

Excerpt from *The Virginia Gazette*

May 6, 1775

Dixon and Hunter

Narrative of facts, relative to John Norton and Sons shipping two half chests of tea in the Virginia, Howard Esten, humbly addressed to the inhabitants of Virginia.

JOHN NORTON and Sons, some time in the month of June 1774, received a letter from Mess. John Prentis and company, covering an invoice of a cargo of goods, in which were contained two certain articles, *viz.* a chest of hyson tea, and another common green ditto. In the course of the same month, they received likewise another letter, with a copy of the said invoice, in which were inserted the same articles of tea. However, J. Norton and Sons, being uneasy at the order, did not give it out till the month of August, hoping and expecting they should have received countermanding orders with respect to the shipping the same; but none such ever came to hand, though they had a letter from Mess. Prentis and company, dated the 26th of June, and afterwards a copy thereof, both of which were received in the month of August. Thus disagreeably circumstanced, J. Norton and Sons, much against their inclinations, complied with shipping the two chests of tea in the latter end of the month of August, amounting to the precise quantity of 154 pounds nett; no other chest of tea being on board, to the best of their knowledge and belief. Their letters and invoices were made up, and dated the 31st of August; about which time some other goods offering J. Norton and Sons were induced to detain the ship fourteen days longer than they intended. On the 15th of September, in the evening, they received a letter from Mr. John Backhouse of Liverpool, but the post dated the 12th of the same month, enclosing a copy of the Virginia association entered into the beginning of August, which they verily believe was the first account received in any part of England. Under these circumstances, how could J. Norton and Sons act? The ship Virginia was then cleared out, and at Gravesend, and the commencement of the non-importation agreement fixed for the 1st of November, a time scarce thought sufficient for her arrival in Virginia. To apply, therefore, for permission to land the tea (could it have been obtained) was thought unadvisable, since during the course of such an application, the time allowed by the association for importation was running on fast, and their correspondents might have been subject to many inconveniences there-from, in case the ship did not arrive in time: Therefore, it was not attempted. Captain Esten left London very early on the

morning of the 16th of September, and passed through the Downs the next day; and , that no step which prudence could suggest might be omitted, he was directed to consult with the committee, and other Gentlemen in Virginia, immediately on his arrival, and honestly to lay the case before them; and that, if he found it was disagreeable to the inhabitants that the tea should be landed, stored, or returned in the ship, he was then to propose destroying it; but by no means attempt the landing it without leave. From such a plain and faithful narration of facts, and from a conviction of the candour which they possess to whom these lines are addressed, J. Norton and Sons are induced to hope that the imputation of injustice to America will cease, that truth will trample over calumny or misrepresentation, and that they shall recover that place which they formerly held in the esteem of their friends and countrymen in Virginia.

JOHN NORTON & SONS

London, Jan. 5, 1775

Since writing the above, on reading the Virginia Gazette of the 24th of Novemer last, it give me infinite concern to find that I have unhappily fallen under the heavy displeasure of the Gentlemen of the committee for York and Gloucester counties, by inadvertently shipping two half chests of tea on board the Virginia, Howard Esten master, ordered by Mess. Prentis and company. My excuse is set forth in the foregoing narration of facts, which I submit to the committees in particular, and the public in general, and hope I shall be acquitted from any evil intentions of prejudicing a people I have a great esteem for, and among whom I have lived (I may say) the happiest part of my life. A censure also for a supposed contempt of the resolutions entered into by the worthy members of the late Assembly, respecting the importations of tea into Virginia, being passed upon me by the above-mentioned committee, I must confess that I thought all the resolves made at that time where preparatory only to those intended at the general meeting in August, that they were then to receive a sanction form the Congress, and that the resolve particularly alluded to , in the hurry of business, entirely escaped my notice; for which I am heartily sorry. I must sincerely declare, that in shipping the tea, there was not the least design intended of umbrage to the inhabitants of Virginia, or lending an aid to government towards raising a revenue in America; that my avowed principles (which I now publish) are, that the Parliament of Great Britain have not the least shadow of right to tax America; that I never will, directly or indirectly deviate from these principles, which I have always professed and which ought to govern every

person that has any regard for the liberty of America. And I also further declare, that so far from having any connection with the Ministry, that my person is even unknown to any of them, and that I never was in their presence, except when I attended about the copper coinage for Virginia, in which I was employed instead of a better agent.

London, Jan. 16, 1775

JOHN NORTON



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