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Severing the Bonds of Empire

1754–1774

The well-born Scotswoman Janet Schaw chose an inopportune time to visit her older brother in North America. Sailing from Edinburgh in October 1774, she arrived in the West Indies in January 1775, where she visited planter families, some whom were also Scots, and did some shopping before sailing on to meet her brother in North Carolina. There she encountered “rusticks” who had, in her opinion, a “rooted hatred” for the mother country and were forming “schemes” detrimental to Britain and America.

Janet Schaw soon learned that an American congress had forbidden “every kind of diversion, even card-playing.” When Wilmington residents held a ball before the ban took effect, she found the event “laughable,” like seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of comic, carousing peasants. She also reported that “the Ladies have burnt their tea in a solemn procession,” but sniffed, “the sacrifice was not very considerable, as I do not think any one offered above a quarter of a pound.” All the “genteel” merchants, she observed, “disapprove of the present proceedings” and were planning to leave. She concluded that the trouble in the colonies had been caused by “mistaken notions of moderation” in parliamentary policy. Schaw returned to Scotland within the year. Her brother’s property was later confiscated by the state for his refusing to take an oath of allegiance, but he remained in his new homeland until his death.

In retrospect, John Adams identified the period between 1760 and 1775 as the era of the true American Revolution. The Revolution, Adams declared, ended before the fighting started, for it was “in the Minds of the people,” involving not the actual winning of independence but a shift of allegiance from Britain to America. Today, not all historians would concur. But none would deny the importance of the events of those crucial years, in which mainland colonies united against British policies.

During the 1760s and early 1770s, an ever-widening split occurred between Great Britain and Anglo America. In the long history of British settlement in the Western Hemisphere, tension

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SUMMARY

had occasionally marred the relationship between individual provinces and the mother country. Still, it rarely lasted long or was widespread, except during the crisis following the Glorious Revolution in 1689. In the 1750s, however, a series of events beginning with the Seven Years' War drew the colonists' attention toward their relations with Great Britain.

Britain's overwhelming victory in that war, confirmed by treaty in 1763, forever altered the balance of power in North America. France was ousted from the continent and Spain from Florida, with major consequences for interior indigenous peoples and British colonists. Indians, who were experts at playing European powers against one another, lost a major diplomatic tool. Anglo-Americans no longer feared the French on their northern and western borders or the Spanish in the Southeast. The coastal British colonies would never have risked breaking with their mother country, some historians contend, had France controlled the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes in 1776.

The British victory in 1763 left Great Britain with a massive war-related debt. Consequently, Parliament for the first time imposed revenue-raising taxes on the colonies in addition to the customs duties that had long regulated trade. That exposed differences in the political thinking of Americans and Britons that had previously been obscured by a shared political vocabulary.

During the 1760s and early 1770s, Anglo American men and women resisted new tax levies and Britain's attempts to tighten controls over provincial governments. The colonies' elected leaders became increasingly suspicious of Britain's motives. They laid aside old antagonisms to coordinate their responses to the new measures. As late as the summer of 1774, though, most were seeking a solution within the empire; few harbored thoughts of independence.

As you read this chapter, keep the following questions in mind:

- * **What were the causes and consequences of the Seven Years' War?**
- * **What British policies did Americans protest, and what theories and strategies did they develop to support those protests?**
- * **Why did the Tea Act of 1773 cause such a major escalation in tensions between the mainland colonies and Great Britain?**

Renewed Warfare Among Europeans and Indians

In the mid-eighteenth century, the British colonies along the Atlantic seaboard were surrounded by potentially hostile neighbors: Indians, the Spanish in Florida and the Gulf of Mexico, and the French along the rivers and lakes stretching from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi. Spanish outposts posed little threat, for Spain was no longer a major power. However, France's forts and settlements dominated the North American interior. In all three Anglo-French wars between 1689 and 1748, Britain could not shake France's hold on the American frontier. Under the Peace of Utrecht, which ended Queen Anne's War in 1713, England won control of such peripheral northern areas as Newfoundland, Hudson's Bay, and Acadia (Nova Scotia)

What was at stake in the Seven Years' War?

