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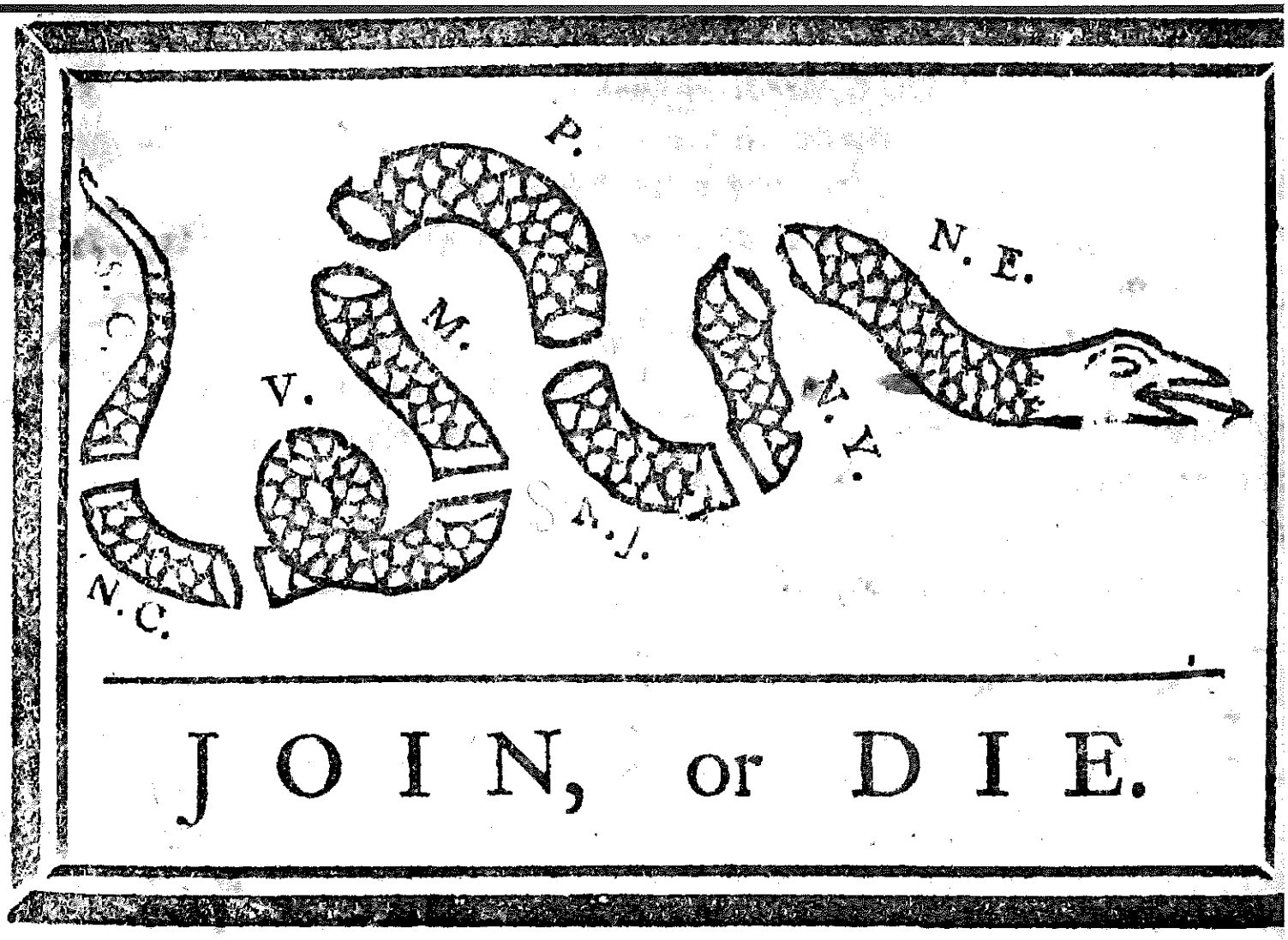
Toward Revolution

1750–1776



GEORGE ROBERT TWELVES HEWES was born in Boston in 1742. His father had been sent to Boston from a country town "to learn a mechanical trade" because the family lacked the means to support him. But the elder Hewes had not prospered, so at age fourteen, George had to apprentice himself to any artisan who would take him on. He became a shoemaker. Although he eventually obtained his own shop, he could make only a meager living in the Boston of the 1760s, and he even went on fishing voyages for extra income. In 1771, he lived in lodgings with his wife and children and owned no taxable property. Nearby, Jane Mecom struggled to raise her children, earning money by making soap and selling clothes. She, too, was from an artisan family but was able to get help from her successful brother, Benjamin Franklin, the printer who had left Boston to find his fortune in Philadelphia. Though Hewes's and Mecom's paths might never have crossed, both were drawn with thousands of others in the 1770s into the shattering events of the American Revolution and the colonies' pursuit of independence from Britain.

Neither Hewes nor Mecom held a prominent role in society (although at the end of his long life, Hewes would be fêted as one of the last survivors of the revolutionary generation). (See his portrait on page 142.) Fame was reserved for the political and military leaders who were honored as the founders of a new nation. But the Revolution could not have begun, and independence could not have been achieved, without the involvement of countless ordinary American colonists.

The colonies' prosperity and rapid growth led Benjamin Franklin and a few other colonists to predict that within a century, America, not the British Isles, would be the center of the British empire. To Britain, the North

Join, or Die

As war with France approached, this woodcut appeared in a 1754 edition of Benjamin Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* as a call to Britain's colonies to form a unified defense. Eleven years later, when Britain attempted to enforce the Stamp Act, Paul Revere, looking for an effective image for resistance, appropriated the old symbol. Benjamin Franklin, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754 — Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

American colonies were economically important parts of an expanding empire. Their shipping, agricultural exports (rice and indigo from the Carolinas, tobacco from Virginia, wheat from the Middle Colonies), demand for manufactured goods, and imports of African slaves all contributed to a steadily growing Atlantic economy. After 1750, Britain's trade with North America exceeded that with its Caribbean sugar colonies. By the early 1770s, the Americas would contribute two-fifths of Britain's total overseas trade.

The mainland colonies also gave Britain a strong foothold on the North American continent with which to pursue rivalries with other European powers. In the war fought between 1754 and 1763, known in North America as the French and Indian War, Britain successfully extended its influence. With active help from the colonies and Native American allies such as the Iroquois, British forces drove the French out of Canada and established control over much of the eastern part of the continent. It was a triumph that, with other gains in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, consolidated what is often called the First British Empire.

Yet within little more than a decade, British ambitions in North America were shattered. In 1775, thirteen of the American colonies rose in rebellion against British rule and joined together in another war, this time to achieve their independence. How did Britain's American triumph turn so quickly to disaster? The story centers on two themes: the conflicts that arose in colonial society itself and the impact on the colonies of imperial wars and policies. In a colonial society already wracked by tensions and whose citizens were mindful of their political rights, British policies provoked increasing popular unrest and protest. When popular movements became allied with colonial elites, resistance became revolution. The goals and actions of people such as George Hewes helped to undermine Britain's rich transatlantic empire and bring into being a new, vigorous republic.

The Colonial Roots of Rebellion

When, in 1776, the people of the thirteen colonies declared independence from Britain and formed the United States of America, they transformed both the history and the geography of North America. As the United States secured its independence, grew, and prospered, its presence on the map would come to seem inevitable. But to most people in the middle of the eighteenth century, the union of Britain's North American colonies into a single nation would have seemed almost inconceivable. The thirteen colonies that would later form the United States — New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia—were all distinct from each other and separately governed. There was little unity between them, and there were few institutions to foster it.

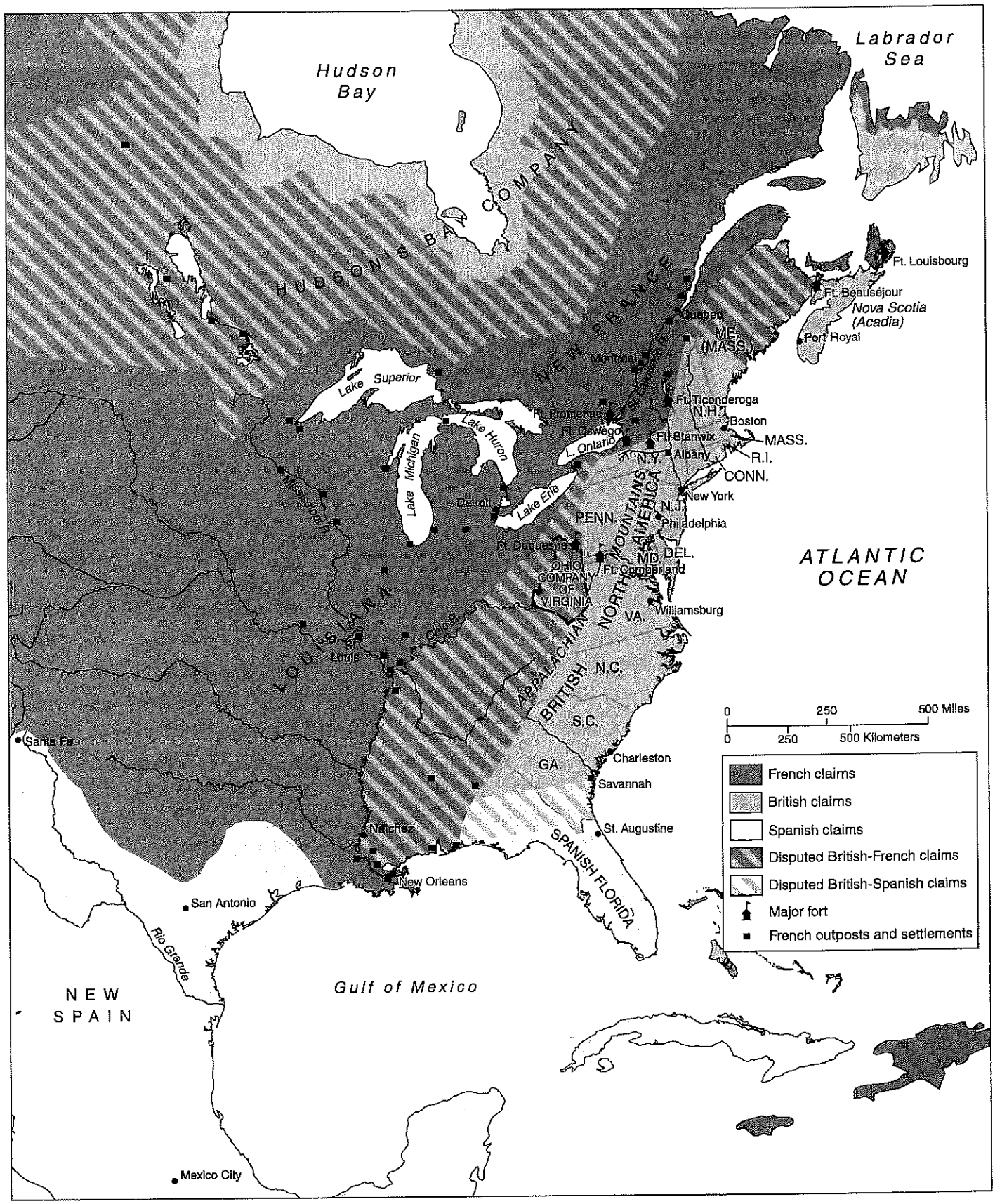
In 1754, Benjamin Franklin and others put forward the Albany Plan for a union of colonies to conduct defense and Indian affairs, but this came to nothing. Most colonies had closer, more regular ties with Britain than they had with each other, and to leading colonists, the British connection seemed largely beneficial.

British policies and colonists' responses to them after the French and Indian War generated the sparks of colonial rebellion. But those events and policies worked upon a social and political context that had already been shaped by the character of colonial developments and the tensions it had produced. Important roots of rebellion already lay in British American societies, as ordinary colonists (especially those in frontier regions) struggled with elites to gain fair access to freehold land and the right to self-government.

Why Were the Thirteen Colonies Ready to Revolt? These were only thirteen among dozens of colonies—belonging to Britain, Spain, France, or other European countries—strung out across the Americas and the Caribbean (Map 4.1). Why did these colonies in particular, and not the others, come to rebel against European rule in the 1760s and 1770s? Answers to that question lie in the varied character of colonial societies and economies and in the different relationships these societies had with their mother countries in Europe. Although there were many contrasts among them, the thirteen colonies that rebelled did have things in common, characteristics that they shared with no other New World colonies at the time. By the mid-eighteenth century, they displayed collectively several traits that other settlements in the Americas shared only partly or not at all.

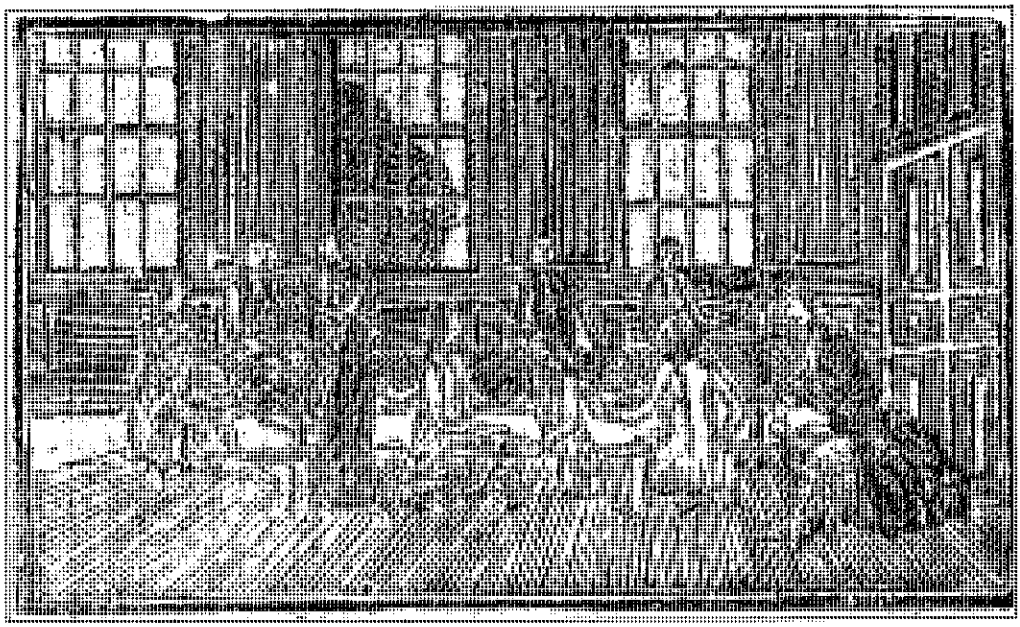
The thirteen colonies were successful centers of European settlement and economic activity to which British policy had permitted virtually unlimited immigration. Many people from the British Isles and parts of Germany, pressed by population growth, agricultural change, and political events, had taken the risk of resettling there. The thirteen colonies had their own political institutions, and they had ruling groups whose homes were in America rather than in Europe. Since the late seventeenth century, British governments had largely left these colonies to their own devices and relatively free of political direction or interference from the mother country. Political liberty and colonial expansion were connected. As South Carolina's Christopher Gadsden remarked, colonists proudly shared the "natural liberties of British subjects," without which "the sons of Britain would have been . . . very thinly scattered on this side of the Atlantic."

