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Abstract: Presents an overview of events surrounding the Boston Massacre of 1770. Details of taxes, including the Stamp and Sugar Acts, levied against the colonists by Great Britain; British military presence maintained in the colonies after the French and Indian War; Protests mounted by the Sons of Liberty and other groups against the tax measures instituted by British Prime Minister George Grenville; Violent uprisings in Boston; Efforts of Sam Adams and other patriots to oust all British soldiers from the city.

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Boston Massacre

The Boston Massacre was the result of the colonists' frustration with British policies after the French and Indian War ended in 1763. They disliked Parliament's active involvement, and hated the presence of British soldiers, who seemed to be policing the colonists. They also resented the numerous attempts at taxation, such as the Sugar Act and Stamp Act, which Parliament tried to impose on them without their consent. When Parliament would not listen to their verbal protests, the expressions of their discontent became violent. Eventually, the Boston Massacre exploded onto the Boston political scene, and brought the colonies closer to revolution.

Taxation without Representation

Colonists were surprised when large numbers of British troops remained in North America. They were happy to have the troops' protection against the French, but were puzzled when the troops remained after the French had been driven from the continent. The people came to the conclusion that the soldiers were not there to protect, but to oppress them. Maintaining this occupying force was expensive, and the British were still reeling from the debt incurred in the French and Indian War. The Quartering Act of 1765 was instituted to force the colonists to share this economic burden. The act demanded that colonial

magistrates find lodging for British soldiers in taverns and inns owned by colonists. The colonists were expected to provide them with food, bedding and other necessities like kitchen utensils. The colonists, however, came to resent the Quartering Act and saw it as an indirect method of taxation.

Direct taxation instituted by Britain also made the colonists furious. Great Britain took advantage of the trading relationship with the colonies to gain an edge over other European competitors. They forced the colonists to send their abundance of raw materials to Britain where it would be manufactured into products. This relationship was further strained when Britain forced the colonists to pay taxes on the products made in Britain. Prime Minister George Grenville and his government began instituting these taxes in 1763. Customs officials had the ability to call on local and military police to enforce the law.

The first tax that Grenville passed was the Sugar Act of 1764. Its purpose was to pay for the British soldiers serving in America. The maintenance costs for the soldiers each year totaled 350,000 Pounds. The Sugar Act charged duty on such imported items as indigo, coffee, and cloth from exotic lands in the empire. It also decreased taxes colonists already paid on molasses.

Many colonists protested against the new measure. James Otis, a lawyer from Massachusetts, wrote "The Rights of British Colonies Asserted and Approved," a work supported by Massachusetts politicians. It told British legislators that they had no right to tax the colonists when there was no colonial representatives in Parliament to speak for them. Such laws could only be made with the colonists' consent.

The Stamp Act

While this and other petitions were sent to England, Parliament was already debating the Stamp Act. It passed in March 1765. It forced colonists to pay for a stamp (or seal) that had to be placed on blank paper, parchment, vellum, business documents and dice. Members of Parliament believed this was a fair tax because the rest of Britain had been paying a stamp tax for five years. It would also provide 60,000 Pounds more for the British army stationed in the colonies. On average, the tax was not costly for the colonists. Each person paid an equivalent of 2/3 of a day's wages for the stamp tax every year. It was not the actual cost that colonists protested against, it was the fact that Parliament was taxing them without their consent. And, because this tax affected the rich and influential directly and almost all of the population at least indirectly, Parliament was faced with a unified front of angry colonists.

The colonists quickly grew tired of being ignored by Parliament, so they turned to violence. In Boston on August 14, 1765, the Loyal Nine, a group of merchants and artisans, terrorized a stamp distributor, Andrew Oliver. The next week, Ebenezer Mackintosh led a group who harassed Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson at his home. The Sons of Liberty grew out of these demonstrations. They were a group of lower- and middle-class men, directed by more affluent leaders. The Sons of Liberty were not afraid to use violence to protest the Stamp Act, and they forced stamp distributors out of business and encouraged colonists to boycott stamps.

Incidents happened in other colonies as well. In New York, a group of British soldiers cut down a liberty pole. The citizens were so enraged that a large mob confronted the soldiers the next day. The panicked British soldiers shot into the crowd and wounded a few colonists, though none were killed. Malice towards the soldiers and British authority grew. By October, New York City began a boycott of European products.

The rest of the colonies joined in this refusal to buy European merchandise. British merchants began to pressure Parliament and on March 18 the Stamp Act was repealed. Along with the repeal, the Declaratory Act was passed. It claimed Parliament had the right to control the colonies in any issue, directly opposing the colonists' claims on the right to be present when tax laws were passed.

