Province immediately to resign their appointment."

No. The Consignees still would not resign. History might have been different if the Governor of Massachusetts had not been in the tea trade.

November 29th

The Tea Ship Dartmouth arrives in Boston. The Committee of Correspondence, led by Brother Joseph Warren, distributes handbills calling for a Mass Town Meeting to return the tea whence it came.

"The detestable Tea shipped for this port by the East India Company has now arrived in this harbor. The Hour of Destruction on manly Opposition to the Machinations of Tyranny stares you in the face."

Five thousand people gather and vote to return the tea ship. Brother John Hancock acts as Moderator for the Town Meetings. Brother Paul Revere starts his work as a guard on the tea ship to see that the tea is not unloaded.

November 30th

Records of the St. Andrews Lodge indicate that the Lodge is adjourned this night "on account of few Brethren present."

Note: "Consignees of Tea took up the Brethren's time."

December 15th

Time is running out. Colonel John Hancock goes to the tea ships to review the Governor's Cadet Corps. Both he and Brother Warren had been Orators at the commemoration of those who had died in the Boston Massacre.

The Consignees were blaming the North End Caucus guard because they would not let the Consignees unload the tea. The Caucus had been guarding the tea at gun point and holding secret sessions at the Green Dragon Tavern. The Consignees were blamed by both Tory and Patriot because they would not withdraw and let the tea be returned to England.

Brother Warren goes to the Customs House with Francis Rotch, the owner of the tea ship, Dartmouth. All exits to the harbor are blocked. By law the Customs Officials cannot release the ship unless the Consignees unload the tea and pay the tax. On December 17th the Customs Officials are to seize the tea according to the law.

Brother Warren visits Brother Rowe, owner of the tea ship, Eleanor. These two Grand Masters hold a unique title in American history for the Ancients and Moderns. Each were called the "Grand Master of the Continent of America." They meet in a concern for his "ship and cargo." Another appeal must be made to the Governor.

December 16th

On the evening of the famous Tea Party the records of the St. Andrew Lodge show that only five members were present. A note says "Lodge closed on account of few members present."

The Committee of Correspondence with Brother Warren calls for a Mass Town Meeting. Seven thousand people meet in and around the Old South Meeting House. It is the largest crowd that had ever assembled in Boston. They wait to hear a message from Governor Hutchinson. Will he return the tea to England?

Seven miles away at Milton, the Governor meets with Francis Rotch, the owner of the Dartmouth. Brother John Hancock and Brother John Rowe help in the appeal to the Governor to return the tea.

The Governor would not let the ships leave with the tea. It would be contrary to the Customs law. Instead he would give the Dartmouth military escort to Castle Island and Fort Williams. There his sons would unload the tea and pay the tax. The owner of the Dartmouth did not want to move his ship under those circumstances of a 60-gun warship military escort.

The Dartmouth owner returns to the crowded Old South Meeting Hall with the news. He is asked two questions.

Will he take the Dartmouth to England with the tea? No. It would mean his "ruin."

Would he unload the tea at the wharf? No. He was "not authorized" to unload it.

The meeting ended and it was then that the "Mohawks" unloaded a consignment of tea at Griffin's Wharf.

The Governor's Cadet Corps stood far back from the crowd on the wharf. The crews of the tea ships went below and gave no assistance. Some of them even helped unload the tea. The crowd observed a silence. No damage was done to the ships. No tea was kept by an individual. The whole Tea Party was in range of a 60-gun warship. The British Admiral watched from the upstairs window of a house nearby.

Afterward the "Mohawks" marched by under his window. The Admiral opened the window and shouted, "Tomorrow you'll have to pay the piper!"

Brother Paul Revere mounts his horse and carries the news to New York. With that news a tea ship at New York turns around and sails back to England with the tea. The news is spread by the Committee of Correspondence. There are over one hundred of these Committees in Massachusetts alone. From the time of the Boston Tea Party the East India Company sold no more tea in America.

Brother John Rowe calls the dumping of the tea "a disastrous affair" in his diary. "I can truly say, I know nothing of the matter, nor who were concerned with it. This might I believe have been prevented. I am sincerely sorry for the event." Brother Rowe was a Loyalist and he remains a Loyalist.

The English Attorney General placed Joseph Warren's name at the top of a list of five. The charge would have been Treason for the Boston Tea Party. There was a lack of evidence. The Ministers never pressed charges.

This was not the first time that Governor Hutchinson and his sons had taken a loss in their tea trading. Just three years before Brother William Molineux and Brother James Otis (St. John's Lodge) led a crowd of a thousand patriots from Faneuil Hall to confront the Hutchinsons. That time there was a nonimportation agreement in Boston. It was about to run out. His sons had been importing tea and hiding it, waiting to make a profit. His sons surrendered the tea and the money for the tea they had already sold. The Hutchinson's didn't forget it...nor, did the Sons of Liberty.

After the Tea Party, Governor Hutchinson was withdrawn to London for "consultation." The King and Ministry sent in General Gage as a new military Governor and gave him "full discretion" to find evidence for a trial of those responsible for the Boston Tea Party. There was no trial in Boston.

Benjamin Franklin, a Grand Master of Pennsylvania, was in London at the time. He called the Boston Tea Party "an act of violent injustice." A group of London merchants wanted to pay twice the value of the tea to keep trade open. Franklin offered to pay for the tea himself.

"Though the mischief was the act of persons unknown, yet as probably they cannot be found, or brought to answer for it, there seems to be some reasonable claim on the society at large in which it happened."

But no one ever paid for the tea, because Parliament closed down the port of Boston, cut off the trade, and sent in the troops.

Many years later Sir Winston Churchill - Prime Minister, Historian and Freemason - commented on the act of Parliament that had given the East India Company a monopoly on tea. Brother Churchill called it "a stupid blunder." Americans have been drinking coffee ever since. The English said that the reason the Americans lost their taste for tea was that they had a peculiar way of mixing it in the salt water.

It started in the Green Dragon Tavern. If a man ordered tea, he was a Tory. If he ordered coffee, he was a Patriot.

It is not so strange that no one could be found to identify the "Mohawks." It was the same the year before in Rhode Island. Some Patriots dressed as Indians attacked the Gaspee in long boats. The British claimed that Brother Abraham Whipple (St. John's Lodge, No. 1, Providence) was the leader. They promised to hang him. Brother Whipple said they would have to catch him first.

George Washington, at age 22, was asked why he became a Mason. He said it was because he found them to be "Leaders in the community."

If "Leaders in the community" ever meet at the Green Dragon Tavern and sing the "Rally Mohawks" song for a television show, let them be sure that their makeup is on straight.

Faneuil Hall and the Old South Meeting House still stand in Boston. The Green Dragon Tavern burned down years ago. The heritage lives on in a picture made in 1773. The artist had the fortitude to sign his name to the words: "Where we met to Plan the Consignment of a few Shiploads of Tea Dec 16, 1773."



...Another 'nugget from the quarry of Freemasonry'. Douglas Messimer, PM Tuckahoe Lodge

*Steblecki, Edith
Roberts, Allen E.*

*Roberts, Allen E.
Knollenger, Bernhard
Miller, John C.*

Paul Revere and Freemasonry - Paul Revere Memorial Association, 1985

Freemasonry in American History - Macoy Publishing, 1985

Seekers of Truth - Anchor Communications, 1988

Growth of the American Revolution - The Free Press, 1975

Origins of the American Revolution - Stanford University Press, 1943