A brief look around the mid-eighteenth-century Americas demonstrates the thirteen colonies' distinctiveness. Spain's empire remained under central control, and Spanish colonial governors were expected to follow instructions from the royal Council of the Indies in Seville. Although



MAP 4.1 European Claims in North America, c. 1750

Britain, France, and Spain competed for influence in North America, each laying claim to vast areas of land and seeking alliances with the Native Americans who occupied most of it to secure their positions. The Indians, for their part, played the Europeans against one another as part of a strategy for holding on to their territories. Note the comparatively small area occupied by the thirteen colonies of mainland British North America.



"How Blest Is That Interpreter of Laws"

Colonists' pride in the institution of the law was demonstrated by this woodcut depicting a courtroom scene (with the presiding judge seated on the right). An accompanying poem celebrated the impartiality of the colonial court system:

How blest is that
INTERPRETER OF LAWS
Who rich and Poor make
equal in a Cause!
Who dares with steady hand
the Balance hold,
And ne'er inclines it to one
Side for Gold.

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

distance often enabled governors to adapt or ignore their orders ("I obey, but I do not comply" was the legendary evasion), autonomous political institutions were weak or nonexistent in the Spanish colonies. Ruling groups remained divided between colonial-born *creoles* and Spanish-born *peninsulares*. Most prominent merchants were based in Spain, while to Spanish administrators, the North American provinces still seemed peripheral to their main possessions in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

French colonies, similarly, lacked the conditions for political independence. The one settler society, Quebec, had a small elite but little political autonomy. Elsewhere, across the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi Valley, France had built missionary and trading networks, but except at the port of New Orleans, there was no settler society or basis for a political culture. After France lost its American territories during the war of 1754–1763, most French inhabitants came under British or Spanish control, but no successful independence movements resulted. Spain ruthlessly put down rebels in Louisiana, while the British occupiers of Quebec pursued policies designed to avoid revolt among their new French Canadian subjects.

Preconditions for political independence were also scarce in British America outside the thirteen colonies. Newfoundland was a colony of fishing outposts, with little political cohesion, and Nova Scotia was only recently and sparsely settled. Many of Britain's Caribbean island possessions, however, were well populated. The largest, Jamaica, had its own provincial assembly that was often in dispute with the government in London. Yet there was little chance that Jamaica or other islands would rebel against British rule. White elites in the Caribbean were much more closely tied to Britain than were those on the mainland. Unlike Chesapeake or

Carolina planters, many wealthy Caribbean planters lived in England and had relatives or agents manage their plantations. The vast majority (90 percent in some cases) of the sugar islands' populations were African slaves. In economies dominated by sugar plantations, there was little land or activity to sustain individual farmers, artisans, or laborers, so the islands attracted few European settlers. Living in constant fear of slave insurrections, the islands' small white populations relied on Britain to suppress rebellion and to keep order.

Only the thirteen British mainland colonies, then, shared conditions that could foster a separate political identity. Locally rooted elites, significant populations of free working people, political institutions, and a degree of economic diversity all contributed to the possibility of independence from Europe. But in 1750, British Americans still had little sense of separateness from England. Over the next quarter century, that separation would be generated first by social and political conflicts within the colonies and then by mounting conflicts with Britain as well. Popular participation figured greatly in these events.

Political and Social Tensions By the mid-eighteenth century, each of the British American colonies had developed its own distinctive pattern of tensions and political disputes. In New York, factions that formed around the rival DeLancey and Livingston families competed for preeminence in the provincial legislature and city governments. In Pennsylvania, different ethnic and religious groups began to challenge the political dominance of Quakers and of the colony's proprietors. In Virginia, the popular evangelism of the Great Awakening produced social and political challenges to the Anglican gentry, while in New England, these challenges helped to break the tradition of consensus in town government that had been built up since the seventeenth century (see Chapters 2 and 3).

In port towns, market prices, trade fluctuations, poor relief, and the impressment of seamen into service in the Royal Navy provoked contention, even riots. The interests of town-based merchants often clashed with those of farmers and planters. Massachusetts, for instance, was divided in 1740–1741 by conflict over the establishment of a land bank, a scheme to issue paper currency backed by the mortgages on farmland that was widely supported in the colony because it promised to ease the payment of debts. Urban merchants, however, preferred being paid in silver or gold and used their influence with the colonial governor to have the land bank defeated. Massachusetts farmers remained wary of potential threats to their freehold system of property ownership and protective of the local institutions, including town meetings, that guaranteed them a degree of self-government.

Land Rioters and Demands for Freehold Rights The land bank dispute remained peaceful, but various causes did spark protests and rioting across

"Stones and Brickbats": Efforts to Halt Impressment

On December 1, 1747, Massachusetts governor William Shirley wrote this letter to the Lords of Trade, revealing Boston's reaction to the British habit of impressment (to supply men for its navy, the British government regularly employed "press gangs" to seize colonial merchant seamen). Boston was plagued by these press gangs in the 1740s; trade suffered as seamen fled the port to avoid forced military service. Shirley describes a November 16, 1747, incident in which several hundred Boston sailors and laborers, white and black, tried to halt an impressment by taking British officers hostage.

The mob now increased and joined by some inhabitants came to the Town House (just after candle light) and armed as in the morning, assaulted the Council Chamber . . . by throwing stones and brickbats in at the windows, and having broke all the windows of the lower floor . . . forcibly entered into it. . . .

In this confusion . . . the Speaker of the House and others of the Assembly pressed me much to speak two or three words to the mob . . . ; and in this parley one of the mob, an inhabitant of the town, called upon me to deliver up the Lieutenant of the Lark, which I refused to do; after which among other things, he demanded of me why a boy, one Warren now under sentence of death in jail for being [involved] in a press gang which killed two sailors in this town in the act of impressing, was not executed; and I acquainted 'em his execution was suspended by his Majesty's order till his pleasure shall be known upon it; whereupon the same person, who was the mob's spokesman, asked me "if I did not remember Porteous's case who was hanged upon a sign post in Edinburgh." I told 'em very well, and that I hoped they remembered what the consequence of that proceeding was to the inhabitants of the city; after which I thought it high time to make an end of parleying with the mob, and retired into the Council Chamber. . . .

In the evening the mob forcibly searched the Navy Hospital upon the Town Common in order to let out what seamen they could find there belonging to the King's ships; and [searched] seven or eight private houses for [British] officers, and took four or five petty officers; but soon released 'em without any ill usage . . . their chief intent appearing to be, from the beginning, not to use the officers ill any otherwise than by detaining 'em, in hopes of obliging [British commodore Charles] Knowles to give up the impressed men.

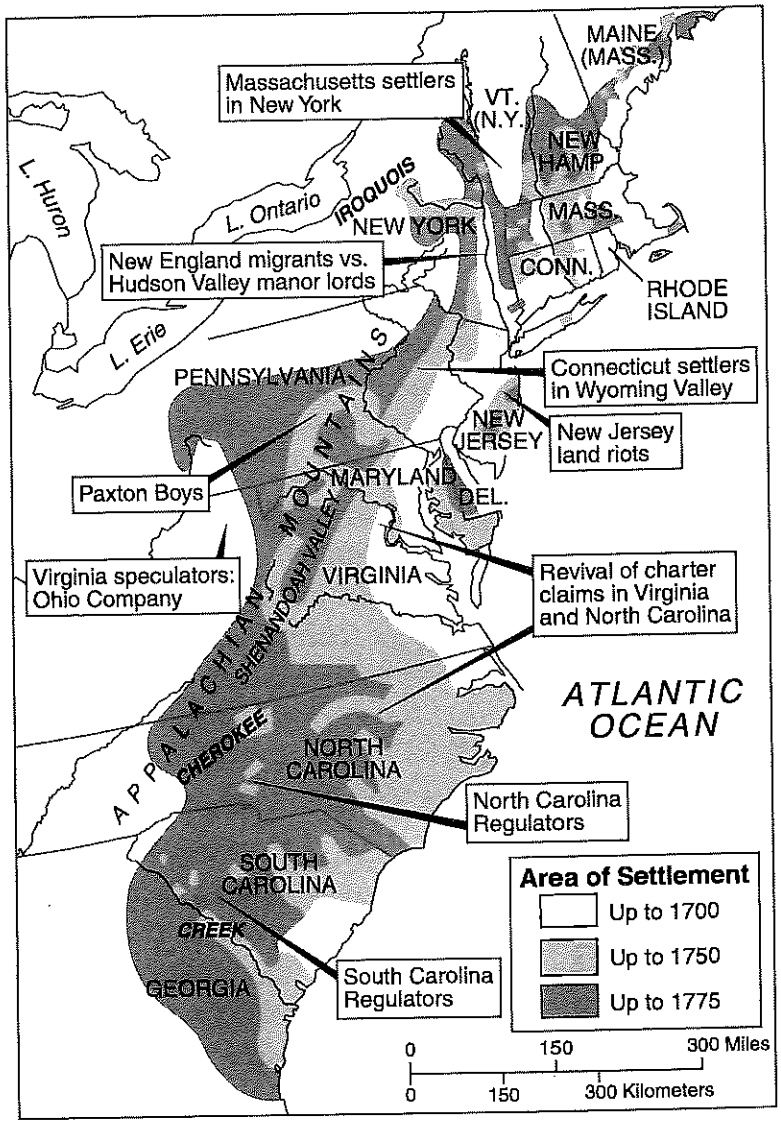
Charles Henry Lincoln, ed., *Correspondence of William Shirley* (1912).

the countryside from northern New England to South Carolina. Aspirations for freehold land and self-government were significant features of these upheavals, which, because the colonies were predominantly rural, often had broad political implications (Map 4.2).

In several areas, such as New Jersey and New York's Hudson River valley, conflict arose between large landholders and tenants. Small farmers, who believed they had the right to freeholds of their own, confronted landowners who, as one protester put it, wanted to lord it over "amiable and

innocent tenants." Landlords' claims to vast tracts of land enjoyed the authority of the crown and the law. Against this, small farmers asserted a moral right to secure ownership of land they themselves had cleared and improved.

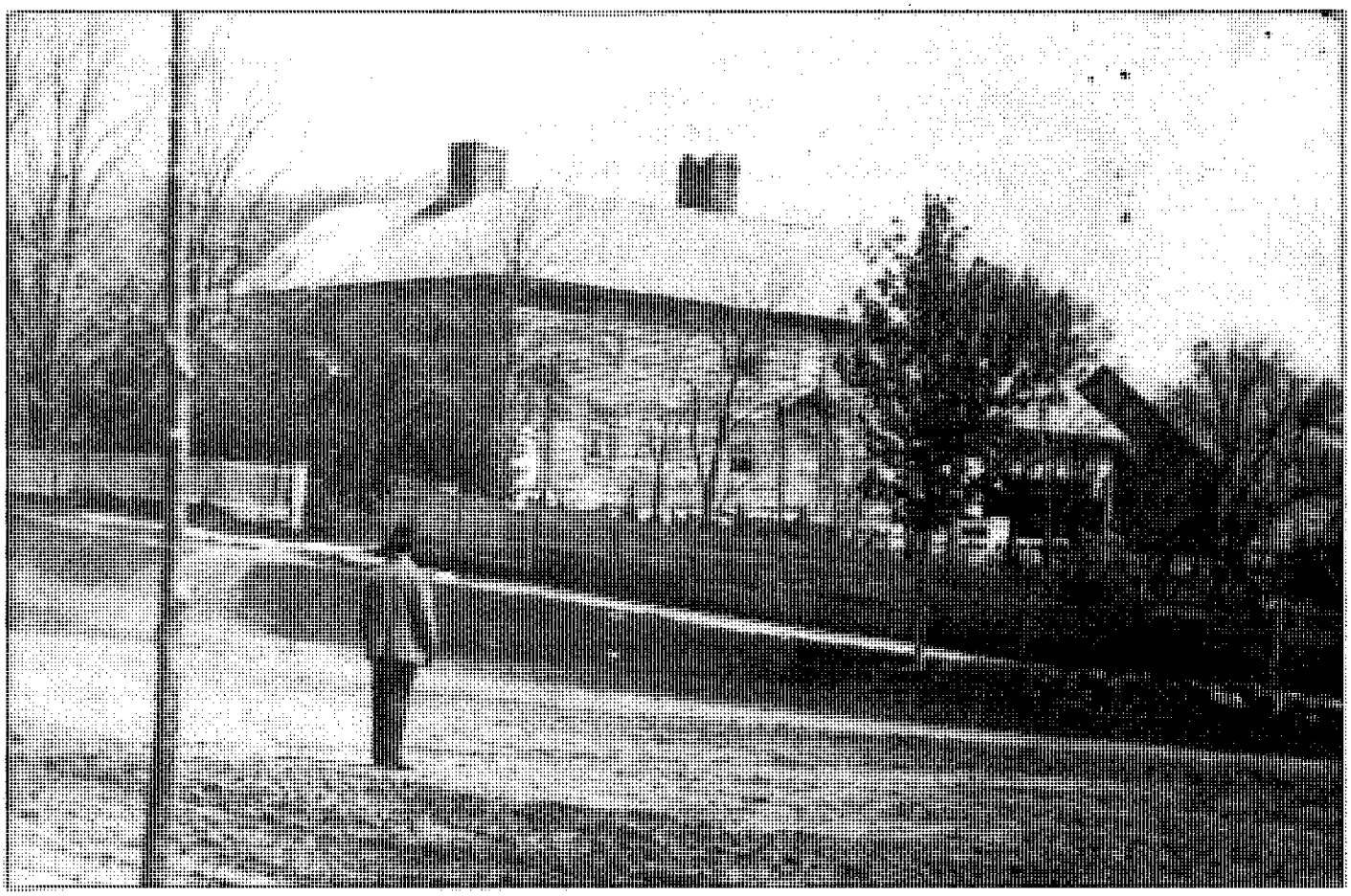
New Jersey witnessed a long-running campaign against the "East Jersey Proprietors," who, on the basis of a seventeenth-century grant from the Duke of York, claimed a large area around present-day Newark. The proprietors tried to collect overdue rent from farmers and began evicting those who refused to pay up. Arguing that this land had been granted illegally, without the consent of the Indians who held title to it, protesters released fellow farmers from jail, and rioters tore down the fences and houses of people who had accepted titles from the proprietors. One prisoner, Samuel Baldwin, was rescued in 1746 by 150 men armed "with clubbs, Axes, and Crow barrs." As though they were running their own government, land rioters collected taxes from their supporters, formed militia companies, and opened courts of their own in which to try their enemies.



