

## **The Burning of the *Peggy Stewart*—An Annapolis Tea Party**

by Glenn E. Campbell, Historic Annapolis

In October 1774, ten months after the Boston Tea Party, a ship owned by Anthony Stewart and his father-in-law, James Dick, arrived in Annapolis harbor. The brig *Peggy Stewart* was named after the merchant's daughter, and it carried 53 indentured servants and a small load (just over a ton) of taxed tea along with other goods consigned to Thomas Charles Williams & Company. When word of the tea leaked to Maryland patriots, many of them gathered in Annapolis to decide what to do about the situation.

This wasn't the first time that Stewart, Dick, and the Williamses were in hot water with local patriots—all of them had been chastised for challenging an earlier boycott of taxed English imports as far back as 1769 and 1770. By 1774, many people weren't willing to let them off easily with just a warning and orders not to unload and sell their tea.

There are conflicting reports about exactly what happened, but it appears that most people in the crowd thought that burning the taxed tea would settle the matter. That wasn't good enough for Matthias and Rezin Hammond and other radicals, who led a mob to Anthony Stewart's house on Hanover Street. They erected a gallows and called for the destruction of the house and the tarring, feathering, and hanging of Stewart if he didn't agree to torch his own ship. Stewart wisely bowed to their demand. He and two of the Williams partners were rowed out to the *Peggy Stewart*, which the three men set afire with the offending tea still onboard. The crowd cheered as the brig burned to the waterline and sank. Stewart and his family fled Annapolis for London and, later, Nova Scotia.

The burning of the *Peggy Stewart* was an important step on Maryland's road to rebellion. Six months later, the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired in Lexington and Concord.



*Jack Manley Rosé's "The Burning of the Peggy Stewart" was one of the murals in Carvel Hall's Old Annapolis Tap Room*