

Colonial New York

A. Andrew Hamilton, lawyer, summary in defense of John Peter Zenger, New York, August, 1735.

“It is agreed upon by all men that this is a reign of liberty, and while men keep within the bounds of truth, I hope they may with safety both speak and write their sentiments of the conduct of men of power; I mean of that part of their conduct only which affects the lives and property of the people under their administration; were this to be denied, then the next step may make them slaves. For what notions can be entertained of slavery without the liberty of complaining. Or if they do complain, to be destroyed, body and estate, for doing so?”

“ The loss of liberty to a generous mind is worse than death; ...the man who loves his country prefers its liberty to all other considerations, well knowing that without liberty life is a misery.”

“Power may justly be compared to a great river; while kept within bounds, it is both beautiful and useful, but when it overflows its banks, it is than too impetuous to be stemmed; it bears down all before it and brings destruction and desolation wherever it comes. If, then, this be the nature of power, let us at least do our duty, and, like wise men who value freedom, use our utmost care to support liberty, the only bulwark against lawless power, which in all ages, has sacrificed to its wild lust and boundless ambition of the blood of the best men that ever lived.”

B. Poem written by William Moore, jr., 12 years old, of Oswego, NY in the 1760's.

“One night in my slumbers, I saw in a dream
Judge Livingston's party contriving a scheme
To set up great papers and give some rich bounty
For to be assemblymen in Dutchess County.
But Leonard (Van Kleek) and Derrick (Brinckerhoff) are both chosen men,
The Livingstons won't get a vote to their ten,
So pull down your papers, talk no more of bounty,
You can't be assemblymen in Dutchess County.
Your printed relation
Tho' signed by Judge Thomas' hand
Your writings are discreet
But in them there's deceit
Not a vote would you get if it wan't for your land.”