

A return to 1765 during Sons of Liberty Week

By SARAH HAINESWORTH

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Dressed in replica Colonial garb, Diane Rey snapped a selfie.

"I'll put this away," she said of her smart phone. "It's not very 18th century."

Tucking her phone into her pocket, she entered Back Creek Books on Main Street and got into character.

"Hear ye, good citizen of Annapolis. My name is Anne Catherine Green, I am wife of Jonas Green, printer of this city, and I must say that present circumstances compel me to command your attention as our very liberties are at stake," she said.

"My husband has recently shut down the Maryland Gazette, putting my family's very livelihood at risk, in order to rally public sentiment around this unjust taxation known as the Stamp Act Tax of 17 and 65."

Though it's been 250 years since the Stamp Act was approved, you too can be part of the rebellion.

Today marks the start of Historic Annapolis' Sons of Liberty Week, a series of events that bring 1765 to 2015 with outbursts of history, a freedom of the press panel discussion, Revolutionary Annapolis tours and a March on Main.

"The idea is to create an atmosphere as if you were there," Rey said. "You are dropped into history."

The Stamp Act, passed by the British Parliament on March 22, 1765, required American Colonists to pay a levy on every piece of printed paper they used. Deeds, wills, newspapers and even playing cards were required to be marked with an official stamp. It was one of the first taxes Marylanders had to pay.

Those who disobeyed the law could face imprisonment or a fine.

When news of the Stamp Tax reached

Annapolis, the tax caused outrage among Colonists and resulted in protests, violence and boycotts.

A mob of 300 to 400 angry Annapolitans hung and burned a likeness of Maryland's stamp commissioner Zachariah Hood and destroyed a home he was renting. In fear of his life, Hood fled the city. But for the Colonists, hardships soon set in.

"Businesses ground to a halt in the Colonies and courts closed because any official paper was required to have a stamp. Stamp officials were so in fear of their lives that nobody could get the stamp," Rey said.

"It affected the movers and shakers of Colonial America."

Many believed that the Stamp Act targeted newspapers in particular as they were required to pay taxes on each copy of the paper and additional taxes for advertisements.

Maryland Gazette publisher Jonas Green tiptoed around the tax by ceasing publication of the paper, then printing, "an Apparition of the late Maryland Gazette which is not Dead but Sleepeth."

"The Sons of Liberty groups sprang out of the stamp era. Press freedom began in America and the cries against taxation without representation were heard," Rey said. "This really was the start of the American Revolution."

The act was eventually repealed on March 18, 1766.

Though the Colonial days are over, the underlying message of the movement is still one that's relevant today.

"This is a very relatable topic no matter what political side you're on," said Lisa Robbins, Historic Annapolis' vice president of education and interpretation.

"Today, you can relate to not wanting to pay your taxes or being told what to do."

Rey agreed.

"People get the rebellious spirit. That transcends time and space," she said. "We hope we can lure people to join the rebellion."

INFORMATION

■ At the Historic Annapolis Museum at 99 Main St., visitors can read Jonas Green's newspapers of the period and view the ongoing exhibit, "Freedom Bound." Admission is free.

■ A lecture and panel discussion on "Freedom of the Press: Then, and Now" will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the James Brice House, 42 East St., Annapolis. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for a wine and cheese reception. Admission is \$5 for students and \$10 for adults. Space is limited. Reservations can be made at www.annapolis.org.

■ A one-hour guided walking tour, "Revolutionary Annapolis," will be held at 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Saturday starting at the William Paca House, 186 Prince George St. Stops will include St. John's College, the Chase-Lloyd House, the Peggy Stewart House and other city locations with ties to the Revolution. The tour is \$10 and reservations are required.

■ "Sons of Liberty Day" will kick off with a Stamp Act protest march up Main Street at 11:30 a.m. Oct. 25, recalling events of Aug. 26, 1765, when angry townspeople burned an effigy of stamp commissioner Zachariah Hood. Marching is free and open to the public.

■ Revolutionary fun for all ages will be held at the William Paca House and Garden from noon to 4 p.m. Oct. 25 and will include music, musket firing, a Rebel Rum tasting by Blackwater Distilling, and children's activities. Events are included with admission to the house and garden.