Chronology

1754	Albany Congress meets to try to forge colonial unity Washington defeated at Fort Necessity, Great Meadows, Pennsylvania	1766	Stamp Act repealed Declaratory Act insists that Parliament can tax the colonies
1755	Braddock's army defeated in Pennsylvania	1767	Townshend Acts lay duties on trade within the empire, send new officials to America
1756	Britain declares war on France; Seven Years' War officially begins	1768	Fort Stanwix treaty opens Kentucky to Anglo-American settlement
1759	British forces take Quebec	1768–70	Townshend duties resisted; boycotts and public demonstrations divide merchants and urban artisans
1760	American phase of war ends with fall of Montreal to British troops George III becomes king	1770	Lord North becomes prime minister Townshend duties repealed, except for tea tax Boston Massacre kills five colonial rioters
1763	Treaty of Paris ends Seven Years' War Pontiac's allies attack forts and settlements in West Proclamation of 1763 attempts to close land west of Appalachians to settlement	1772	Boston Committee of Correspondence formed
1764	Sugar Act lays new duties on molasses, tightens customs regulations Currency Act outlaws paper money issued by the colonies	1773	Tea Act aids East India Company Bostonians protest the Tea Act
1765	Stamp Act requires stamps on all printed materials in colonies Sons of Liberty formed	1774	Coercive Acts punish Boston and Massachusetts as a whole Quebec Act reforms government of Quebec First Continental Congress called

and gained access to the Great Lakes region previously dominated by France. But Britain made no territorial gains in King George's War (see Table 5.1.)

Iroquois Neutrality

During Queen Anne's War and King George's War, the Iroquois Confederacy maintained a neutrality policy first developed in 1701. While British and French forces vied for nominal control of North America, the confederacy skillfully manipulated the Europeans, refusing to commit warriors to either side despite gifts from both. The Iroquois continued a long-standing conflict with Cherokees and Catawbans in the South, thus giving their young warriors combat experience and replacing population losses with new captives. They also cultivated peaceful relationships with Pennsylvania and Virginia, partly to obtain the colonists' imprimatur for their domination of the Shawnees and Delawares. And they forged ties with Algonquians of the Great Lakes region, thereby making themselves indispensable go-betweens for commerce between the Atlantic coast and the West. Thus, the Iroquois consolidated their control over the interior north of Virginia and south of the Great Lakes.

But the region inhabited by the Shawnees and Delawares (now western Pennsylvania and Virginia and eastern Ohio) provided the spark that set off a major war. In a significant reversal of previous patterns, that conflict spread from America to Europe, decisively resolving the contest for North America.

As early as the late 1730s, trouble began as British traders pushed west from the Carolinas and Virginia, challenging French power beyond the Appalachians.

TABLE 5.1 The Colonial Wars, 1689–1763

American Name	European Name	Dates	Participants	American Sites	Dispute
King William's War	Nine Years' War	1689–97	England, Holland versus France, Spain	New England, New York, Canada	French power
Queen Anne's War	War of Spanish Succession	1702–13	England, Holland, Austria versus France, Spain	Florida, New England	Throne of Spain
King George's War	War of Austrian Succession	1739–48	England, Holland, Austria versus France, Spain, Prussia	West Indies, New England, Canada	Throne of Austria
French and Indian War	Seven Years' War	1756–63	England versus France, Spain	Ohio country, Canada	Possession of Ohio country

The French had difficulty supplying their settlements during a successful British naval blockade of the St. Lawrence during King George's War. This heightened French colonial officials' fear of British incursions, especially when in the 1740s Iroquois negotiators, claiming to speak for the Delawares and Shawnees, ceded large land tracts to Pennsylvania officials. Squatters (mainly Scots-Irish and Germans) had negotiated agreements with the Delawares for settlement rights. But the agreements reached by the Penn family's agents and the Iroquois ignored local Indians and squatters, all of whom were told to move. Disgruntled Delawares and Shawnees migrated west, where they joined other displaced eastern Indians.

The region to which they moved, claimed by both Virginia and Pennsylvania, was coveted by wealthy Virginians, who, organized as the Ohio Company, received a huge land grant in 1749. The company's agents established trading posts that aimed to dominate the crucial area where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers join to form the Ohio (see Map 5.1). But France relied on the Ohio River for access to its posts on the Mississippi. Thus, in the early 1750s, Pennsylvania fur traders, Ohio Company representatives, the French military, squatters, Iroquois, Delawares, and Shawnees jostled for position in the region. A 1752 raid by the French and their native allies on a trading outpost sited at modern Cleveland rid the region of Pennsylvanians, but the Virginians posed a serious challenge. Accordingly, in 1753, the French pushed southward, building fortified outposts at strategic points.

