

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

The American Colonies and the British government had a difficult relationship in the mid-1700s. England wanted the Colonies to obey its rules and recognize its authority. But the colonists were growing restless with the treatment shown them by the British Crown. To complicate matters, the Colonies were separated geographically from England by the Atlantic Ocean. During the eighteenth century, travel between the two countries/continents took months.

Governing and being governed became very difficult for those on each side of the water.

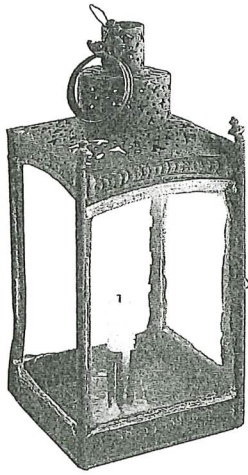
The first British colonists who came to the New World in the early 1600s struggled to make their home in the new, unknown land. They came for different reasons—freedom of religion, the hope of finding riches, the chance of a better life. But many of these early settlers also shared some characteristics: They were adventurous risk takers and inclined

All was not well in the Colonies in the 1770s. In this view of the Boston Massacre, British regulars, surrounded by an angry mob, shoot to defend themselves.



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Courtesy Concord Museum, www.concordmuseum.org

This is one of the lanterns that hung in the Old North Church steeple. It signaled the start of a long night for alarm riders such as Paul Revere.

to independent mindedness. Those roots ran deep enough to carry over to the patriots of the next several generations.

The people who became embroiled in the Revolutionary War in 1775 still thought of themselves as British citizens. However, many of the people living in the Colonies in the mid-1700s had been born in the New World. Some had never even traveled to England. Their homes, families, and businesses—everything that was familiar—were in the Colonies.

Between 1689 and 1763, there had been constant warring among European countries over control of colonial North America. The American **militia** and British soldiers had fought side by side in this series of battles, known as the French and Indian Wars (1754–1763). But the cost of these overseas wars left the British government deeply in debt. The king and **Parliament** decided to raise badly needed money by imposing taxes on the Colonies.

The colonists viewed these taxes and other attempts to control them as unfair. Why should England be allowed to tax them when the colonists did not have any representatives in Great Britain who could convey their interests? Why was England sending soldiers to America at the colonists' expense? Why were the colonists being treated as second-class citizens? The rumble from these and other questions circulated by the colonists began to grow.

From 1764 to 1775, England enacted a series of taxes on the American Colonies. (See the timeline for more information about those specific events.) The men and women of Massachusetts particularly were opposed to England's policies. They formed political resistance groups, such as Boston's Sons of Liberty and Daughters of Liberty, and **boycotted** the taxed goods. But whenever the British government repealed one tax in the Colonies, it quickly introduced another.

Word of England's actions and its harsh treatment of the Bostonians spread beyond that colony's borders to other American cities and settlements. Individual colonies up and down the East Coast of America began to recognize that a break with England was looming. They also sensed that their strength to pursue such action would lie in supporting one another.

Stamps such as these were applied by the British to goods sold in the Colonies—with the cost of the stamp coming out of the colonists' pockets.

A **militia** is an army made up of ordinary citizens, rather than professional soldiers.

Parliament is the national legislature of Great Britain (among other countries).

Boycott means to act together to stop buying or using something as a form of protest.



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THE PATH TO WAR

A Timeline of Major Events

1764

Sugar Act of 1764

British prime minister George Grenville introduces this tax, which reinforces a previous molasses sugar tax.

1765

Stamp Act of 1765

This law is the first direct tax imposed on the American Colonies. Its purpose is to raise money for the military defense of the Colonies. It requires that all paper products (newspapers, legal documents, advertisements, and so on) bear a stamp. The colonists are angered by this "taxation without representation" in Parliament. They resist the law: It is repealed in 1766.

1766

Declaratory Act of 1766

This is England's attempt to reassert its power over the American Colonies. The act states that the English government is the authority on all laws passed in the Colonies.

1767

Townshend Acts of 1767

Named for British statesman Charles Townshend, these acts attempt to collect **duties** on items—such as glass, lead, paints, paper, and tea—coming into the Colonies from England. The Boston merchants refuse to pay the tax and boycott English goods. By 1770, most of the acts, except for the tea tax, are repealed.

1770

Boston Massacre, March 1770

Massachusetts citizens resent the presence of British soldiers, who are sent to keep order in the restless colony and enforce the Townshend Acts. The colonists are physically and verbally abusive to the British **regulars**. Provoked by an angry crowd, the soldiers fire on the mob and kill five colonists.

Duties are taxes on imports that are charged by a government.

Regulars are soldiers who belong to a nation's permanent army.

A tax collector is tarred and feathered by colonists who are angry about the Tea Act.



The American Revolution: A Picture Sourcebook, by John Grafton, Dover Publications, Inc., 1975

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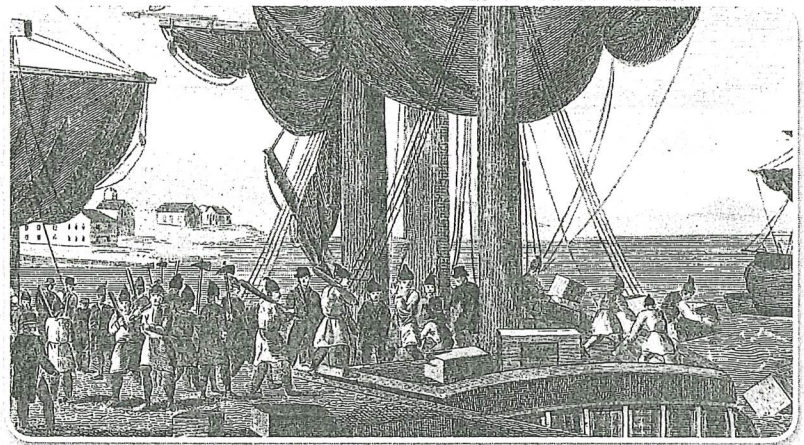
1773

Tea Act of 1773

Introduced by Frederick, Lord North, the law attempts to save the financially strained British East India Company. It gives the company the right to pick merchants—those loyal to the king—in the Colonies to act as exclusive distributors of its tea. It also allows the company to export the tea directly to the Colonies instead of going to Great Britain first. The colonists refuse to support the tax.

Boston Tea Party, December 1773

Frustrated by the Tea Act, the people of Boston organize. They remove and destroy the tea being held on three ships in Boston Harbor.



Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

The men in charge of the Boston Tea Party made every effort to destroy only the hated tea on the ships.

1774

Coercive Acts of 1774

Also known in the Colonies as the Intolerable Acts, these laws are enacted to punish Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party. Boston Harbor is closed to all trade, and the colony's right to self-government is abolished. The people of Massachusetts are forced to **quarter** British troops. In addition, conflicts between the colonists and royal officials from then on are to be tried in England or another colony.

First Continental Congress, September to October 1774

Delegates from all the Colonies (except Georgia) meet in Philadelphia to discuss concerns over England's colonial policies. Petitions regarding major points of contention are composed and sent to the king.

Quarter means to furnish with housing.