

## Primary Sources Documenting the Burning of the *Peggy Stewart*

Listed here is a selection of records at the Maryland State Archives which describe the burning of the *Peggy Stewart* on October 19, 1774. Each of these items can be viewed online.

There was strong—but not universal—support for destroying the *Peggy Stewart* and its cargo of tea. However, most of the surviving descriptions come from wealthy merchants and planters, who almost universally opposed the decision to burn the ship. They resented the destruction of private property and feared that they too could one day be targeted.

This tension between radical and moderate factions persisted throughout the American Revolution.

### Government Records

#### [Port of Entry Record, October 14, 1774 \[SE71-1\]](#)

This book records the *Peggy Stewart*'s entry into Annapolis harbor and lists its cargo. The tea is not included, but it is not known why.

### First Hand Descriptions

#### [Joshua Johnson to Wallace, Davidson & Johnson, August 4, 1774 \[S528-15\]](#)

Johnson was part of a rival merchant firm. Hearing that tea was on board the *Peggy Stewart* when it departed from London, he predicted trouble:

“I should not be surprised to hear that you made a bonfire of the *Peggy Stewart* as I have a hint that [there is] shipped tea on board.”

#### [Simon Bressett to James Cheston, October 16, 1774 \[SC 125-3\]](#)

“Here [in Annapolis] is a [ship] that have several chest of tea on board and **they do expect to burn the vessel and tea on Wednesday [October 19] next when the country people comes in to town.** The town is in an uproar. ...”

[Adam Leverton to Anne Galloway Cheston, October 20, 1774](#) [SC 5991-1-21]

“... Last night I saw the Brig Peggy Stewart consumed before our windows on account of the tea, a spectacle that shocked me much. Mr. S[tewart] offered to make all proper concessions but the merciless mob would not spare his property. **I begin to be out of love with patriotism.** ...”

[John Galloway to Samuel Galloway, October 20, 1774](#) [SC 125-1]

“... Capt. Jackson [Richard Jackson, captain of the *Peggy Stewart*] refused ... to bring any Tea to America in his Vessel, [but] Mr. Thomas William [a merchant] ... in London without his knowledge put 17 Chests on board and that he did not discover it till at sea.

... It was the unanimous opinion of all present that [the tea] should be burnt ... but **some of the Mob called out that it should not come on shore, that the Vessel should also share the same fate.** Matters now began to run very high and the people to get warm. **Some of the Gentlemen from Elk Ridge and Baltimore Town insisted on burning the Vessel.**

Mr. Carroll [Charles Carroll, Barrister] then went and consulted Mr. [James] Dick [Stewart’s business partner] who immediately consented to the destroying of the Vessel. Mr. Dick was fearful that **if they did not give up the Vessel that it would be attended with worse Consequences to Mr. Stewart, as the mob had threatened to lay violent hands on him.** Mr. Carroll then declared to the people that Tea & Vessel should both be burnt. ... **Mr. Stewart went on board of his Vessel and set fire to her with his own hands.**”

[Thomas Ringgold to \[“Dear Sir”\], October 25, 1774](#) [SC 125-2]

“... Anthony Stewart obstinately went and paid [the tea tax] & contrary to the advice of all his Friends. **This incensed the people and a great number came in from all parts of the Country and nothing less than tarring & feathering would satisfy them.** This they were diverted from by the Influence of Barrister Carroll [Charles Carroll, Barrister] & others in pity to Mrs. Stewart who was then in Labor.

Anthony then proposed to atone for his offense by having the Tea burnt on his own loss. This was not thought sufficient and it was put to vote whether or not the Ship should not be burnt. A Majority determined she should not but many appearing discontented old Mr. Dick insisted that in order to give general satisfaction which he thought was due to the people that the Vessel too should be burnt. She was accordingly committed to the Flames. **From the whole of Mr. Stewart’s conduct I have no doubt but he has premeditated the Exploit to endear himself to the Ministry [British government] and I am glad the people have shown so much spirit.** ...”

## **Newspapers**

Coverage of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart* in Annapolis's newspaper, the *Maryland Gazette*, among the many articles written about the event at the time.

**October 20, 1774, p. 2:** Article describing the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*. It also includes the *Peggy Stewart* in the list of vessels which entered Annapolis harbor.

**October 27, 1774, p. 2-3:** Additional descriptions of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*.

**April 13, 1775, p. 2-3:** Reprints a letter in the *Public Ledger*, a London newspaper, "Facts Relative to the Riot at Annapolis in Maryland."

**June 4, 1812, Supplement to the *Maryland Gazette*:** A special supplement published by James Williams, who was blamed for arranging the shipment of tea 38 years earlier, in an effort to clear his name and disassociate himself from Anthony Stewart.

## **Biographies**

Information about the lives of a few people involved in or witnesses of the burning

**Charles Carroll, Barrister:** One of the main participants in the public meeting to decide the *Peggy Stewart*'s fate. Called himself "the Barrister" to distinguish himself from the other Charles Carrolls in the state.

**Charles Carroll of Carrollton:** Moderate Revolutionary leader. Not directly related to Charles Carroll, Barrister.

**Samuel Galloway:** Wealthy planter in Anne Arundel County and recipient of letter listed above.

**Mordecai Gist:** Merchant, prominent Revolutionary figure, among the leaders of the unrest. Rose to brigadier general in the Revolutionary War.

**Simon Retallick:** Indentured servant transported on the *Peggy Stewart*. Established himself as a blacksmith in Annapolis and later worked on the construction of the [Maryland State House](#).