

TIMELINE OF BRITISH-NORTH AMERICAN COLONIAL RELATIONS, 1763-1775

1763

The Proclamation of 1763 aims to ease tensions with Native Americans by banning English settlement west of the Appalachian mountains and requiring settlers west of the Appalachians to return east.

1764

The Sugar Act is passed by the English Parliament to help pay the war debt incurred by the French and Indian War and to pay the costs of managing the colonies and newly acquired territories. The Act increased duties on imported sugar and other items including textiles, wine, coffee, and indigo. The Act also bans the import of foreign rum and French wines as well as doubling the duties on foreign goods reshipped from England to the colonies.

The English Parliament reorganizes the American customs system to better enforce British trade laws that were laxly enforced in the past. The admiralty court in Halifax, Nova Scotia is given jurisdiction over the American colonies in trade matters.

The Currency Act stops the issuing of any legal tender paper money by the colonies. Threatening to destabilize the colonial economy of the commercial North and agricultural South, the colonists unite against the Act.

In May at a Boston town meeting, James Otis brings up the issue of taxation without representation. He urges the colonists to unite against the recent acts passed by Parliament. Two months later, Otis publishes “The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved.” Boston merchants launch a boycott of British luxury goods in August.

1765

The Stamp Act is passed by Parliament in March. Designed to pay the high costs of the British military organization in the American colonies. The Act imposes the first direct tax on the colonists and taxes all printed materials including; newspapers, pamphlets, bills, legal documents, licenses, almanacs, dice and playing cards. For the first time in colonial history, Americans will pay a tax directly to England instead of to their own legislatures. Influential groups directly affected by the tax-lawyers, publishers, land owners, ship builders, and merchants-organize to oppose the Stamp Act.

In March, the Quartering Act is passed by Parliament, mandating colonists house and feed British troops.

In May, Patrick Henry offers seven Virginia Resolutions to the House of Burgesses that claim only the Virginia legislature have the legal power to tax residents.

In October, representative from nine colonies meet at the Stamp Act Congress in New York City. The Congress prepares a resolution to be sent to King George and Parliament, petitioning the repeal of the Stamp Act and the Acts of 1764. The resolution claims that only colonial legislatures can tax colonists and that taxation without representation violates the basic civil rights of colonists.

On November 1, the Stamp Act goes into effect. Colonists refuse to use stamps halting most daily business and legal transactions in the colonies. In New York City, mob violence breaks out. The royal governor is burned in effigy, British troops are harassed, and houses are vandalized.

In December, General Thomas Gage, commander of British military in America, asks New York assembly to order colonists to house and supply his troops. The American boycott of English imports spreads. Over 200 Boston merchants join the boycott.

1766

In January, New York assembly refuses to comply completely with General Gage's request to implement the Quartering Act.

In March, following much debate in Parliament, the Stamp Act is repealed. On the same day, Parliament passes the Declaratory Act affirming that the British government has power to pass laws governing the American colonies.

In April, colonists celebrate repeal of Stamp Act and end boycott.

In August, the continuing refusal of New York residents to house and feed British soldiers leads to violent clashes between British soldiers and armed colonists, including Sons of Liberty members. In December, the King suspends the New York legislature after it votes again not to comply with the Quartering Act.

1767

In June, Parliament passes the Townshend Revenue Acts, imposing taxes on the colonists for paper, tea, glass, lead and paints. The goal is to pay the costs incurred in the administration and protection of American colonies. The Act also sets up a colonial board of customs commissioners headquartered in Boston.

In October, Boston residents begin a boycott of English luxury items.

1768

In February, Massachusetts radical Samuel Adams writes the Circular Letter that opposes taxation without representation and calls for united colonial action against the British government. Sent to assemblies throughout the colonies, the letter explains how the Massachusetts general court is opposing the Townshend Acts.

In April, Lord Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the Colonies orders colonial governors to stop their assemblies from endorsing the circular letter. He also orders the governor of Massachusetts to dissolve the general court if that colony's assembly does not revoke the letter. By the end of April, three other assemblies have endorsed the letter, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

In May, a British warship sails into Boston harbor to stop Boston agitators from harassing customs commissioners.

In June, a customs official is locked up in the cabin of the Liberty, a ship owned by John Hancock. Imported wine is then illegally unloaded without payment of duties.

