

Merchant Thomas Robie Questions American Boycotts, 1770 (modified)

Context: Thomas Robie lived in Marblehead, Massachusetts, where he ran a shop selling goods he imported from Britain. The **boycott** of British **imports** greatly hurt his business. In this letter, Robie mocks colonists for refusing to buy British tea and complains about the unfair treatment he has faced. He fled Marblehead as a Loyalist with his family in May 1775 and reopened his business in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

*The below excerpt has been modified using modern language.



Marblehead, MA January 13, 1770

Gentlemen,

Having waited some time to sell this tea, but not having any opportunity to do so: I am trying to get rid of it and want to let you know that it is still unsold. Tea has been sold in Salem, MA and I think we can match the price they get there.

I think that somehow or other quantities of tea have found their way into the Town, notwithstanding the **Vigilance** of our worthy Patriots, who are as careful in Detecting and removing any small package, as if tea itself were evil and could forever change the relationship between Great Britain and the colonies. The Patriots

have treated me poorly for trying to sell tea; excuse me for my bad temper and impatience in bothering you for your help.

I am with due Respect – Gentlemen.

Your most humble servant,

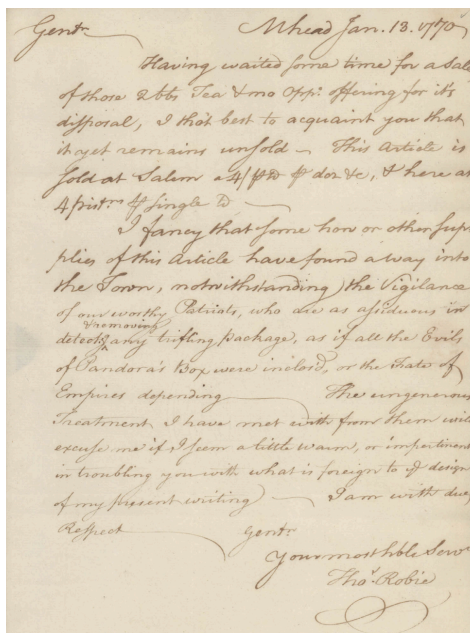
Thomas Robie

For the Student: What is Mr. Robie trying to do with his tea? Who does he blame for the slow down of selling his tea? Why is Mr. Robie in such a “bad temper”?

[Read the original letter.](#)

Merchant Thomas Robie Questions American Boycotts, 1770 (original transcript)

Context: Thomas Robie lived in Marblehead, Massachusetts, where he ran a shop selling goods he imported from Britain. The boycott of British imports greatly hurt his business. In this letter, Robie mocks colonists for refusing to buy British tea and complains about the unfair treatment he has faced. He fled Marblehead as a Loyalist with his family in May 1775 and reopened his business in Halifax, Nova Scotia.



Mhead Jan. 13. 1770

Gentlemen, –

Having waited some time for a Sale of those 2 bbs Tea & no opp[ortunity]: [I am] offering for it's disposal, I tho[ugh]t best to acquaint you that it yet remains unsold -- This article is sold at Salem a 4/[pence] [per] doz &c, & here at

4 [Pistole] [per] single

I fancy that some how or other supplies of this article have found a way into the Town, notwithstanding the Vigilance of our worthy Patriots, who are as assiduous in detecting & removing any trifling package, as if all the Evils of Pandora's Box were inclos'd, or the Fate of

Empires depending -- The ungenerous Treatment I have met with from them will excuse me if I seem a little warm, or impertinent in troubling you with what is foreign to ye design of my present writing --

I am with due

Respect -- Gentn.

your most [humble] [Servant]

Thos. Robie

[Zoom in on the original letter.](#)