Instead of appeasing the colonists' anger, Britain antagonized them further with the Townshend Acts. Charles Townshend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, tried to reform taxation by charging colonists for imported items only, such as paint and paper. The Revenue Act was one of the Townshend Acts and was meant to provide 40,000 Pounds to pay governors and judges ruling in the American colonies. Now those in colonial government would not have to depend on the colonial legislatures for their salaries. This bill was proof to the colonists of the British desire to control them. Again, they responded by boycotting the tax, so that the government made only a pitiful 3,500 Pounds. In 1770, most of the taxes levied by the Townshend Acts were repealed, except for the tax on tea. Tea was a very popular commodity that Britain believed the colonists could not live without it. They kept a tax on it partially to show the colonists that Parliament was still in control.

Violent Uprisings

Violence continued to be a problem, especially in Boston. In 1768, John Hancock's ship *Liberty* was confiscated when customs officials discovered that he had not paid tax on his shipment of Madeira wine. People were so angry that some of the customs workers' homes were razed by the enraged mobs. In the meantime, the Massachusetts legislature had written a Circular Letter that was passed around all of the colonies, exhorting them to boycott taxed goods.

Governor Francis Bernard called for more soldiers to keep the peace in Boston. The 14th and 29th regiment came, which only increased the tension. Two more regiments, the 64th and 65th came from Ireland. When it appeared that the city was more stable, the 64 and 65th were transferred to Halifax.

However, Boston was far from calm. Many patriots continued to foment anger and protest. Sam Adams inflamed Bostonians with tales in his newspaper, "Journal of the Times," about the terrible misconduct of British soldiers. Gov. Bernard claimed that 9 out of 10 of these stories were libelous.

Anger was boiling near the surface. Patriots were searching for an excuse to take action against the King's soldiers. When Ebenezer Richardson, a customs employee, chopped down a liberty pole in February 1770, a mob of young men tried to assault him. He took refuge in a house and began firing randomly into the mob from a window, killing a twelve-year-old boy, Christopher Snider. Snider's elaborate and emotional funeral pushed the city even further towards outright rebellion. More incidents occurred in the streets as colonists badgered and argued with soldiers, causing minor scuffles.

One of these incidents became a milestone in the road to war. On March 5, 1770, Private Hugh White was doing his duty as a sentry in Boston's King Street, just a block away from the customs house. A young boy began to pester White. The soldier knocked the boy down with the butt of his musket. That drew an angry crowd, which grew as shouting brought more people near. White backed himself up against the customshouse door and tried to go in. When he could not, he stood his ground and raised his gun in defense. The mob continued to grow, shouting threats at him. They began to gather anything that could be used as a weapon, including snowballs from the foot of snow that lay on the ground. White cried

out for help, which brought Captain Thomas Preston and his seven soldiers. Together, they tried to peaceably keep the crowd under control; but someone in the mob struck a redcoat hard enough to make the soldier drop his gun. As people dove to pick it up, the gun went off. Hearing the shots, the other soldiers began firing until Preston stopped them. Two of the colonists died on site while three others died soon after. One of the first men to fall was Cripus Atticus, an ex-slave.

Down with the British

The next day Sam Adams held a meeting at Faneuil Hall and demanded that all British soldiers be cast out of the city. The soldiers moved from the city to Castle William not far away. This temporarily reduced the tension over the British soldiers' presence in Boston.

Preston and the soldiers were tried separately in courts of Massachusetts. Preston was tried first and defended by John Adams, the future president of the United States. The jury decided that there was no evidence that proved Preston had ordered his soldiers to fire into the crowd. He was acquitted and left the city.

His acquittal made the plight of the soldiers even worse. If the commander had not ordered the soldiers to fire, then the soldiers themselves were responsible for shooting into the crowd. All of them pleaded not guilty. A new jury found none of them guilty of murder. Two of the soldiers were found guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter and were taken back to jail. The rest of the men went free. By the time the verdict came in for the soldiers, it had almost been a year since the incident occurred. Most of the Bostonians' rage had been calmed.

Although the violence had subsided, the colonists were still discontented. The tea tax remained, and the colonists refused to pay it. On December 16, 1770, the colonists retaliated by dumping 342 chests of tea from the East India Company into Boston Harbor. The merchandise was worth \$48,295, or \$3 million in today's money. The British answered with the Coercive Acts, known as the Intolerable Acts in the colonies. They closed part of Boston and removed the government of Massachusetts to the town of Salem, located to the north. These punishments and attempts at control only united the colonies, which were previously considered as separate entities. They all feared that since it happened to Massachusetts, it could happen to them as well.

The presence of British soldiers in America during peacetime made the colonists angry. New taxation forced on the colonials by such British politicians as Grenville and Townshend only made the situation worse. The colonists protested against taxation without representation peaceably at first but used violence when their words were ignored. The Boston Massacre was the result of tensions between British soldiers and the colonists and was an early sign of the tensions that would lead to the war for independence.

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