MAP 4.2 Conflicts over Land in the Mid-Eighteenth Century
From northern New England to South Carolina, struggles over land and rights erupted between the 1740s and 1770s as backcountry settlers fought with provincial governments, land speculators, or Indians.

In New York, protest focused on the great manors of the Hudson River valley, some of whose landlords were raising rents and reducing tenants' entitlements. Angry tenants knew that the titles to some of these estates, most notably Livingston Manor, were fraudulent, and they challenged the very basis of landownership in the colony, seeking to demolish its quasi-feudal structure. In 1766, the valley erupted in an insurrection that spread from Manhattan to Albany, as tenants withheld rent payments and claimed freehold title to the land they farmed. Their leader, William Prendergast, declared that they "sought the good of the country" and that "it was hard they were not allowed to have any property." New York's government sent British troops against the rioters in 1766, suppressed the revolt, and sentenced Prendergast to death.

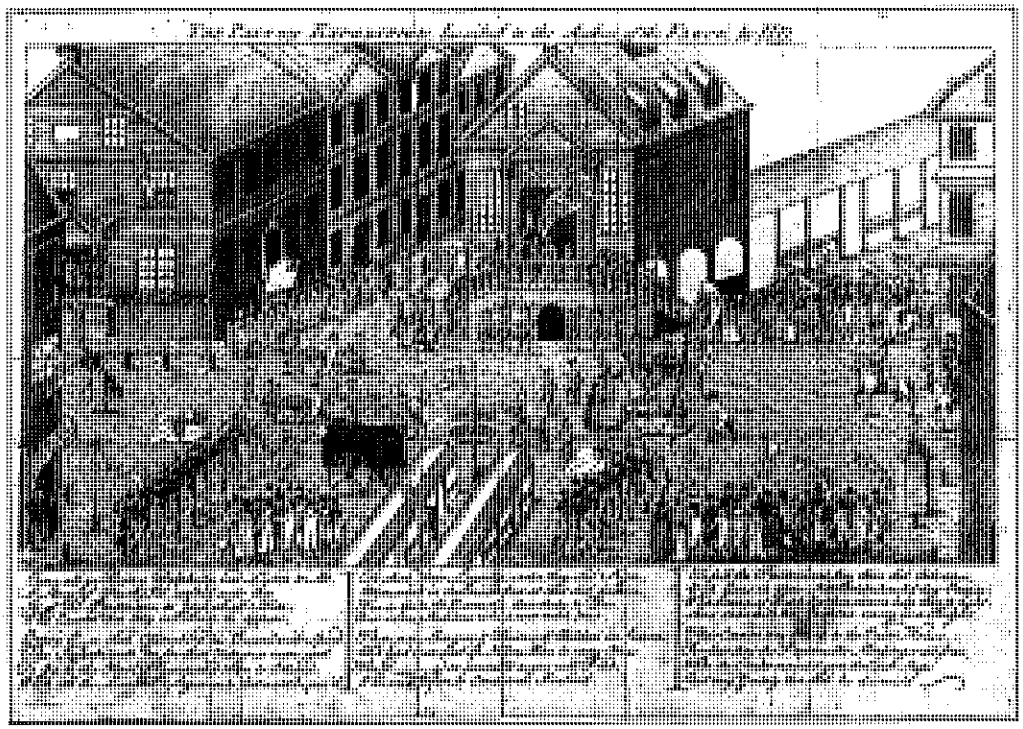
This Hudson River valley conflict also involved New England migrants who were settling on land adjacent to New York, including the Green Mountains. Most of these settlers took up land under titles from New Hampshire that granted freehold ownership. But New York disputed New



Gathering at the Catamount Tavern
The Green Mountain Boys used the Catamount Tavern in Bennington as their headquarters. Bennington, named after New Hampshire's royal governor Benning Wentworth, was in the southeastern part of what is now Vermont, only a short distance from the seat of New York's government in Albany. The tavern was built around 1769 and featured a sign with a stuffed catamount or mountain lion. Stereograph, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

Hampshire's claim to the region. The boundary between New York and Massachusetts had never been fixed, and Hudson River valley landholders were eager to expand their estates eastward. Settlers feared that if New York's claims were successful, proprietors would gain title to their farmland, turning them into tenants. After 1764, when the Privy Council in London decided that the Green Mountains did indeed belong to New York, New England settlers calling themselves the Green Mountain Boys waged sporadic guerrilla warfare against the New York authorities. Agreeing with William Prendergast that "there was no law for poor men," they tried to provide one that would guarantee the rights of independent small farmers against the claims of the wealthy, and they pursued their campaign into the American Revolution.

Conflict on the Frontier Farther south, immigration from Britain, Ireland, and Germany, as well as local population growth, prompted demand for new farmland. Migration to the frontier produced conflict between new settlers and leaders in older regions. Settlers demanded both better political representation and government help to remove Indians from the land they wanted to occupy.



The Paxton Expedition

A contemporary engraving satirized Quaker Philadelphia's military preparations as the Paxton Boys neared the city in 1763. An accompanying poem concluded:

To kill the Paxtonians, they then did Advance,
With Guns on their Shoulders, but how did they Prance;
When a troop of Dutch Butchers came to help them to fight,
Some down with their Guns, ran away in a Fright.
Their Cannon they drew up to the Court House,
For fear that the Paxtons the Meeting would force,
When the Orator mounted upon the Court Steps
And very Gently the Mob he dismis'd.

Henry Dawkins, *The Paxton Expedition, Inscribed to the Author of the Farce, by HD*, line engraving, 1764, 13 11/16 × 7 5/16 inches — Library Company of Philadelphia.

In Pennsylvania, frontier settlers — many of them Scots-Irish — encroached on the territory of tribes with which the colonial government had so far largely managed to deal peacefully. Fraud and violence accompanied these encounters, making frontier life dangerous and precarious. Like Bacon's rebels in Virginia in 1676 (see Chapter 2), settlers sought to kill or remove natives, and in 1763, when the Pennsylvania government did not protect them from Indian counterattacks, frontiersmen formed their own army, the Paxton Boys. Sixty men raided a settlement of Christianized Indians at Conestoga, killing six inhabitants on the spot and later murdering fourteen others who had sought shelter in the jail at Lancaster. Two hundred and fifty frontiersmen then marched on Philadelphia, where assemblymen conceded many of their demands.

South Carolina frontier farmers and planters protested the lack of governmental institutions in the backcountry. They were unrepresented and had no effective officers or courts to protect them or to prosecute bandits who threatened them. Claiming equal rights with fellow colonists ("We are Free-men — British subjects — Not Born Slaves"), they appealed to the colonial assembly, which was dominated by coastal planters and had ignored them. Frontiersmen formed vigilante groups that called themselves Regulators and seized control of the backcountry from 1767 to 1769. They hanged, whipped, or banished suspected thieves and burned their homes. Although the leaders came from the small minority of ambitious, commercially oriented slave owners, thousands of small farmers supported them. At length, the assembly responded to their grievances. In 1769, it provided for

"Have Not Your Purses Been Pillaged . . . ?": The North Carolina Regulators

Herman Husband, the author of this tract, was the most prominent agitator in the North Carolina Regulator movement. A man of great contradictions, he held land grants of over 8,000 acres yet also advanced new democratic ideas in his writings. His September 1769 letter is addressed "to the inhabitants of the Province of North-Carolina" and appeals to farmers to vote for representatives of their own kind.

Dear Brethren,

Nothing is more common for Persons who look upon themselves to be injured than to resent and complain. These are sounded aloud, and plain in Proportion to the Apprehension of it. . . .

The late Commotions and crying Dissatisfactions among the common People of this Province, is not unknown nor unfelt by any thinking Person. No Person among you could be at a Loss to find out the true Cause. I dare venture to assert you all advised [as] to the Application of the Public Money; these you saw misapplied to the enriching of Individuals, or at least embezzled in some way without defraying the public Expenses. Have not your Purses been pillaged by the exorbitant and unlawful Fees taken by Officers, Clerks, &c? . . .

The Exorbitant, not to say unlawful Fees, required and assumed by Officers; the unnecessary, not to say destructive Abridgement of a Court's Jurisdiction; the enormous Encrease of the provincial Tax unnecessary; these are Evils of which no Person can be insensible, and which I doubt not has been lamented by each of you. . . .

I need not inform you that a Majority of our Assembly is composed of Lawyers, Clerks, and others in Connection with them, while by our own Voice we have excluded the Planter. . . . We have not the least Reason to expect the Good of the Farmer, and consequently of the Community, will be consulted by those who hang on Favour, or depend on the Intricacies of the Laws. . . .

But you will say, What is the Remedy against this malignant Disease?

I will venture to prescribe a sovereign one if duly applied; that is, as you have now a fit Opportunity, choose for your Representatives or Burgesses such Men as have given you the strongest Reason to believe they are truly honest: Such as are disinterested, publick spirited, who will not allow their private Advantage once to stand in Competition with the public Good. . . .

William K. Boyd, ed., *Some Eighteenth Century Tracts Concerning North Carolina* (1927).

extra representatives and two new inland parishes (counties) with legal and political institutions, including the courts, jails, and sheriffs that frontier settlers wanted. Having achieved their aims, the South Carolina Regulators disbanded.

In North Carolina, however, a separate Regulator movement faced a more hostile colonial government. A group of lawyers and land speculators had recently moved to the frontier, taking over local offices and accumulating large tracts of land. Their arrival shut out middling and poor whites, who had previously been able to acquire backcountry land and hold political office but now faced evictions, high taxes, and indebtedness as well as excessive court fees charged by corrupt officials. From 1765 on, many of these farmers, tenants, and laborers rose in rebellion. But the government, dominated by the coastal elite, resisted them and their demands. In 1771, when hundreds of armed Regulators clashed with colonial militia at the Alamance River, twenty Regulators were killed, one hundred were wounded, and the rest dispersed. Five Regulator leaders were executed, including one summarily on the battlefield, and their movement collapsed.

Unlike most town riots, which were short-lived and sporadic affairs over the price of bread or similar matters, unrest and rebellion in rural and frontier areas concerned fundamental issues: who would own land; how rights would be distributed and upheld; and whether society would tend toward hierarchy or equality. A recurrent theme was rural people's assertion of a right to self-government and to legal and political structures that would allow them to live without subservience to the wealthy and well connected.

The First British Empire: Triumph and Crisis

During the 1750s and 1760s, these same themes emerged in conflicts arising out of Britain's control over its empire. Questions of rights, freedom, and self-government came to alter colonists' views of their relationship to Britain. When imperial and internal conflicts became entangled, and particularly when rural people became involved in disputes with Britain, the mix proved explosive.

Over the first half of the eighteenth century, the British government had rarely intervened in colonial business. It usually left governors and provincial assemblies to handle matters themselves. For decades, colonial elites had controlled the taxation and administration of their colonies, imitating in their assemblies the practices of the English House of Commons. They told themselves and their people that they were the guardians of British liberties. They had become used to acting as a ruling class and to arguing that their rule was in the common interest. Still, the continent's increasingly iinportant role in overseas trade and in Britain's rivalries with other European powers meant that the British were by no means indifferent to North America. Commercial development and war caused Britain's interest in the colonies to grow. The war of 1754 to 1763—its achievements and its consequences—would reshape British views of its colonial empire and its colonists' views of the mother country. Britain's greater involvement in

the colonies' frontier land policies and relations with Indian tribes, coupled with a postwar economic slump that only exacerbated existing inequality, left many colonists resentful and prepared to question British intentions.

Economic Developments and Constant Warfare Since the seventeenth century, Britain's trading regulations, especially the Navigation Acts, had directed colonial products in ways that best served British interests. In the eighteenth century, new regulations tried to ensure that colonial manufactured goods did not compete with those of Britain's burgeoning industrial producers. As the colonies expanded and matured, their economies became increasingly interdependent with Britain's. The southern and middle colonies exported agricultural goods, whereas the Northeast exported fish, ships, and forest products. Growing prosperity in the colonies meant increased demand for European manufactured items as well as for materials to supply colonial manufacturers. Colonists, moreover, were purchasing increasing amounts of luxury or ornamental products: fashionable cloths and furnishings, tableware, and beverages such as tea. Such items were being consumed across a growing spectrum of colonial society.

British merchants were keen to meet colonial demand but were also wary of acquiring bad debts if payments were not forthcoming. Like the bigger colonial merchants, they disliked paper currency schemes, such as the Massachusetts Land Bank or currency issued by colonial governments, because they feared that it would lose value. Twice, Parliament legislated against colonial paper money: a 1751 act prohibited it in New England, and the Currency Act of 1764 extended the ban to other colonies. Such laws provoked little opposition by themselves, but as events unfolded, a growing number of colonists regarded them as indications of a dangerous British interest in regulating colonial affairs for Britain's own purposes.

American colonists were also repeatedly embroiled in wars, not usually of their own making, for which they had to raise armies and pay taxes. Often arising out of European concerns, these wars nevertheless started in or spread to North America. Colonists took pride in their "English liberties"—voting for representatives, protection from arbitrary power, common law rights such as that to trial by jury—and were content enough to support wars against France or Spain, which they saw as "tyrannies" unblessed by such privileges. Their support for war was greatest when colonial and British ambitions coincided. New England's Protestants enthusiastically backed campaigns against the Catholic French in Quebec. In 1745, during King George's War between Britain and France, Massachusetts forces captured the French fortress of Louisbourg, on Cape Breton Island, which controlled the entrance to the St. Lawrence River. The victory prompted jubilation among New Englanders because it promised an end to their long-standing fear of their Catholic neighbors.

But joy later turned to dismay when Britain—pursuing its own interests at peace negotiations in 1748—returned Louisbourg to the French, exchanging it for a valuable Caribbean sugar island. A few colonists began to question their subordinate relationship to Britain. In a 1750 sermon, preached in Boston on the anniversary of Charles I's execution, Reverend Jonathan Mayhew argued that obedience to rulers was required only as long as they "perform the duty of rulers, by exercising a reasonable and just authority for the good of human society." Condemning as "slavish" the prevailing doctrine of unlimited submission to government, Mayhew suggested that the public good might "make us withhold from our rulers that obedience and subjection which it would, otherwise, be our duty to render."

The French and Indian War American events soon broke the peace of 1748 between Britain and France. France saw Virginia settlers and Pennsylvania traders, who were pushing west across the Appalachian Mountains, as a threat to its territorial interests. When the French tried to build forts in the Ohio Valley, British and colonial governments warned them off. In western Pennsylvania in 1754, a Virginia militia unit under a young colonel named George Washington blundered into a skirmish with French troops and touched off a war that would spread from North America to Europe, India, and the Caribbean. By the time peace came in 1763, France's power in North America had been destroyed.