1770

In January, members of the Sons of Liberty in New York and 40 British soldiers clash violently over the posting of broadsheets by the British. Several men are seriously wounded.

On March 5, the Boston Massacre occurs when a mob harasses British soldiers under the command of Captain Thomas Preston. The soldiers fire their muskets into the crowd. Three people are killed and two are mortally wounded. In the aftermath of the tragedy Sam Adams persuades the new Royal Governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, to withdraw the British troops from Boston. Preston and eight of his men are charged with murder.

In April, the Parliament repeals the Townshend Acts, eliminating duties on imports into the colonies except for tea.

In October, the Boston Massacre trial begins. John Adams and Josiah Quincy act as lawyers for Captain Preston and six of his men, who are acquitted. The other two soldiers are found guilty of manslaughter. They are branded and released.

1772

In June, when the British customs ship *Gaspee* runs aground off Rhode Island, colonists from Providence attack the ship, setting the British crew ashore. Then they burn the ship. In September, the British government offers a 500 pound reward for the capture of the attackers. The announcement that they would be sent to England for trial fuels discontent among many American colonists.

In November, Samuel Adams convenes a town meeting in Boston, establishing a committee of correspondence to communicate with other towns and colonies. The town meeting later passes proclamations calling for self-rule by the colonies.

1773

Virginia, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and South Carolina set up committees of correspondence.

On May 10, the Tea Act takes effect. It maintains the six-year old threepenny per pound import tax on tea arriving in the colonies and gives the near bankrupt British East India Company a virtual tea monopoly. The company can sell directly to colonial agents, bypassing middlemen and underselling American merchants.

In October, colonists in Philadelphia and Boston protest against of the tea tax. A few weeks later, three ships bearing tea sail into Boston harbor.

In November, despite the calls from colonists, Governor Hutchinson refuses to let British ships leave Boston harbor until the tea taxes are paid.

On December 16, 1773, following a mass meeting, a group of colonists dress up as Mohawks and board the ships, throwing 342 containers of tea overboard.

1774

In March, Parliament responds to Boston Tea Party by passing Coercive Acts. The port of Boston is shut down until Massachusetts pays tea taxes and reimburses East India Company for the loss of the tea.

In May, colonists in Rhode Island, New York, and Pennsylvania call for an intercolonial congress to overcome the Coercive Acts and discuss a common course of action against the British.

On May 20, Parliament passes another series of Coercive Acts. The Massachusetts Regulating Act and the Government Act end self-rule in the colony as the Crown and the governor take over the government. The Administration of Justice Act prohibits royal officials in Massachusetts from being sued in colonial courts, and the Quebec Act establishes a centralized government in Canada administered by the British. The Quebec Act incenses colonists by extending the southern boundary of Canada into regions claimed by Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Virginia.

From September 5 to October 26, the First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia. Fifty-six delegates attend, representing every colony except Georgia. Sam Adams and John Hancock are among the representatives from Massachusetts while Patrick Henry and George Washington are among those from Virginia. Among the actions taken by Congress are:

- declaring opposition to Coercive Acts and calling for disobedience to them;
- promoting the creation of local militia
- adopting the Declaration and Resolves that oppose British attempts to undermine colonial self-rule while stressing the rights of the colonists to life, liberty, and property; and
- setting up the Continental Association to boycott British imports, embargo exports and discontinue the slave trade.

1775

In February a provincial congress in Massachusetts starts preparing for war, leading to Parliament declaring Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion.

On March 23, Patrick Henry gives a strong speech against British rule, stating, "Give me liberty or give me death!"

On March 30, the New England Restraining Act requires the New England colonies to trade exclusively with England and prohibits fishing in the North Atlantic.

In April, Massachusetts Governor Gage receives orders to enforce Coercive Acts. He also is ordered to suppress the rebellion with force.

On April 18, Gage sends 700 British soldiers to destroy the colonists' weapons depot at Concord.

Paul Revere and William Dawes ride from Boston to warn colonists. Around midnight, Revere reaches Lexington. He warns Sam Adams and John Hancock who are hiding out there.

At dawn on April 19, the British advance guard and about 70 militia men confront each other on Lexington Green with the British advance guard. Without orders, a shot is fired, followed by a volley from the British troops and a charge of the militia lines. Eight Americans are killed and ten are wounded. The British continue on to Concord, destroying the colonists' weapons and supplies. Militia men attack a British platoon.