

# New York Merchants Non-importation Agreement

## October 31, 1765

*The merchants of New York City voluntarily agreed not to purchase goods from Great Britain. Cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston quickly followed suit, compounding the effects of colonial boycotts on British goods. The successful implementation of these non-importation agreements across the colonies pressured British merchants and policymakers by disrupting trade and creating economic leverage.*

At a general meeting of the merchants of the city of New York, trading to Great Britain... to consider what was necessary to be done in the present situation of affairs with respect to the Stamp Act, and the melancholy state of the North American commerce, so greatly restricted by the impositions and duties established by the late acts of trade. They came to the following resolutions, viz.

1. First. That in all orders they send out to Great Britain for goods or merchandise of any nature, kind, or quality whatsoever, usually imported from Great Britain, they will direct their correspondents not to ship them unless the Stamp Act be repealed. It is nevertheless agreed that all such merchants as are owners of and have vessels already gone, and now cleared out for Great Britain, shall be at liberty to bring back in them, on their own accounts, crates and casks of earthen ware, grindstones, pipes, and such other bulky articles as owners usually fill up their vessels with.
2. Secondly. It is further unanimously agreed that all orders already sent home, shall be countermanded by the very first conveyance; and the goods and merchandise thereby ordered, not to be sent unless upon the condition mentioned in the foregoing resolution.
3. Thirdly. It is further unanimously agreed that no merchant will vend any goods or merchandise sent upon commission from Great Britain that shall be shipped from thence after the first day of January next unless upon the condition mentioned in the first resolution.
4. Fourthly. It is further unanimously agreed that the foregoing resolutions shall be binding until the same are abrogated at a general meeting hereafter to be held for that purpose. In witness whereof we have hereunto respectively subscribed our names.

**[This was subscribed by upwards of two hundred principal merchants].**

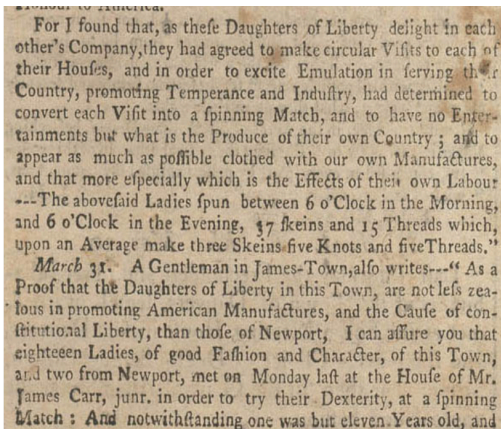
In consequence of the foregoing resolutions the retailers of goods of the city of New York subscribed a paper in the words following, viz.

We, the underwritten, retailers of goods, do hereby promise and oblige ourselves not to buy any goods, wares, or merchandises of any person or persons whatsoever that shall be shipped from Great Britain after the first day of January next unless the Stamp Act shall be repealed-as witness our hands.

New York Mercury, November 7, 1765.

## Women in Protests to the Stamp Act

During the Stamp Act crisis, and in the years leading up to the Revolution, many British colonists refused to buy things that were shipped from England. Women were important to these boycotts, because they were often in charge of all the purchases made for colonial homes and families. They also had the skills to make homemade substitutes for British products.



For I found that, as these Daughters of Liberty delight in each other's Company, they had agreed to make circular Visits to each of their Houses, and in order to excite Emulation in serving their Country, promoting Temperance and Industry, had determined to convert each Visit into a spinning Match, and to have no Entertainments but what is the Produce of their own Country; and to appear as much as possible clothed with our own Manufactures, and that more especially which is the Effects of their own Labour -- The above said Ladies spun between 6 o'Clock in the Morning, and 6 o'Clock in the Evening, 37 Skeins and 15 Threads which, upon an Average make three Skeins five Knots and five Threads."

March 31. A Gentleman in James-Town, also writes-- "As a Proof that the Daughters of Liberty in this Town, are not less zealous in promoting American Manufactures, and the Cause of constitutional Liberty, than those of Newport, I can assure you that eighteen Ladies, of good Fashion and Character, of this Town, and two from Newport, met on Monday last at the House of Mr. James Carr, junr. in order to try their Dexterity, at a spinning Match: And notwithstanding one was but eleven Years old, and

For example, in New England, women joined in the boycotts by going to "spinning bees." By the mid-1700s most women did not need to spin their own yarn, because they could buy factory made fabric at stores. But when the colonists started boycotting British fabric because of taxes like the Stamp Act and Townsend Act, it inspired a whole new generation of women to learn the skill of making their own fabric from their mothers and grandmothers.

From the Massachusetts Historical Society.  
"The Essex Gazette." March 30, 1769.

At these events, women would set up spinning wheels and keep each other company while they spun yarn that could be woven into fabric. The fabric made this way was called "homespun." Wearing clothing made from homespun fabric was one way to demonstrate your support for the rights of the colonies in the 1760s and 1770s.

Most spinning bee participants were young, unmarried women, because they were the people who had the spare time for such work. Spinning was considered an acceptable way for women to express their political opinions, because it was within the bounds of traditional women's work.

To make yarn or thread, fibers from wool, flax, or cotton must be tightly wound together to form a single strand. For most of human history, this “spinning” work was done by hand, but the process was slow. The spinning wheel, which was first invented in India between the years 500 and 1000, made the work much faster. The large wheel is powered by a foot pedal, and as the wheel spins, it causes a smaller spindle to whirl at a very fast speed. The person operating the wheel steadily feeds fibers onto a strand of yarn attached to the spindle, and they are wound tightly as the spindle spins.



Boomer, Lee. “Spinning Wheels, Spinning Bees.” *Women & the American Story*, March 13, 2024.  
<https://wams.nyhistory.org/settler-colonialism-and-revolution/the-american-revolution/spinning-wheels-spinning-bees/>.

Reflecting the English and European fashions during the eighteenth century, printed cottons of all types were in great demand in America. Most printed textiles of the time were imported from England, since laws prohibited the manufacture and printing of fabrics in the colonies. As economic protests to the Stamp Act and Townsend Act



picked up over the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the colonists were defying the English bans, and cottons and linens were being printed openly by shops in New England and in the mid-Atlantic colonies. Early printed textiles, like this example, received their patterns through a technique of printing with wood blocks. A design was cut in high relief on a block of wood. Colored dyes were applied to the relief design, which was then stamped on the fabric, thus transferring the pattern. Along with historical scenes based upon American figures and events, floral patterns were popular. In this late eighteenth-century American printed cotton, the lavish pattern of brightly colored flowers recalls the elaborate designs of

Indian fabrics and of their European counterparts.

Sylvia Dezon, Chintz, c. 1780, *Index of American Design*, 1943.8.2654

## Discussion Questions

1. What were the key commitments made by merchants in New York for the non-importation agreement?
2. Why do you think the merchants would boycott British goods knowing that it would hurt their business?
3. Explain why spinning yarn and wearing homespun clothing were acceptable forms of political protest for women?
4. Discuss how the boycott of British goods and domestic manufacture of goods like textiles could affect colonial perceptions of independence.