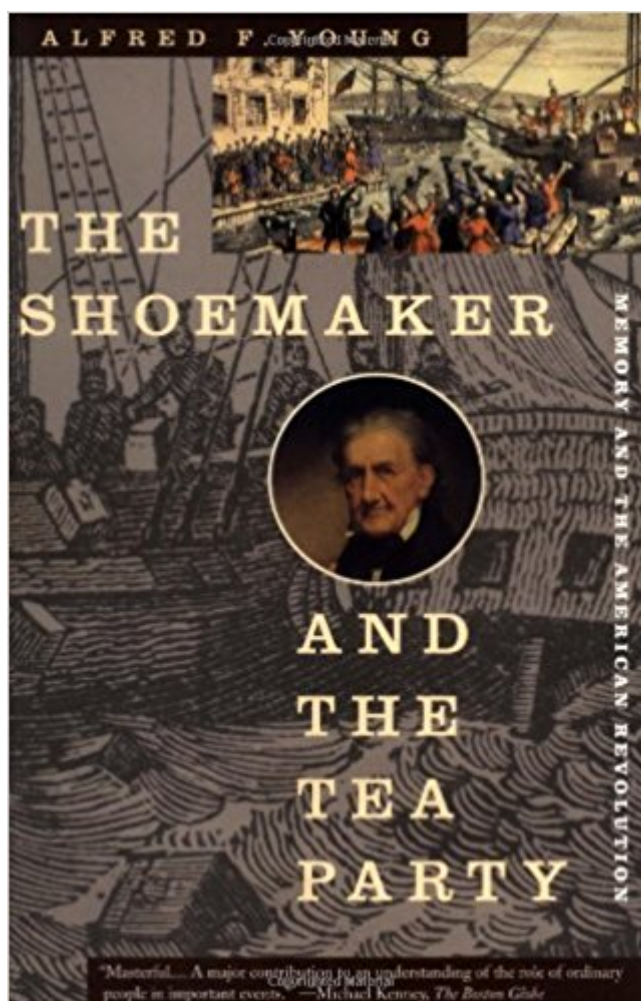


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# The Shoemaker And The Tea Party: Memory And The American Revolution



## Synopsis

George Robert Twelves Hewes, a Boston shoemaker who participated in such key events of the American Revolution as the Boston Massacre and the Tea Party, might have been lost to history if not for his longevity and the historical mood of the 1830's. When the Tea Party became a leading symbol of the Revolutionary era fifty years after the actual event, this 'common man' in his nineties was 'discovered' and celebrated in Boston as a national hero. Young pieces together this extraordinary tale, adding new insights about the role that individual and collective memory play in shaping our understanding of history.

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## Customer Reviews

On December 16, 1773, some 150 men boarded three ships docked at Griffin's Wharf. Dressed as Mohawks, their faces darkened with soot, the men cracked open chests of tea and threw them into Boston Harbor. What began as a protest against the duty on tea became an icon of the American Revolution. But what did the Boston Tea Party mean to its participants? Indeed, what did the Revolution mean to the ordinary person? In *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, Alfred F. Young tells the story of George Robert Twelves Hewes, who was involved in several events in Boston during the Revolution. In 1835, when Hewes was in his 90s, he was celebrated as one of the last survivors of the Tea Party. *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* comprises two linked essays. The first is about Hewes (whom Young describes as "a nobody who briefly became a somebody in the Revolution and, for a moment near the end of his life, a hero"), his memories, and what these

memories reveal about the meaning of the Revolution for him. "For a moment he was on a level with his betters. So he thought at the time, and so it grew in his memory as it disappeared in his life." The second essay follows the lead of Michael Kammen and Eric Hobsbawm by looking at the dichotomies of public vs. private and popular vs. official memory, and the external forces that shape these memories into "tradition." Young does an excellent job of illustrating his theory with experiences from Hewes's life, newspaper accounts, and contemporary prints. This book will interest both scholars and general readers, though Young does presume some prior knowledge of the Revolution on the part of the reader. A thought-provoking look at the nature of memory, history, and tradition. --Sunny Delaney --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This brief volume manages to be two books in one: the biography of a minor figure in the American Revolution and an essay on America's collective memory of the Revolutionary era. The shoemaker in question is George Robert Twelves Hewes, who participated in the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and other events of the rebellion. In 1835, the virtually forgotten Hewes was invited to Boston as one of the last surviving members of the Tea Party. Based on scattered archival materials, obscure printed works, and interviews with Hewes's descendants, this book offers a fascinating peek into the life of a poor man who got caught up in revolutionary fervor. Young, a senior research fellow at Chicago's Newbury Library and the author or editor of numerous books on the Revolutionary era, also presents an intriguing account of how events become "special" to a nation. The famous Tea Party, for example, was not so famous and was not even called a "tea party" until over a half-century after it occurred. Recommended for most public and academic libraries. A Thomas J. Schaeper, St. Bonaventure Univ., NY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Young analyzes the ways the personal and public memory influence our present historical understanding of events like the Boston tea party, the American revolution, and its heroes. He makes clear that what is remembered and celebrated is by no means inevitable, but shaped both by memory and the shifting needs of society. The first half of the book is an account of shoemaker George Hewes life and involvement in the Revolution, while the second unravels the shaping of historical memory. I found the second half to be both more "meaty" and interesting.