At first, though, the French were successful. The British general Edward Braddock led an expedition in 1755 to drive the French from Fort Duquesne in western Pennsylvania but was ambushed and killed, along with much of his force. However, the British were securing their hold on Nova Scotia, and in 1755, they forcibly deported thousands of Acadians, the region's French-speaking settlers. Some were dispersed to other British colonies, but after much hardship, many made their way to Louisiana, forming the nucleus of its Cajun (Acadian) community. After 1757, the British prepared to invade French Canada itself, with colonial assistance. They retook Louisbourg, captured Quebec in 1759, and seized Montreal the following year, shattering the French hold on North America. At the peace negotiations in Paris, Britain chose to keep Canada, ending France's threat to New England and the western frontier. Obtaining Florida from Spain too, Britain gained control of the continent's entire east coast.

The war was successful for Britain and its American colonies but also exposed disagreements between them. Colonists disliked having British troops "quartered" (compulsorily housed) in their homes. The British did not view colonists as their equals; until 1758, all British officers were formally superior to colonial officers, regardless of rank. The British looked down on colonial militias as less effective than their own regular soldiers because the militias did not embody what they believed to be proper social

The Death of General Wolfe

This 1770 painting by the Pennsylvania-born painter Benjamin West shows an incident that occurred during the Battle of Quebec in September 1759. This painting transformed the way in which artists depicted historical events. West, who settled in England and became court painter to King George III, portrayed the death of the commander of the English forces, Major General James Wolfe, at the height of the battle that would end in a French defeat. When the painting was exhibited, it stirred great controversy because its subjects wore contemporary dress instead of the ancient Greek and Roman costumes that were usually deemed appropriate for a history painting. West confronted his critics, declaring, "The same truth that guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil of the artist . . . if instead of the facts . . . represent classical fictions, how shall I be understood by posterity? I want to mark the date, the place, and the parties engaged in the event." However, West's painting included men who were not with Wolfe when he died, including the lone Indian figure. No Indians fought with British forces in Quebec. Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 60 × 84 1/2 inches — National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; transfer from the Canadian War Memorials, 1921 (gift of the Second Duke of Westminster, Eaton Hall, Cheshire, 1918).

subordination. Most British officers were aristocrats and gentlemen who commanded soldiers drawn from among the poor and disadvantaged. Many colonial militia units reflected the greater democracy of New World settlements, with much less social distance between officers and men. In

1758, Governor Thomas Pownall of Massachusetts claimed that "most of these soldiers . . . are Freeholders, who pay taxes, [or] are the sons of some of our Militia colonels, and the sons of many of our Field Officers, now doing duty as Privates." Some units elected their company commanders. British officers, incredulous at practices that, to them, signaled unreliability, often treated colonial troops as mere auxiliaries, and the French and Indian War left them with a poor impression of Americans' fighting capabilities.

Prejudice blinded the British to military achievements that were in fact boosting colonials' self-confidence. Virginia militiamen, commanded by the same George Washington whose mistake the previous year had ignited hostilities, were prominent survivors of Braddock's defeat in 1755. Washington's good reputation for saving his unit would be recalled twenty years later, when the colonies sought a commander to lead their own forces against the British. Colonial soldiers took pride in their contributions to British victories. They still saw themselves as belonging to their own specific provinces, but many had served alongside units from other colonies, and this fostered a new sense of unity. Some spoke of themselves for the first time as "Americans."

The Consequences of War The war spurred British political interest in the colonies and a shift toward greater intervention in colonial affairs. It had been costly, and Britain looked to the colonies to foot part of the bill. The war's end, meanwhile, brought a decline in demand for military goods and services, which in turn caused suffering for many working people in the ensuing economic depression. Coupled with existing social tensions in the colonies, these economic changes led to a dramatic crisis in Anglo-American relations.

None were more affected by the French defeat in North America than Indians. The war's outcome opened the prospect of renewed colonial settlement and pressure on Indian lands. Previously able to play the French and British off against each other, many native groups feared having to deal with a single dominant European power. Native Americans from Maine to the Carolinas had taken the opportunity offered by the war to try and push back white settlements. The Chippewa chief Minevavana told the British that "although you have conquered the French, you have not yet conquered us. These lakes, these woods and mountains . . . are our inheritance; and we will part with them to no one."

By 1763, former French allies in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes regions were mounting a concerted effort to hold off Anglo-American expansion. Ottawas, Hurons, Shawnees, and Delawares had switched alliances from the French to the British in 1759, hoping that the British would withdraw from west of the Appalachians and leave them alone. When

"Another Race of White Men Come Amongst Us": British Replace the French in the Lower Mississippi Valley

Native groups understood the dramatic consequences of the French and Indian War, as Alibamon Mingo, elderly leader of the Choctaw nation, indicated in his meetings with the British in Mobile in 1765. Mingo remembered the French fondly and spoke of his expectations of fair trade with and just treatment by the British.

When I was Young the White Men came amongst us bearing abundance along with them, I took them by the hand & have ever remained firm to my Engagements, in return all my wants & those of my Warriors & Wives & Children have been Bountyfully Supplied. I now See another Race of White Men Come amongst us bearing the Same abundance, & I expect they will be equally Bountyfull which must be done if they wish equally to gain the affection of my people. . . .

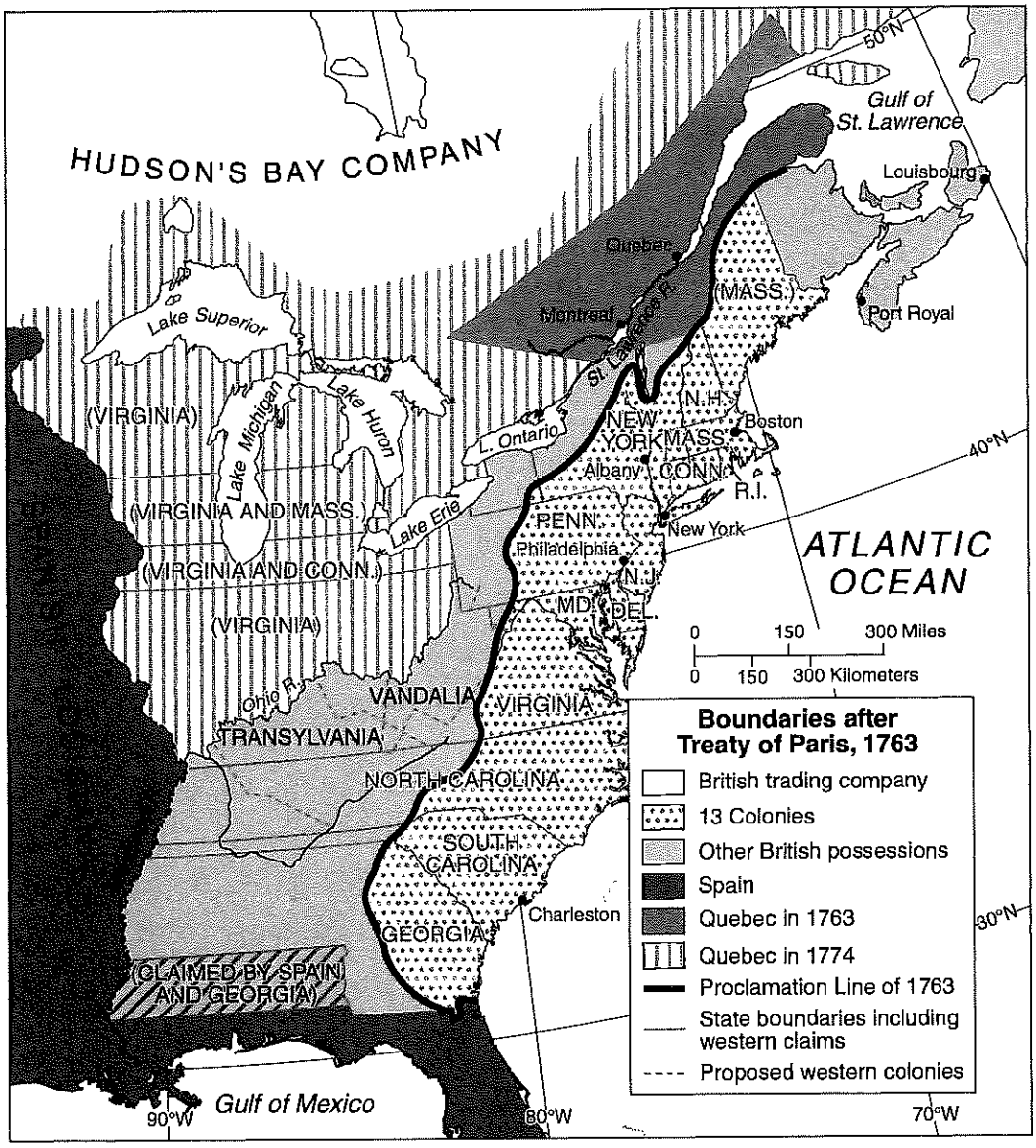
I cannot Immagine the Great King could Send the Superintendant to deceive us. In case we deliver up our French Medals & Commissions we expect to receive as good in their place, and that we Should bear the Same Authority & be entitled to the Same presents, If you wish to Serve your Old Friends you may give New Medals & Commissions & presents, but the worthy cannot bear to be disgraced without a fault, Neither will the Generous Inflict a Punishment without a Crime. . . .

I am not of opinion that in giving Land to the English, we deprive ourselves of the use of it, on the Contrary, I think we shall share it with them, as for Example the House I now Speak in was built by the White people on our Land yet it is divided between the White & the Red people. Therefore we need not be uneasy that the English Settle upon our Lands as by that means they can more easily Supply our wants.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Mississippi Provincial Archives: English Dominion*, compiled and edited by Dunbar Rowland (Nashville, Tenn.: Brandon Printing Co., 1911), 240–41.

this did not happen, the Delaware prophet Neolin called for the expulsion of "the dogs clothed in red." The Ottawa chief Pontiac led an uprising aimed at dislodging British troops from the Great Lakes region, but disease quickly depleted his forces, and they had to abandon their campaign. Pontiac's rebellion nevertheless created conditions for a serious breakdown in relations between Britain and its colonists.

Frontier settlers and land speculators were quickly moving through the mountains into what would become Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The British wanted to impose order on this movement, to secure its own influence and end conflict between settlers and Indians. In a Proclamation of 1763, Britain prohibited settlement west of a line drawn along the ridge of the Appalachian Mountains (Map 4.3). The ban would be enforced by troops permanently stationed for the purpose.



MAP 4.3 British North America, 1763–1774

This map illustrates British policy in North America after the conquest of French Canada. The Proclamation Line of 1763 limited colonial settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains, whereas the Quebec Act of 1774 — passed at the same time as the Coercive Acts — fueled colonial anger by extinguishing several provinces' western land claims, extending the boundary of Quebec, and denying Quebec an elected assembly.

By itself, the Proclamation Line provoked some anger. Frontier settlers found their land titles in question. Investors in land companies (who included men such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin) found their hopes of speculative profits jeopardized. Colonial pamphleteers denounced the specter of tyranny that arose from Britain's intention to keep a "standing army" in America. More important, these writers saw Britain's new frontier policy as evidence that Parliament was embarking on a determined effort to make the colonies serve British interests.

Three Cherokees in London

The Cherokees began the Seven Years' War as one of Britain's staunchest Indian allies, but broken promises about land boundaries and gift exchanges tore apart that alliance. The Indians and British moved to open warfare in 1759, leading to decimation of the Cherokees' South Carolina homelands before they sued for peace. After the war, in 1762, three Cherokee chiefs visited London to meet the new English monarch, George III, and obtain assurances about their security. They were fêted but returned home empty-handed. This engraving depicts the Cherokee chiefs, with leading war chief Osteneco in the center and their interpreter on the left. This is one of the few Indian portraits drawn from life during the colonial era, providing a more accurate depiction of the figures and their clothing. *Three Cherokees Came Over from the Head of the River Sovannah to London, 1762* — National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Museum.

Strains Within the Empire: Trade and Taxes The French and Indian War benefited colonists who were in a position to profit from it. Colonial merchants who won wartime government contracts grew very rich. In New York City, Britain's American military headquarters, Oliver DeLancey used his

political connections to boost his fortune to well over 100,000 pounds, the equivalent of many millions today. Lesser folk also prospered. Farmers found that the army needed their crops; gunsmiths made weapons; blacksmiths fashioned ironware; shipyard workers produced vessels; carpenters built barracks and fortresses; women brewers sold beer to soldiers; respectable widows provided bed and board for officers. But prosperity was not equally shared. Many colonists saw no gain from the war, and the disparity between rich and poor became more obvious.

The end of the war ended the prosperity it had generated. The slump was worst in Boston, which had sunk into an economic stagnation that the war had only temporarily alleviated. Boston's population ceased to grow around 1750, and some of its trade was drawn away by other ports, especially the rapidly growing towns of Philadelphia and New York. Boston was thrown into a severe postwar depression as work disappeared and many people found themselves without employment. Almshouses filled up with new inmates, many of them women and children. Wages fell but prices remained high, so even those who could find work were hardly better off.

The postwar slump also affected New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. A New York rum seller regretted that "the Tipling Soldiery that used to help us out . . . are gone," and it was reported that the depression in the city had "reduced very many Families and poor People to great Distress." Charleston shipwrights and tanners found their work halved, while laborers faced irregular work and rising food prices. In all the port cities, the combination of inequality and hardship influenced the political events that were soon to unfold, although hard-hit Boston would play a particularly prominent role.

Imperial Conflict Grows

The French and Indian War also laid a heavy financial burden on Britain. The government of Prime Minister William Pitt had spent lavishly and raised taxes to conduct the fighting in the late 1750s. The new prime minister, George Grenville, faced enormous debts as well as expenditures for the navy, army, and officials essential to keeping Britain's newly expanded empire intact. Reluctant to raise taxes still further at home, Grenville's unstable administration looked to the American colonies to provide some of the necessary revenues.

Grenville was one of many British politicians who reasoned that the colonists had gained most from the war, which had removed their French enemy and enhanced their access to furs and other trade. Moreover, it seemed that the colonists had won these gains at little cost to themselves. Provincial assemblies had withheld contributions of men and resources or refused to pay governors' salaries unless they were given control of military

appointments and supplies. Colonists had traded with the enemy under flags of truce or by smuggling. They so disregarded trading regulations that the customs service in the colonies cost more to run than it collected in revenue.

Unlike most other European monarchies, the British crown could not tax or make laws without Parliament's consent. This principle was celebrated as one of the safeguards of British liberties. In Grenville's view, the American colonists were, like all Britons, subject to Parliament's authority. Their own provincial assemblies were subordinate to Parliament, which alone could legislate for the general good. The general good now required that colonists start paying their own way within the empire.

Grenville and his successors discovered that colonists did not share this view. Parliamentary efforts to levy taxes in the colonies met with repeated resistance. Between 1765 and 1775, successive crises, each more serious than the last, drew increasing numbers of people from all levels of American society into a struggle that would eventually lead to independence. Animating this struggle was a growing belief that the British intended to remove their "liberties" and subject them to the tyranny of arbitrary government—to "enslave" them, as many colonists started to say.