An absolutely great book to read if you like pre-Civil War America. I personally ordered the book for my history class, but then as I read it, I got more and more interested in it. I was very pleased to

have read the book, and I do not plan to spoil any parts of the book here, but I can assure you that this is a good history reference.

Exactly as described

Really dry read.

.Written long before today's "Tea Party Movement" was dreamed of, this 1999 volume focuses on the revolt that became a lasting symbol of the American spirit. Alfred F. Young's life was spent examining the radicalism of the American Revolution. Small wonder that he was fascinated by the repercussions of the Boston Tea Party, the largest civilian uprising of the American Revolution. In this book he traces American attitudes toward "The Destruction of the Tea" from the day it took place in 1773 up to the tumultuous years of 1830-1835, and from then to the War Between the States. At the moment it occurred, John Adams wrote in his diary, "There is a Dignity, a Majesty, a Sublimity, in this effort of the Patriots that I greatly admire. The People should never rise, without doing something to be remembered--something notable and striking. This destruction of the Tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important Consequences, and so lasting, that I can't but consider it as an Epocha in History." By 1809, John Adams singled out Samuel Adams and John Hancock as "almost buried in oblivion" in a wailing lament about "the extraordinary and unaccountable inattention in our countrymen to the History of their own country." His words reflect the quiet time that occurs after any trauma. By 1800, people were seeking stability and yearned for quiet. The Destruction of the Tea was part of a frightening and disturbing recent past that seemed best forgotten. In a cathartic action after the war, many historic sites and monuments were deliberately destroyed. Slowly, as the years passed, it became all right to talk once more about the horrors of War. Much of this remembering was stimulated by the pension laws of 1818 and especially of 1832, which required veterans to submit, in lieu of written records, "a very full account" of their military service. The shoemaker in this tale was a real man, a poor but daring man, who had served as a boatswain on the evening of the Boston Tea Party, signaling to the marauders when the coast was clear. As the known survivor of that illegal event, Hewes became a kind of folk hero in his old age. His words survive in a few places and bring life and action and color back into the frightening days of the Boston Massacre and the Destruction of the Tea. Later, in the days of the Civil War, tales of the Boston Tea Party joined effigy burning and tarring and feathering in the popular rituals from the Revolution that people could call upon. Today, we find that in a time of

uncertainty the Boston Tea Party is again being invoked. Today's so-called Tea Party backs up Young's contention that "the past can be mobilized for partisan purposes," and second, that the inventions of the past (as tradition) may occur as a means of resisting change or of achieving innovations. The original tea party was "bold, wild and extralegal. People could make of it what they will." Kim Burdick Stanton, Delaware

I read and reviewed this book for a graduate course in Historiography, based around the American Revolution. Very much enjoyed it and I think most casual readers who enjoy books of this genre will like it quite well. It gives a glimpse at some of the important events from the revolutionary era from a little different perspective of someone who was, well just kind of there. Not a real rebel rouser, but soundly in support of what was happening, at least that is the way he remembers it. I won't say much more so as not to spoil it, but can add that the book looks at how and really what history is, which is of course always open to interpretation.

Boring book, sorry for those that have to read it for a class, I usually enjoy history books, but I just feel this isn't a good book. Been a while since I read it so can't say much about content.

This book was difficult to read at times but since the english was closer to modern times it was easier to read than Pocahontas book (sorry hist class). This book is historically accurate, and has been proven to be mostly true besides for a couple of things. It should be required by every high school Hist class.

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