The Stamp Act and Townshend Duties Grenville began his effort to increase revenues from the colonies with the Sugar Act of 1764, designed to end the notoriously inefficient enforcement of the navigation laws. Since 1733, a high duty had been imposed on molasses imported to North America from foreign colonies, but none had been imposed on molasses from British colonies. Smuggling was easy, and revenues suffered. The Sugar Act imposed a new, low duty on imported molasses, making smuggling less lucrative, and provided for more customs officers to be sent to America to enforce the law, with the right to receive one-third of the value of every vessel and cargo they condemned for smuggling. Smuggling cases would be removed from local courts, whose juries were often the defendants' friends and neighbors, to juryless vice-admiralty courts. Measures against smuggling caused some resentment, but the erosion of the entitlement to trial by jury was more serious to many colonists, who saw it as undermining their English liberties.

Grenville's next step ignited a serious crisis. In the Stamp Act of 1765, he extended to the colonies a measure that was already used in Britain: the requirement that a stamp be purchased for many documents and printed items (land titles, contracts, court documents, playing cards, books and newspapers). The tax had to be paid in hard currency, which was difficult to come by in the economic slump. The money that was raised would remain in the colonies to pay for troops and administration, but it would be controlled by colonial governors, not the elected assemblies.

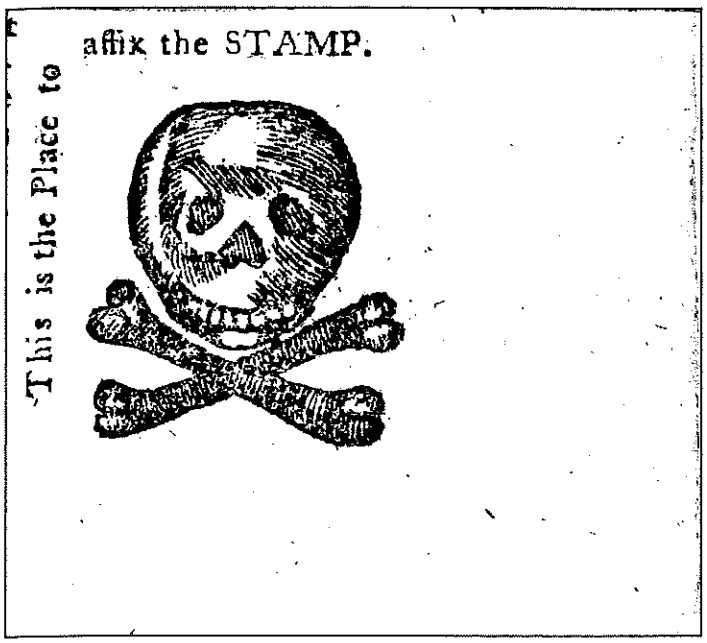
The Stamp Act provoked widespread anger because it affected almost everyone. Apprentices signing indentures, young couples getting married, merchants making contracts, people making wills, those buying or selling land or slaves, newspaper readers—all would have to pay the new tax. The act also hit at the power of colonial political elites. The Stamp Act was Parliament's first attempt to levy a widespread colonial tax over the heads of colonial assemblies. The assemblies began to resist parliamentary initiatives. As they were quick to point out, the Stamp Act threatened to make colonists pay for their own subjection to British rule. By giving royal governors an independent revenue, it promised to cut them free from restraint by the assemblies that voted their salaries. The rest of the tax would go to pay for the soldiers and officials who were enforcing unpopular British laws.

The Colonies Reduced
Britannia, surrounded by her amputated limbs — marked Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and New England — contemplated the decline of her empire in this 1767 engraving published in Britain. The cartoon, attributed to Benjamin Franklin, warned of the consequences of alienating the colonies through enforcement of the Stamp Act (the Latin phrase, meaning "Give a coin to Bellisarius," referred to the popular apocryphal tale of the noble Roman general Bellisarius, who, unjustly exiled by the Emperor Justinian, was forced to beg). Franklin, who was in England representing the colonists' claims, arranged to have the image printed on cards that he distributed to members of Parliament. *The Colonies Reduced. Design'd and Engrav'd for the Political Register*, 2 3/8 × 3 7/8 inches, 1767 — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Political instability in Britain led to the ousting of Grenville and to the repeal of the Stamp Act early in 1766. Parliament, however, emphasized in a Declaratory Act that it retained the right to "make laws and statutes . . . to bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever." Although this act contained no specific measures, its implications paved the way for further conflicts with the colonies.

In 1767, Parliament and a new chancellor of the exchequer, Charles Townshend, tried to tax the colonies again, both to raise money and to exercise parliamentary supremacy. Believing that colonists had rejected the Stamp Act because it was an "internal" tax, collected within the colonies themselves, Townshend sought to levy "external" taxes on goods brought into the colonies. The Revenue Act of 1767 (the "Townshend Duties") taxed paint, paper, lead, glass, and tea as they reached America. Colonists regarded the distinction between internal and external taxes as invalid, so these duties again provoked fierce opposition.

Colonists objected to British taxes because without representation in Parliament, they had no say in levying them, and because they saw taxation as part of a broader British plan to curb their liberties. Further resentment arose when Britain first suspended the New York assembly after it refused to vote for supplies for British troops in the province and then passed a Quartering Act obliging New Yorkers to board soldiers in their houses when required. The British also established a board of commissioners in Boston to run the colonial customs service and in 1768 posted two regiments of troops to Boston to protect the commission, aggravating colonists' fears of a standing army. This was the first time a garrison had been stationed out-



"This Is the Place"
This protest against the Stamp Act was printed in the bottom right-hand corner of the October 24, 1765, *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser.* *The Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, October 24, 1765 — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

side New York or frontier outposts. The army erected a guard post at Boston Neck to catch deserters, putting everyone entering or leaving town under the sentries' scrutiny.

Meanwhile it seemed to colonists as if the customs service itself was at war with the American economy. Minor officials enforcing trade regulations regarded colonists as disloyal or criminal. They worked for the rewards they could earn by catching smugglers, using laws so complex that almost any vessel or traveler violated some technicality. A minor discrepancy in a ship's papers could result in the seizure of the vessel and its contents. All involved in commerce, from great merchants such as John Hancock of Boston to the ordinary seamen who crewed the ships, fell afoul of the rules.

Elite Protest Prominent in the arguments over British policy were colonial political leaders, who gathered in the provincial assemblies to debate what action to take. In 1765, the Stamp Act provoked prompt opposition. In June, the Virginia House of Burgesses passed strongly worded resolutions against the act, and eight other colonial assemblies followed suit. In October, official delegations from nine colonies gathered in New York City for a Stamp Act Congress, which adopted resolutions condemning the measure, called for a boycott of British goods, and sent petitions to Parliament and an address to the king.

Concerned about British policy, gentlemen, lawyers, clergymen, and merchants began to write essays and treatises on constitutional rights. The imperial crisis unleashed a decade-long outpouring of such works. At first, writers were hesitant, aware that they were toying with dangerous ideas by debating Parliament's power to tax and to interfere with colonial assemblies. These debates pushed them toward new conceptions of the colonies' relationship with Britain.

Colonists initially claimed that Parliament could not tax them for revenue because they were not represented in the House of Commons. The Virginia House of Burgesses argued that "taxation of the People by themselves or by persons chosen by themselves . . . is the distinguishing Characteristick of British freedom." For the burgesses, the "persons chosen" by Virginians would be the members of their own House, the only people for whom Virginians could vote. Some pamphleteers came to suggest that Parliament might have no authority in the colonies and that the colonial assemblies governed in its place, under the direct authority of the king. But

this theory contradicted the British constitutional principle that the king ruled in and through Parliament and held no authority separate from it.

Gradually, pamphleteers undermined virtually everything colonists had once believed about their relationship with Britain, reaching increasingly radical conclusions, so that by 1774, Thomas Jefferson could insist that by migrating to the colonies, settlers had placed themselves beyond the sovereignty of Parliament. In *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, Jefferson argued that the Navigation Acts were "void" because "the British Parliament has no right to exercise authority over us." Recent British measures in the colonies were "acts of power, assumed by a body of men, foreign to our constitutions and unacknowledged by our laws." Taken one by one, the measures might appear "accidental," but together, they "too plainly prove a deliberate and systematical plan of reducing us to slavery." Jefferson and like-minded colonial leaders were but a few steps short of regarding the American colonies as independent from Britain.

Popular Protest Yet Jefferson and his fellow pamphleteers did not conduct political argument in a vacuum. Attitudes toward Britain became radicalized in light of events acted out on the colonies' streets and farmlands and in its households, as well as in the colonial assemblies. British taxes and British troops intruded on the lives of ordinary men and women. In Boston, Jane Mecom wrote to her brother Benjamin Franklin of the "confusion and distress those Opresive Actts have thrown us poor Americans into." Crowd action had long been an integral part of colonial life (see Chapter 3). Now women and men deployed these traditions against the symbols of British rule. In New York alone, fifty-seven crowd risings took place between 1764 and 1775, and numerous similar episodes occurred across the colonies. As popular crowds joined political elites in protesting British policy, they asserted their own sense of rights and justice and helped to turn protest into resistance.

In Boston, a small group of men calling themselves the "Loyal Nine," who included a painter, a printer, a jeweler, and two braziers (makers of brasswork), initiated popular resistance to the Stamp Act in the summer of 1765. They made August 14 a day of political theater to show Bostonians what the Stamp Act would mean when it went into effect that November. They hanged from a tree near Boston Neck effigies of George Grenville and of Andrew Oliver, the Boston merchant who had accepted the office of stamp distributor. Naming this the Liberty Tree, one of many that would appear in the next decade, the Nine set up a mock stamp office, where they ceremoniously stamped the goods of farmers and carters coming to town with produce and of passersby on foot and on horseback. A crowd then cut down the effigies, paraded and burned them, demolished a small building that was thought to be Oliver's stamp office, and then marched to Oliver's

"In Praise of Liberty": Colonial Crowds Protest the Stamp Act

Colonists' protests against the Stamp Act took many forms, including hanging and burning effigies of British officials and destroying their offices and houses, as well as those of colonial Stamp Act commissioners. The following account—from the Patriot newspaper The Boston Gazette*—of an attack on Boston's stamp collector Andrew Oliver shows how effective such dramatic crowd actions could be.*

Early on Wednesday morning last, the effigy of a gentleman sustaining a very unpopular office, viz, that of Stamp Master, was found hanging on a tree in the most public part of the town, together with a boot, wherein was concealed a young imp of the Devil represented as peeping out of the top. On the breast of the effigy was a label, "IN PRAISE OF LIBERTY," and announcing vengeance on the subverters of it. And underneath was the following words: He That Takes This Down Is an Enemy to His Country. The owner of the tree . . . endeavored to take it down; but being advised to the contrary by the populace, lest it should occasion the demolition of his windows, if not worse, desisted from the attempt. The diversion it occasioned among the multitude of spectators who continually assembled the whole day, is surprising: not a peasant was suffered to pass down to the market . . . till he had stopped and got his articles stamped by the effigy. Towards dark some thousands repaired to the said place of rendezvous, and having taken down the pageantry, they proceeded with it along the main street to the town house, thru which they carried it, and continued their route thru Tilby Street to Oliver's dock, where there was a new brick building just finished; and they imagining it to be designed for a Stamp Office, instantly set about demolishing of it, which they thoroughly effected in about half an hour.

Boston Gazette, August 19, 1765.

house, where they broke some windows, tore down fencing, and built a bonfire. The following day, Oliver resigned his position.

The August 14 protesters confined themselves to denouncing the British ministry, the Stamp Act, and its local agent. But protestors also touched on social divisions. A second Stamp Act riot on August 26 revealed the class antagonism that underlay Boston life in the wake of war and depression. This riot targeted symbols of wealth, culminating in a furious attack on the home of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson. The crowd ransacked the house and, with considerable effort, demolished the cupola that had made it one of the town's grandest residences. The destruction marked popular resentment not just of British policy, but also of the power and privilege colonial rule gave to a few men.

Alarmed at the crowd's excesses on August 26, popular leaders tried to avoid further attacks on symbols of wealth. But they could not prevent social differences and tensions from finding expression. In November, a

crowd sacked a fine mansion in New York, and the governor's chariot, sedan chair, and sleighs were "burnt in the Bowling Green with effigies and Gallows." In Charleston, a Stamp Act protest revealed not only opposition to British taxes, but also the fragility of the South's social fabric. As a white crowd paraded to the shout of "Liberty! Liberty! and [no] stamped paper," a group of African Americans provoked a panic when they took up the cry of "Liberty!" from the sidelines.

Opposition to the Stamp Act produced an unprecedented degree of political organization among colonists. Groups with names such as "Sons of Liberty" emerged in several towns and cities; the name later became a generic term for similar groups that provided the nucleus of a revolutionary movement. Their members came from a variety of backgrounds and included, like Boston's Loyal Nine, many artisans. Wealthy merchants protested as well, making up an important segment of the revolutionary leadership. Most famous was the Boston merchant and smuggler John Hancock. These groups also included men who were neither wealthy nor worked with their hands for a living. They included Samuel Adams of Boston, Isaac Sears of New York, and Dr. Thomas Young, who turned up in Albany, Boston, Newport, and finally Philadelphia. Samuel Adams was a Harvard graduate who dreamed of turning America into a "Christian Sparta"—a rigorous republican commonwealth—and who courted a popular following in the Boston town meeting. Thomas Young was a religious freethinker and self-taught physician who primarily treated the poor. Isaac Sears was the son of a Cape Cod oysterman who, after going to sea early in life, worked his way up to become a ship's captain before settling down ashore as a trader and marrying the daughter of a tavern keeper. As such men devoted themselves to building popular resistance to British authority, they started to transform American political life.

Colonists took Parliament's repeal of the Stamp Act early in 1766 as a sign that their protests had been successful, so when the Townshend Duties were enacted in 1767, protest resumed, lasting this time for over two years. Campaigners in the main ports organized nonimportation agreements binding merchants not to purchase goods from Britain. Violators were publicly denounced as "Enemies to their Country," were tarred and feathered, or had their houses daubed with the contents of cesspits (known as "Hillsborough paint" after the British minister for the colonies). Symbols of wealth were once again targets. In Marlborough, Massachusetts, the merchant Henry Barnes saw his carriage (one of the very few in town) vandalized when he refused to comply with nonimportation. Abstaining from imported products or fashions became a mark of patriotic willingness to give up luxuries for the public good.

Women as well as men supported the boycotts, and their support became important patriotic symbols. They organized spinning bees to pro-

Resistance to the Stamp Act
A generation after the event, an etching in a 1784 German pocket almanac imaginatively celebrated the Boston crowd (including women, African Americans, and artisans wearing leather aprons) burning stamped papers. Daniel-Nicholas Chodowiecki, *Historisch-genealogischer Calender, oder Jahrbuch der merkwürdigsten neuen Welt* (1784) — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

duce yarn for cloth that would substitute for British textiles and announced their refusal to purchase or drink the tea imported by traders. In Massachusetts, over three hundred women agreed to "totally abstain" from drinking tea, and women at one spinning bee expressed the hope that they "may vie with the men in contributions to the preservation and prosperity of their country, and equally share the honor of it." For women, usually barred from a formal public role, the patriotic cause offered an opening into political events, and some claimed that their support for it should earn them political rights.

At first, nonimportation agreements formed a rallying point for popular political cohesion, but as the campaign dragged on, it revealed the divisions in colonial society. Never popular with colonial merchants, nonimportation was not fully enforceable. Bostonians loyal to Britain scored a propaganda victory by publishing lists of goods imported by supposedly patriotic merchants. By early 1770, merchants anxious not to break the boycott were also eager to resume trade with England as soon as nonimportation ended. That year, by repealing all but one of the import duties (that on tea), the British government succeeded both in breaking the boycott and in exacerbating divisions within the radical movement.

Artisans were the strongest supporters of nonimportation because it increased the demand for locally made goods, a boon for them during a time of depression. In 1770, after the boycott collapsed and this demand diminished, the shoemaker George Hewes was among many who ended up in debtors' prison. But artisans were not just protecting their material self-interest. They were also asserting a right to participate in political decisions. Nothing could be "more flagrantly wrong," said one New Yorker, "than the assertion of some of our mercantile dons, that the Mechanics have no right to give their Sentiments."

Seamen and laborers viewed the resistance to Britain differently. For them, nonimportation meant hardship: less trade, fewer ships at sea, and fewer jobs ashore. Some sailors tried to persuade merchants to support the resistance not by refusing to carry goods, but by evading the duties on them. Poorer colonists also gained their own perspective on the evils of a standing army. As competition among out-of-work seamen and laborers for scarce waterfront jobs grew tougher, the presence of ill-paid, idle British troops made matters still worse. In New York and Boston, friction between local workers and British soldiers hunting for jobs became commonplace.

In New York in January 1770, a two-day street fight, dubbed "the Battle of Golden Hill," broke out between soldiers and laborers. Events in Boston soon overshadowed it. There, resentments came to a head as demonstrations against the Townshend Duties continued. On February 22, a customs official fired his gun at some rioters and killed an eleven-year-old boy. The boy's funeral was observed throughout the town. Feelings were still running high when, on March 5, a crowd confronted a detachment of troops guarding the customs house on King Street, throwing snowballs and brickbats at them. Frightened by what seemed to be a bloodthirsty mob, the soldiers retaliated. George Hewes, who was in the crowd, was struck by a private's gun. Then, amid the confusion, troops opened fire, killing four Bostonians and fatally wounding a fifth. All five were laboring men: Crispus Attucks, a half-Indian, half-African sailor; Patrick Carr, an Irish journeyman leathermaker; Samuel Gray, a ropemaker; Samuel Maverick, an ivory turner's apprentice; and James Caldwell, a ship's mate. As Caldwell was shot in the back and fell, the injured Hewes—who knew him—caught him in his arms.

A Society of Patriotic Ladies
Cheap prints depicting current events were in great demand in both England and the colonies. This 1775 British print mocks the Edenton, North Carolina, Ladies' Patriotic Guild, a group of fifty-one women who signed a declaration in support of nonimportation, swearing not to drink tea or purchase other British imports. The artist treated the women with scorn, portraying them as ugly, impressionable, and neglectful of their children. Philip Dawe (?), *A Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton in North Carolina*, mezzotint, 1775, 13 3/4 × 10 inches — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Bostonians were incensed at what they soon came to call the "Boston Massacre," and radical propaganda ensured that, unlike the Battle of Golden Hill, the Massacre would remain firmly lodged in public memory. Paul Revere's engraving of the scene, widely copied and distributed, became the most familiar depiction of the event. Showing an orderly rank of redcoats discharging their muskets into the crowd, Revere presented the massacre not as the result of panic, but as a deliberate act of murder by the British army.

In the short run, the incident marked the end of a phase in the resistance to British policies. Within months, Britain had removed its troops from the town of Boston to Castle Island in Boston Harbor and had repealed most of the Townshend Duties. With the radicals already divided, the nonimportation movement collapsed. In time, though, the Boston Massacre came to seem a turning point in the conflict with Britain. For the next

The Bloody Massocre

Paul Revere issued his version of the Boston Massacre three weeks after the incident. The print (which Revere plagiarized from a fellow Boston engraver) was widely circulated and repeatedly copied (over twenty-four times). The print was the official Patriot version of the incident. British soldiers actually did not fire a well-disciplined volley; white men were not the sole actors in the incident; and the Bostonians provoked the soldiers with taunts and thrown objects before shots were fired. Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th, 1770. . . .*, etching (handcolored), 1770, 7 3/4 × 8 3/4 inches — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

thirteen years, until the end of the Revolutionary War, Boston observed March 5 as a day of public mourning. Radicals used the event to rebuild popular opposition to British rule. The Massacre's victims came to be viewed as the first martyrs of a revolutionary cause, and the fact that they

were laborers built popular support for that cause. An event that had grown out of the nonimportation movement and reflected divisions in Boston society instead became a basis for building a united coalition.

The Boston Massacre, c. 1868
Artists continued to redraw, repaint, and reinterpret the Boston Massacre. This engraving based on a painting by Alonzo Chappel still omitted Crispus Attucks, but it showed the chaos of the confrontation and captured the horror of soldiers shooting down unarmed citizens. American Social History Project.

Resistance Becomes Revolution

Although concerted opposition to Britain receded, attacks on customs officers and other officials continued sporadically. In 1772, a government revenue vessel, the *Gaspée*, ran aground in Narragansett Bay, and a crowd from Providence burned it, erecting liberty poles to mark the event. But these protests chiefly involved urban residents, not people in the countryside. This pattern changed during a further, still more serious imperial crisis, which began in 1773 with Parliament's passage of the Tea Act. Protest again began in the towns, but this time, it spread to rural regions, where the vast majority of colonists lived. When rural people became engaged in the struggle, resistance turned to revolution.

Since fleeing England in the seventeenth century and settling on land they could call their own, rural New Englanders had feared any measure that might threaten their freeholds and return them to some form of feudalism. Urban radicals played on this fear in the hope of igniting rural opposition to Britain. In 1772, the Boston town meeting appointed a Committee of Correspondence to rouse the interior, warning that if "a British house of commons can originate an act for taking away our money, our lands will go next or be subject to rack rents from haughty and relentless landlords who will ride at ease, while we are trodden in the dirt." At first, these efforts met with apathy. Some of the people to whom the committee wrote thought that relations with Britain were none of their business. But the campaign over the Tea Act of 1773 prompted country people to respond, and they did so with vigor. Along with protesters in the port towns they helped initiate a chain of colonial challenges and British responses that would forge unity between colonies, bring on outright war with Britain, and lead to the colonies' declaration in 1776 that they were an independent country.

From the Tea Act to Continental Resistance The Tea Act was not intended as a colonial taxation measure. Parliament was trying to solve the financial troubles of the British East India Company, permitting it to raise money by selling tea directly to America through chosen agents in each

"Let Every Man Do His Duty . . .": George Hewes Describes the Boston Tea Party

George Robert Twelves Hewes, a poor shoemaker who had also been at the scene of the Boston Massacre three years earlier, participated in the Boston Tea Party. In a memoir taken down by James Hawkes in 1834, Hewes describes the meeting of "the Whole body of the People" that deliberated on the action and then tells of the disciplined destruction of the tea.

On the day preceding the seventeenth [of December], there was a meeting of the citizens of the county of Suffolk, convened at one of the churches in Boston, for the purpose of consulting on what measures might be considered expedient to prevent the landing of the tea, or secure the people from the collection of the duty. At that meeting a committee was appointed to wait on Governor Hutchinson, and [to ask] whether he would take any measures to satisfy the people on the object of the meeting. . . . When the committee returned and informed the meeting of the absence of the Governor, there was a confused murmur among the members, and the meeting was immediately dissolved, many of them crying out, "Let every man do his duty, and be true to his country"; and there was a general huzza for Griffin's wharf. . . .

When we arrived at the wharf, there were three of our number who assumed an authority to direct our operations, to which we readily submitted. They divided us into three parties, for the purpose of boarding the three [tea] ships. . . . We were immediately ordered by the respective commanders to board all the ships at the same time, which we promptly obeyed. The commander of the division to which I belonged, as soon as we were aboard the ship, appointed me boatswain, and ordered me to go the [ship's] captain and demand of him the keys to the hatches and a dozen candles. I made the demand accordingly, and the captain promptly . . . delivered the articles; but requested me at the same time to do no damage to the ship or rigging. We then were ordered by our commander to open the hatches and take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard, and we immediately proceeded to execute his orders, first cutting and splitting the chests with our tomahawks, so as thoroughly to expose them to the effects of the water.

In about three hours from the time we went on board, we had thus broken and thrown overboard every tea chest to be found in the ship, while those on the other ships were disposing of the tea in the same way, at the same time. We were surrounded by British armed ships, but no attempt was made to resist us.

James Hawkes, *A Retrospect of the Boston Tea Party* (1834).

colonial port. Its prices would be low enough that, even after paying the Townshend Duty on tea (which the act cut in half), the company could undercut other merchants who had, as John Adams put it, "honestly smuggled" their tea from Holland.

The Act should have made everyone happy: Britain would get taxes, the East India Company would get revenue, and colonists would get cheap tea. Instead, it reignited American outrage at British policy. Colonists spurned the attempt to bribe them into accepting the tax on tea. Charleston landed its first cargo of tea, but Philadelphia and New York refused to let tea ships even enter their harbors. In Boston in November 1773, the first vessels carrying tea docked because Thomas Hutchinson, who was now governor (and whose sons were Boston agents for the East India Company), insisted that the cargo should land and the tea duty be paid. Daylong protest meetings of "the whole Body of the People" convened, choosing leaders to persuade Hutchinson to desist. Talks broke down. On the night of December 16, parties of Patriot leaders and workingmen boarded the ships and dumped the tea overboard into the harbor. The shoemaker George Hewes led one of the groups.

This "Boston Tea Party" became a powerful emblem of American resistance. The men who carried it out were disguised as "Mohawks." Hewes had blackened his face with a piece of charcoal and thrown a blanket around his shoulders. When another tea ship reached New York a few months later, another group of "Mohawks" prepared to reenact the event but were beaten to it by a crowd that surged onto the ship, destroyed the tea themselves, then paraded the empty tea chests to "the Fields" outside the city walls and burned them. Rioters disguised themselves in Indian dress not for practical reasons (secrecy was unnecessary in a sympathetic neighborhood), but as a symbol of their identity as Americans rather than Englishmen living in America. They were shifting from being "freeborn Englishmen" to becoming "American freemen."

Britain responded severely to the Bostonians' destruction of a valuable tea cargo. Parliament passed four measures, which colonists called the Coercive Acts or the Intolerable Acts. These acts closed Boston Harbor until the town paid for the tea, cutting off Boston's main source of livelihood; altered Massachusetts government, revoking the 1691 charter that had given the colony the unique privilege of electing its own council and limiting town meetings to one each year for the election of local officers; allowed British officials accused of wrongdoing to face trial in another province or in Britain itself, away from Boston's charged atmosphere; and made it easy for the British to billet troops in colonial homes. Soon after the Coercive Acts were announced, in May 1774, Thomas Gage, the general in charge of Britain's army in America, replaced Hutchinson as governor, and Gage's troops reoccupied Boston.

The able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught.

The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught

Many British prints sympathized with the colonists' claims. In this engraving, published in the April 1774 *London Magazine*, America (depicted as an Indian woman) was assaulted by several recognizable British statesmen — principally Lord North, the Prime Minister, who was shown forcing tea down her throat (only to have it spat back into his face). Meanwhile, France and Spain looked on, and Britannia averted her eyes in shame. By June 1775, the engraving had reached the colonies, where it was copied and reproduced by Paul Revere. *London Magazine*, April 1774 — Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Britain meant to show that it would retreat no further in the face of American protests and would restore its authority in the colonies. But the Coercive Acts had exactly the opposite effect, redoubling the radical movement in Boston. Many Bostonians who had once been sympathetic to the crown began to change their views. Benjamin Franklin's sister Jane Mecom, who a few years before had regarded Thomas Hutchinson as "the Gratest ornement of our Country," was now angered by "the town[']s being so full of Proflegate soulders [profligate soldiers] . . . and "the[ir] Profane language."

More important, the British measures spread colonial resistance from town to countryside far more effectively than the Boston Committee of Correspondence had managed. By interfering with town meetings and county courts, the Coercive Acts carried Britain's quarrel with Boston to every corner of Massachusetts. Rural people, many of whom had been reluctant to oppose British policies, now acted to prevent the new measures from taking effect. In doing so, they turned their province away from the path of submission to royal authority and onto the road to revolution.

When the first court to convene under the provisions of the Coercive Acts was due to open in Worcester County in August 1774, its judges arrived to find virtually the whole male population of the county armed and assembled in their militia units near the courthouse. The crowd remained in place until each of the judges had read a public statement resigning his post. The Worcester court never opened; nor did any of the other county courts in the province. Prominent men appointed to the new provincial council under the Acts were also "persuaded" by assembled crowds to resign or were

subjected to humiliating treatment. One councilor resigned only after being locked up for the night in a smokehouse.

By late summer 1774, royal government in Massachusetts had virtually collapsed, and the governor's authority ran no farther than his troops could march. Defying the governor's order that it dissolve, the province's General Court met in Salem, and militia units drilled under officers who now acknowledged the authority of this extralegal provincial assembly. Massachusetts people created their own political institutions and took over the province. Defying the British laws, town meetings and county conventions met to direct affairs, no longer conducting their business in the name of the king, but in the name of the "commonwealth" or "the people of Massachusetts." A revolution was under way.

Most significant of all, the Coercive Acts prompted popular action in other colonies too. By late 1774, much of New England was united behind Massachusetts. So was the white population of Virginia, where, despite the evangelical challenge to its leadership since the Great Awakening, the planter class remained firmly in control. Having suffered from weak tobacco prices in the 1760s and indebtedness to British merchants, many Virginia planters were reconsidering the benefits of being part of the British empire and coming to see colonial status as a disadvantage. Meanwhile, the colony's popular leaders, such as Patrick Henry, forged links between the gentry and others in the population, denouncing "luxury" and proclaiming the "virtue" of the Patriot cause. From 1774 to mid-1776, the combination of New Englanders and Virginia gentlemen led a drive for strong measures against Britain that would forge a path to independence.

The Bostonians Paying the Excise-Man, or Tarring and Feathering

A 1774 British print depicts the tarring and feathering of Boston Commissioner of Customs John Malcolm. Tarring and feathering was a ritual of humiliation and public warning that stopped just short of life-threatening injury. In this print, Malcolm was attacked under the Liberty Tree by several Patriots, including a leather-aproned artisan, while the Boston Tea Party occurred in the background; in fact, the Tea Party had taken place four weeks earlier. This anti-Patriot print may have been a response to the sympathetic "The Able Doctor" published earlier the same year. Philip Dawe (?), mezzotint, 1774, 14 × 9 1/2 inches — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

These leaders found their forum in two Continental Congresses, formed of representatives from the different colonies gathered to resist British policies. Although intercolonial cooperation had been attempted in response to the Stamp Act, it was less far-reaching than this. The first Continental Congress met in Philadelphia for six weeks in the autumn of 1774, and the second commenced in May 1775. Convened to rally to the aid of Massachusetts, delegates came to the first congress from twelve, then thirteen colonies. They included participants in popular protests, such as artisan members of the Charleston Sons of Liberty who were among South Carolina's delegation. Led by radicals keen to make the rest of America see that they shared Massachusetts's problems, this congress drafted and

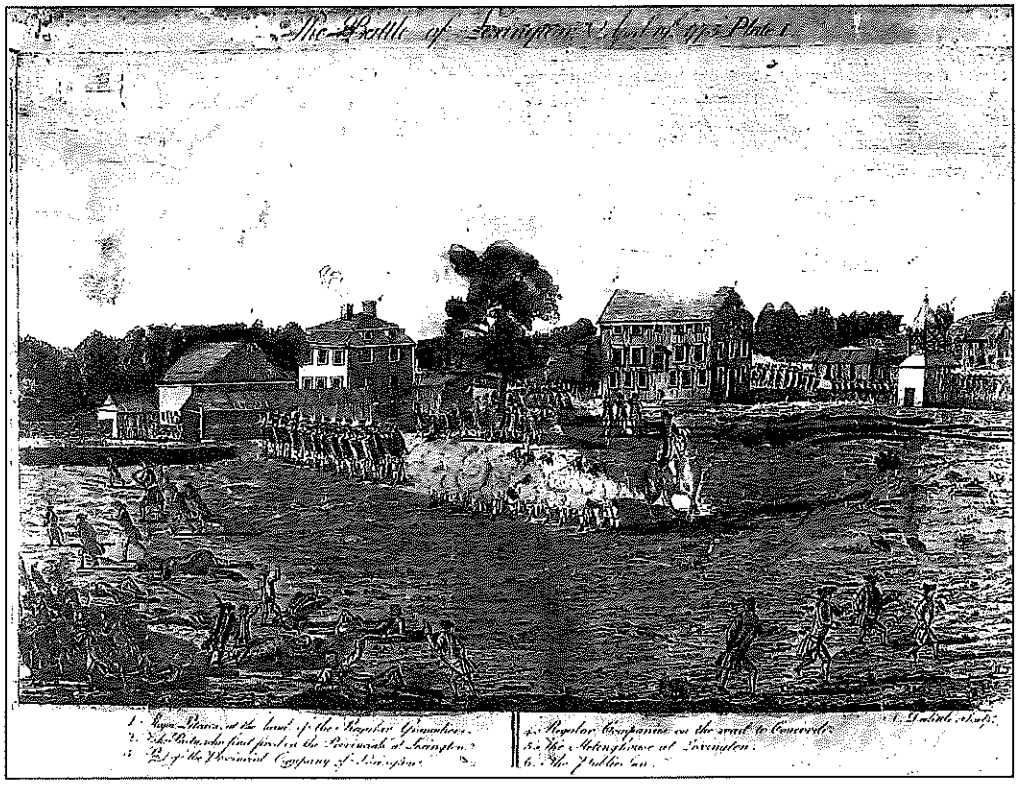
The "Necessary Politicians"
A particularly derisive comment on colonial demands, this 1775 British etching shows two Tory politicians evaluating Patriot documents in a privy (or "necessary" house). A tarred-and-feathered figure decorates the outhouse wall. *The Congress or Necessary Politicians*, etching, 1775?, 8 × 6 1/2 inches — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

adopted the Continental Association, a measure that decreed a complete boycott of European products and called for the creation of committees throughout the colonies to enforce it. In Boston, Jane Mecom regarded "the Uniteing of the Colonies" as "a token of God[']s design to deliver us out of all our tro[u]bles."

Linking the colonies together in a common cause and providing for local support, the Continental Association harnessed popular action to the beginnings of a national movement. Sometimes against opposition, local Patriot committees started to enforce the Association's provisions. Even more than in the boycotts against the Townshend Duties, support for the Patriot cause entailed forgoing European goods and fashions and adopting symbols of domestic frugality. Following Massachusetts, other colonies set up extralegal institutions to take over effective government.

War Begins Before the Second Continental Congress could meet, fighting with Britain broke out in Massachusetts. During the fall and winter of 1774–1775, New Englanders had collected weapons and organized their town militias to defend their extralegal committees and conventions. In September 1774, a mere rumor that British troops had left Boston to capture a provincial powder store set thousands of rural Massachusetts men marching eastward until they could be recalled. An observer reported women in their houses along the way "making Cartridges, [and] running Bullets . . . animating their Husbands and Sons to fight for their Liberties." It was a sign of what would come. In occupied Boston, a committee of artisans watched troop movements closely. The extralegal provincial congress began planning to raise an army of 15,000 men. But this army did not yet exist when, on the night of April 18–19, 1775, General Gage dispatched troops to capture militia supplies hidden at Concord, some eighteen miles inland.

The artisans' committee sent Paul Revere and other riders to warn the interior. When the British detachment reached Lexington, the town's militia was drawn up on the green to face it. They probably intended only a symbolic confrontation, but someone's gun went off, the two sides exchanged fire, and soon eight militiamen were dead. The British troops marched on, completed their task at Concord, and set out back to Boston. Their outward march had been easy, but the return was not. Farmers and workmen



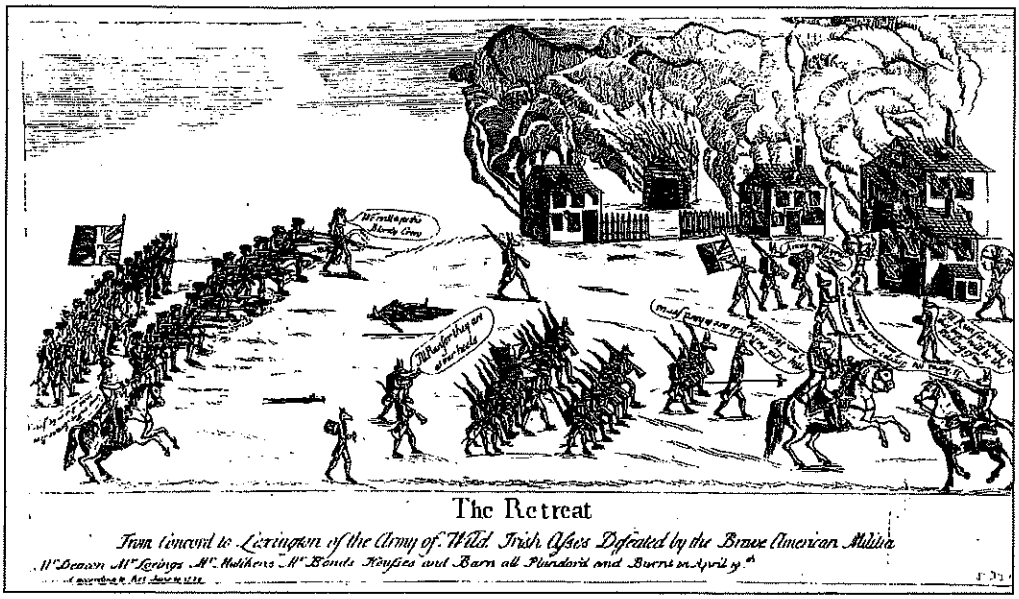
The Battle of Lexington

This picture was one of a set of four prints based on drawings sketched shortly after the battle of Lexington by Amos Doolittle, a twenty-one-year-old engraver who visited the site as a member of the Connecticut militia. Although the location was rendered with accuracy, the drawing misrepresented the behavior of British troops, whose discipline was less than perfect. The four prints, on sale by December 1775, were the first American illustrations of warfare during the Revolution. Amos Doolittle, *The Battle of Lexington, April 19th, 1775*, line engraving (hand-colored), 1775, 13 × 17 1/2 inches — Print Collection, Miriam and Ira Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

rallied from the surrounding towns and attacked the British from the fields and woods along their route, scoring heavy casualties. Once the British had reached Boston, militia units—citizen-soldiers, poorly trained, and mostly without uniforms or good weapons—threw up siege lines around the city and kept the army penned up there. The British, commented Jane Mecom, "were much mistaken in the people they had to Deal with."

In June, the colonial militia again showed that they could fight. Gage decided to dislodge them from Breed's (now Bunker) Hill overlooking Charlestown. He did so, but only at great cost. Determined to demonstrate the superiority of regular soldiers over the provincial forces that he regarded as ill-disciplined, Gage launched a nearly suicidal uphill frontal assault on the defenses at the top. Before retreating to new positions, the militia killed or wounded nearly half of Gage's men. The British made no more such attacks, and when, in the winter of 1775–1776, the provincials were reinforced by cannons captured from Ticonderoga, New York, Gage was obliged to withdraw from Boston altogether.

During the summer of 1775, the Continental Congress took steps to support the New England armies and ready the colonies for war. It appointed George Washington to head a new Continental Army that would fight alongside the provincial militias and ensure that the cause was not fragmented by individual provinces' own interests. The choice of Washington was based partly on his reputation from the French and Indian



The Retreat

This print, possibly made in America, presents the plundering retreat of British troops on April 19, 1775. The unknown artist chose to portray the King's soldiers as donkeys and the advancing Massachusetts troops in disciplined ranks (in fact, they fought as guerrillas, harassing the British from the shelter of houses, trees, and rocks). British Museum.

War, but it was also political. The appointment of a southerner such as Washington was essential if the war was to become more than a New England affair. Moreover, Washington was a wealthy member of Virginia's ruling class, and he would bring prestige to this new position.

The Second Continental Congress remained in session for over a decade, until well after the war itself was over. In July 1775, it issued a "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms," summarizing the injuries that Britain had inflicted on the colonies, condemning the "cruel aggression . . . commenced by the British troops," and declaring that the "united colonies" faced a stark choice between "an unconditional submission to . . . tyranny" and "resistance by force." Although Virginia and New England were effectively united, much of the rest of America was not. Within a matter of months, however, events would bring Congress to face the issue of independence.

The People Take Sides Between 1774 and 1776, as the dispute with Britain grew, many people in the colonies were forced to take sides. Among those who formed the revolutionary coalition, there was a powerful feeling of belonging to a grand cause. But what some found exhilarating many others feared. Some of them decided to go along with revolution, as one New Yorker expressed it, by "swimming with a stream it is impossible to stem." Others decided that life would be unimaginable without a king and the social order for which he stood.

Loyalism to Britain was strong in some places. In the prosperous farming country around New York City, Loyalists formed a majority. In the Hudson and Mohawk valleys, parts of New Jersey, Maryland's eastern shore,

"Good for Nothing": A Shopkeeper Is Accused of Toryism

As Roelof Eltinge discovered, the divisions between those who supported the war against Britain, those who did not (known as Tories or Loyalists), and those attempting to remain neutral impinged on family and community life in a variety of ways. Eltinge was a shop owner in New Paltz, New York, and member of a wealthy family. His local Committee of Safety (one of many established by the Continental Congress in 1774 to enforce the boycott against British goods) suspected him of Toryism. Brought before the committee in 1776 to explain why he refused to accept the currency issued by the Continental Congress, Eltinge was arrested and eventually banished by the state of New York for his Tory sympathies, which, this excerpt from his testimony suggests, seemed motivated more by pragmatism than by politics.

Mr. Roelof Eltinge, being summoned by the Sub Committee, appeared accordingly and says in his Defence, on the first Emmitting the Continental Money there was Sundry Disputes about the Money. Some said it was Good, others said it was Good for Nothing. However, when he found he Could pass it readily he received it in payment, but to tell the truth of the matter, for it was a Folly to Lie about it, I Never liked it for I always thought if the King Got the better of the Country the money would be Good for Nothing. Farther, that a certain Mrs. Wirtz, wife of Doctor Wirtz, Came to my house in Order to purchase Some Goods out of my store, when I told Mrs. Wirtz that I did not like to take Congress money for my Goods, as I supposed She intended to pay me in that money, and that I would rather Trust her for the Goods. . . .

After this, our Troops Retreating from Long Island, there was a General rumour amongst the people of my Neighborhood that in a Little time Congress money would be Good for Nothing, as the King was likely to overcome, and at this Time numbers of People came to pay me money who, I do believe, would not have thought of doing it, had they not been afraid the money would be Good for Nothing, on which I told them I would not receive the money.

Catherine S. Crary, *The Price of Loyalty: Tory Writings from the Revolutionary Era* (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), 146–147.

The Destruction of the Royal Statue

An incident in New York City in 1776 inspired this German engraving. After a public reading of the Declaration of Independence, Patriots marched to a statue of George III standing in the city's Bowling Green and pulled it off its pedestal. The lead statue was reputedly melted down and used for ammunition. Francois Xavier Habermann — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

and much of the Carolina backcountry, Loyalists were numerous enough to turn the struggle between Britain and the colonies into a civil war.

Inhabitants in and around Manhattan knew that they were vulnerable to attack by the British army headquartered there. Some Hudson Valley tenants followed their Loyalist landlords; others became Loyalists when landlords they hated chose the Patriot cause. Poor white Marylanders were suspicious of the planter elite. One wheelwright asserted that "The gentlemen were intending to make us all fight [the British to protect] their land and Negroes. . . . If I had a few more white people to join me I could get all the Negroes to back us, and they would do more good in the night than the white people could do in the day." Some Virginia slaves rallied to the king because the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, promised freedom to those who would serve in the army. Many whites in the North and South Carolina backcountry supported the crown because their provinces' Patriot leaders were the same men who had opposed the Regulator movements a few years before. Because only British restraints stood between them and land-hungry Americans, many Indians, too, remained allied to the crown. Tens of thousands of Loyalists would ultimately emigrate from their homes—some back to Britain, some to British colonies in the Caribbean, and many more to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick, where they remained British colonists.

Many who sided with the revolution did so only after long hesitation. Before independence, the greatest disunity existed in Pennsylvania and New York, where political leaders were sharply divided. Pennsylvania's Joseph Galloway, a longtime political ally of Benjamin Franklin, led a sizable portion of the Philadelphia elite to oppose any effort by Congress to do more than petition the king for redress of grievances. New York's DeLancey

family and the political faction associated with it quickly chose Loyalism. These men, including wealthy import merchants, decided that the gathering revolutionary movement posed more danger than British policies. Much of the rest of New York's upper class, along with men such as Pennsylvania's John Dickinson, foremost of the pamphleteers against the Townshend Duties, hesitated on the brink long after Virginians such as Washington and Jefferson and New Englanders such as John Hancock and John and Abigail Adams had made up their minds for independence. After independence, these hesitant leaders did their best to obtain a new political order that would be secure for their own class.

Gradually, popular organization pushed New York and Philadelphia in a radical direction. In 1774, as those at a New York City meeting debated how to respond to the Coercive Acts, an astute young gentleman named Gouverneur Morris looked on from a balcony. On one side of the debate were merchants and property owners, men like Morris himself. On the other side were "all the tradesmen, etc. who thought it worthwhile to leave daily labor for the good of the country. . . . The mob begin to think and to reason." He called them "poor reptiles" but "with fear and trembling" predicted that "'ere noon they will bite." Morris overdramatized, but he understood what he saw. Nine years of resistance to Britain had given working people a political identity and a voice that would not be silenced.

The Two Meanings of Radicalism The notion of radicalism had two dimensions that often, but not necessarily, coincided. On one hand, it entailed firm opposition to British measures and a willingness to take steps that would lead, by 1776, to a complete break with British rule. On the other, some radicals went further, advocating social and political change within America itself.

Between 1774 and 1776, committees that were formed to take on governmental functions became a new forum for urban artisans. New York City's Committee of Fifty-One was at first broadly based, containing both fiery radicals and men who would soon declare their loyalty to the crown. But enforcing the Continental Association and coordinating a war effort shifted the membership, and by early 1776, the same types of patriotic men who had formed the Sons of Liberty ten years earlier dominated urban committees. Obscure farmers often controlled rural committees. Women, too, became involved in popular action, helping committee searches, enforcing boycotts, raising funds, and making clothing and supplies. A young New Yorker, Charity Clarke, claimed that America, helped by a "fighting army of amazons . . . armed with spinning wheels," would be able to "retire beyond the reach of arbitrary power." These developments unleashed a greater militancy and radicalism, bringing new figures into public life and altering the way it was conducted.

"Remember the Ladies . . ."

Some American women were fired by the possibilities of the revolution, among them Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, a Boston lawyer who was attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Abigail Adams read Thomas Paine's Common Sense *and agreed with its plea for independence. She wrote to her husband, raising the question of revising laws that affected the status of women. John Adams's response, despite its bantering tone, shows the fears of elite patriots that subordinate people of all sorts were throwing off their deference to their social "betters."*

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree [Mass.], March 31, 1776

I long to hear that you have declared an independency—and by the way in the new Code of Laws, which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hand of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity? Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, April 14, 1776

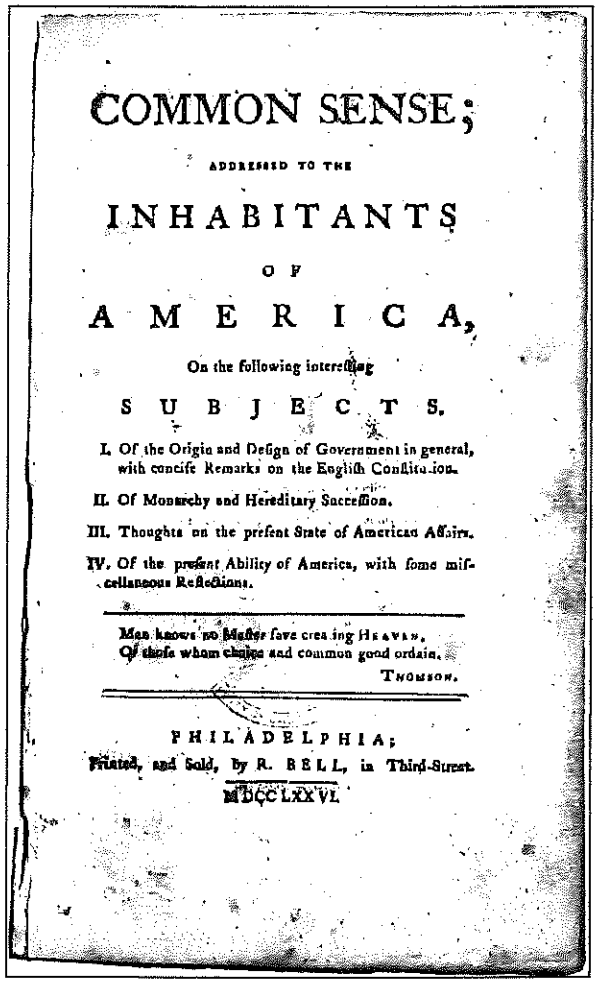
As to your extraordinary Code of Laws. I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government everywhere. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient—that schools and Colleges were grown turbulent—that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters. But your Letter was the first Intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerful than all the rest were grown discontented. This is rather too coarse a Compliment but you are so saucy, I won't blot it out.

Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. . . . Rather than give up this, which would completely subject Us to the Despotism of the Petticoat, I hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight.

L. H. Butterfield and Wendell D. Garrett, eds., *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vol. 1 (1963).

Pennsylvania Patriots, including rural Germans and Scots-Irish and members of the urban popular movement, pressed for more equal political representation in the province and for a reduction in the property qualifications for voting. In Virginia and the Carolinas, radical political leaders found that patriotism involved compromising with popular demands for equality. When gentry in Fairfax County, Virginia, first formed a volunteer militia in September 1774, they adopted a gentlemen's uniform of blue coats, breeches, waistcoats, and stockings. Five months later, reorganized as the Fairfax County militia and "Embodying the people," they wore hunting shirts and trousers, the working clothes of ordinary men. The royal governor of South Carolina noted, "the People . . . have Discovered their own strength and importance" and would not be "so easily governed by their former Leaders."

Philadelphia's popular movement gained special importance because of the city's size and the fact that it was the seat of the Continental Congress. As the city's elite retreated, divided and confused, radical committees secured support for the revolutionary cause, drawing on the lively political culture of the city's artisans. The revolution's most powerful pamphleteer, the English radical Thomas Paine, had arrived in Philadelphia only in 1774 but quickly immersed himself in political journalism. Early in 1776, as the Continental Congress was wavering over whether or not to pursue independence from Britain, Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* struck a powerful blow in favor.


COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

AMERICA,

On the following interesting

SUBJECTS.

I. Of the Origin and Design of Government in general, with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.

II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession.

III. Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.

IV. Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous Reflections.

Man knows no Master save creating HEAVEN,
Or those whom choice and common good ordain.
THOMSON.

PHILADELPHIA;
Printed, and Sold, by R. BELL, in Third-Street.
MDCCLXXVI.

Common Sense
The cover of Thomas Paine's 1776 pamphlet. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Common Sense embodied radicalism in both senses, arguing both for American independence and for a new form of politics and society in the former colonies. "We have it in our power," Paine wrote, "to begin the world over again." He used plain language, addressing the political concerns of Patriot elites whom he urged to sever ties to Britain, but he aimed particularly at artisans and farmers, whom he urged to join the political discussion. Britain's military attacks on colonists, he argued, made reconciliation impossible. Americans' future would be jeopardized by retaining their colonial dependence on Britain. Independence would be not only just ("a government of our own is our natural right"), but also expedient: America's prosperity would follow from having "the legislative powers in her own hands."

Above all, Paine ridiculed the idea of a monarchy and the principle of government by hereditary succession. He laid out instead a plan for an inde-

pendent America under republican government, in which annually elected provincial assemblies based on "more equal . . . representation" would be overseen by an elected congress governed by a Continental Charter. Paine's pamphlet won wide acclaim; up to 150,000 copies were printed. From Georgia to New Hampshire, people read and applauded Paine's argument for independence and his vision of a great popular democracy freed from the ties of European monarchy.

Declaring Independence As the crisis deepened, the case for independence made increasing sense. Loyalists and those urging moderation found their arguments weakening as fellow colonists faced not only political oppression but also actual attack by the British army. The popularity of Paine's argument and of other calls for independence helped to move the cause forward, and the existence of the Continental Army gave Congress the political strength to contemplate such a step. In the early summer of 1776, the Continental Congress appointed Thomas Jefferson and others to draft a declaration of independence, which, after making amendments, it adopted in early July.

The Declaration's chief purpose was to explain and justify the severing of ties with Britain. It catalogued a long list of grievances against the king that amounted to "a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States." If a people were suffering under oppressive rule, the Declaration proclaimed, "It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government" and to set up a new political system.

By declaring independence and forming a new entity—the United States—Americans markedly raised the political and military stakes in their struggle with Britain. If it wanted to prevail, Britain would no longer have to suppress a rebellion; it would have to reconquer what had become an independent people. With independence, American radicals took the final step in redefining themselves and their protest against Britain. They no longer saw themselves as "colonists," as rebels against British authority, or as protecting their "rights and privileges [as] freeborn Englishmen." They were now free Americans defending their independent states against an overseas power.

Conclusion: What Sort of American Society?

Independence did much more than alter Americans' relationship to Britain. The Declaration of Independence proclaimed universal rights, rooted not in British precedents, but in the laws of nature. It suggested a radical vision of a new American society. It affirmed that the ultimate source

of authority should lie not with kings or rulers, but with "the good People of these Colonies." Its bold statement "that all men are created equal" reflected the popular attempt to wrest self-government and self-determination from the hierarchical power of an imperial monarchy. Alongside liberty and political rights, it placed the concept of equality. Paine had written that "Whenever I use the words freedom or rights, I . . . mean a perfect equality of them. . . . The floor of Freedom is as level as water."

Yet Americans were not all agreed that equality or popular government should be the basis of their new nation. The citizen militias of New England had brought them to war and revolution, but Americans were divided as to whether New Englanders should provide a model for continuing the war or for forming new governments. When Washington arrived in Massachusetts in 1775 to take command of the Continental Army, he regarded his soldiers with the disdain a British officer could have mustered, as "generally speaking the most indifferent kind of people I ever saw . . . an exceedingly dirty and nasty people." New York Patriot generals cursed at having New England soldiers to command. "It is extremely difficult," wrote Philip Schuyler, "to introduce a proper subordination among a people where so little distinction is kept up," and Richard Montgomery complained that "New England troops are the worst stuff imaginable. There is such an equality among them."

George Washington's goal from the start was to build "a respectable army," and he gradually made conditions more like those of the British regulars his troops were fighting. The rough, often unruly democracy of the war's beginning was superseded by harsher discipline, and Washington's template for the Continental Army reflected the wishes of many members of Congress for an independent America. Once the British were finally removed, they hoped, they could build an ordered, disciplined society under the control of an American upper class. James Duane, a future mayor of New York, urged that leadership should be "in the hands of property and rank who . . . will preserve . . . authority over the minds of the people." The tension between popular and elite conceptions of the new United States would be a recurrent theme throughout the revolution and the events that were to follow.

The Years in Review

1744–1748

- New England Protestants enthusiastically support British campaigns against the French Catholic colonists in Quebec during King George's War between Britain and France.

1751

- Britain prohibits the New England colonies from making paper currencies legal tender in payment of debts; some see the ban as a dangerous intrusion on colonial affairs.

1754

- The French and Indian War begins, lasting for seven years and not settled until the Peace of Paris, 1763. Spreading to Europe in 1756, the war is known there as the Seven Years' War.
- Benjamin Franklin and others put forward the Albany Plan to create a union of colonies to conduct defense and Indian affairs; it is unsuccessful.

1763

- At the Peace of Paris, Great Britain acquires Canada from France and Florida from Spain.
- Britain issues a proclamation prohibiting settlement west of a line drawn along the ridge of the Appalachian mountains; the "Proclamation Line" is enforced by troops permanently stationed for the purpose.
- Scots-Irish frontiersmen (the Paxton Boys) raid a settlement of Christianized Indians at Conestoga and kill twenty, then march on Philadelphia to force the government to remove Indians from the land they want.

1764

- The Green Mountain Boys from New Hampshire wage sporadic guerrilla warfare against New York land speculators.
- The colonies strongly oppose the Sugar Act, passed by Parliament as a revenue-raising measure.
- The Currency Act demands that all American colonies cease printing paper money.
- A French fur trader establishes St. Louis as a Mississippi trading post.

1765

- The Stamp Act, which requires a stamp on printed materials ranging from wills and newspapers to playing cards, sparks colonial protest and political organization.
- A Boston protest against the Stamp Act results in a mob attack on Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson's house.
- Official delegations from nine colonies gather in New York City for a Stamp Act Congress, which adopts resolutions condemning the

measure, calls for a boycott of British goods, and sends petitions to Parliament and an address to the king.

- Parliament passes the first Quartering Act (the second is passed in 1774), which obliges colonists to board British soldiers in their houses if required.

1766

- Parliament repeals the Stamp Act but declares its authority over the American colonies in the Declaratory Act.
- In New York's Hudson River valley, tenants led by William Prendergast revolt against landowners by withholding rent payments and claiming freehold title to the land they farmed. New York's government sends British troops against the rioters, suppresses the revolt, and sentences Prendergast to death.

1767

- The Revenue Act (Townshend Duties) places a duty on goods imported by the American colonies. In protest, activists in port cities organize nonimportation campaigns to convince merchants not to purchase goods from Britain.
- Frontier settlers in South Carolina form vigilante groups to seize control of the colony's backcountry; after two years, the colonial assembly provides for extra representatives and two new inland parishes (counties) with legal and political institutions, including courts, jails, and sheriffs.

1768

- The British government posts two regiments of troops to Boston to protect customs officials, for the first time establishing a garrison outside New York or frontier outposts.

1770

- On March 5, panicked British troops fire into a crowd of Bostonians protesting their presence in the city and kill five workingmen; the event becomes known as the Boston Massacre.

1771

- The Battle of the Alamance ends a six-year conflict in the North Carolina backcountry between disenfranchised middling and poor whites, known as Regulators, and the provincial government dominated by the coastal elite.

1772

- Boston town meeting establishes the Committee of Correspondence to build a coalition between town and country.

- Angry Rhode Islanders burn the British schooner *Gaspée.* The British government overrides the authority of the colonial courts by appointing a special commission to investigate.

1773

- The Tea Act gives the British East India Company a monopoly on tea imported to America.
- On December 16, Patriot leaders and workingmen board East India Company ships docked in Boston Harbor and dump their tea overboard to protest Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson's compliance with the Tea Act; this "Boston Tea Party" becomes an important symbol of American resistance.

1774

- In May, Parliament passes four measures designed to regain control over the colonies after the Boston Tea Party; colonists call these measures the Intolerable or Coercive Acts.
- The First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia from September 5 to October 26 and passes the Continental Association, a measure that decrees a complete boycott of European products and calls for the creation of committees throughout the colonies to enforce it.
- Thomas Jefferson publishes the pamphlet *A Summary View of the Rights of British America,* which argues that "the British Parliament has no right to exercise authority over us."

1775

- The American War of Independence begins on April 19 at the Battles of Lexington and Concord.
- The Second Continental Congress convenes in Philadelphia in May.

1776

- Thomas Paine publishes the pamphlet *Common Sense,* which rapidly gains popularity among artisans and farmers.
- The Continental Congress declares independence from Britain on July 2. The Declaration of Independence is adopted on July 4, although most delegates do not sign it until August 2.

Additional Readings

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