Albany Congress

In response to the French threat, delegates from seven northern and middle colonies gathered in Albany, New York, in June 1754. They sought to persuade the Iroquois to abandon their neutrality and to coordinate plans for colonial defense. The Iroquois saw no reason to change a policy that served them well for half a century. And although the Albany Congress delegates adopted a Plan of Union (which would have established an elected intercolonial legislature with the power to tax), their provincial governments uniformly rejected the plan, fearing a loss of autonomy.

While the Albany Congress delegates deliberated, the war began. Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie sent a small militia troop to build a palisade at the forks of the Ohio. When a substantial French force arrived, the Virginia militia surrendered. The French then constructed Fort Duquesne. Learning of the confrontation, the inexperienced young officer who commanded the Virginia reinforcements



MAP 5.1

European Settlements and Indians, 1754

By 1754, Europeans had expanded the limits of the English colonies to the eastern slopes of the Appalachian Mountains. Few independent Indian nations still existed in the East, but beyond the mountains they controlled the countryside. Only a few widely scattered English and French forts maintained the Europeans' presence there.

Source: Copyright © Cengage Learning

pressed on. He encountered a French detachment, and Tanaghrisson, the leader of his Ohio Indian scouts, killed the French commander. Tanaghrisson started a war to force the British to defend the Ohio Country against the French. The Virginians were trapped by pursuing French troops in a crudely built Fort Necessity at Great Meadows, Pennsylvania. After a day-long battle (on July 3, 1754), during which more than one-third of his men were killed or wounded, twenty-two-year-old George Washington surrendered.

Seven Years' War

Washington's blunder and Tanaghrisson's aggression helped ignite a war that eventually encompassed nearly the entire world. In July 1755, a few miles south of Fort Duquesne, the French and Indians attacked British and colonial troops. In the devastating defeat, General Edward Braddock was killed. The Pennsylvania frontier was repeatedly attacked by Delawares for two more years; over a thousand residents were killed. Settlers felt betrayed because the Indians attacking them had once been (an observer noted) "all-most daily familiars at their houses."

Britain declared war on France in 1756, thus formally beginning the Seven Years' War. Even before then, Britons and New Englanders feared that France would try to retake Nova Scotia, where most of the population descended from seventeenth-century French settlers who had intermarried with local M'ikmaqs. Afraid that the approximately twelve thousand French Nova Scotians would abandon their neutrality policy, British commanders in 1755 forced about seven thousand from their homeland—the first large-scale modern deportation, now called ethnic cleansing. Ships crammed with Acadians sailed to each mainland colony. Many families were separated, some forever. After 1763, the survivors relocated: some returned to Canada, others to France or its Caribbean islands. Many settled in Louisiana, where they became known as Cajuns (derived from *Acadian*).

British officers tried unsuccessfully to coerce the colonies into supplying men and materiel to the army. When William Pitt, the civilian official heading the war effort in 1757, agreed to reimburse the colonies' wartime expenditures and placed recruitment in local hands, he gained greater American support. (Even so, Virginia burgesses appropriated more funds to defend against possible slave insurrections than to fight the French and Indians.) Many colonial militiamen served alongside red-coated regulars from Britain; the two groups maintained an antagonistic relationship, however.

Adding to the tensions were the actions of Anglo-American merchants in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, who continued trading with the French West Indies. They bribed customs officers to look the other way while cargoes of fish, flour, timber, and other products bound for such neutral ports as Dutch St. Eustatius or Spanish Monte Cristi (on Hispaniola) actually ended up in the French Caribbean, and they acquired valuable French sugar in return. British officials failed to stop the illicit commerce. North America also supplied France with vital materiel during the war.

Nevertheless, in July 1758, British forces recaptured the fortress at Louisbourg, winning control of the entrance to the St. Lawrence River. In the fall, Delawares and Shawnees accepted British peace overtures, and the French abandoned Fort Duquesne. Then, in September 1759, General James Wolfe's regulars defeated the French and

Seven Years' War: Major French-English conflict that was the first worldwide war.



Links to the World

The First Worldwide War

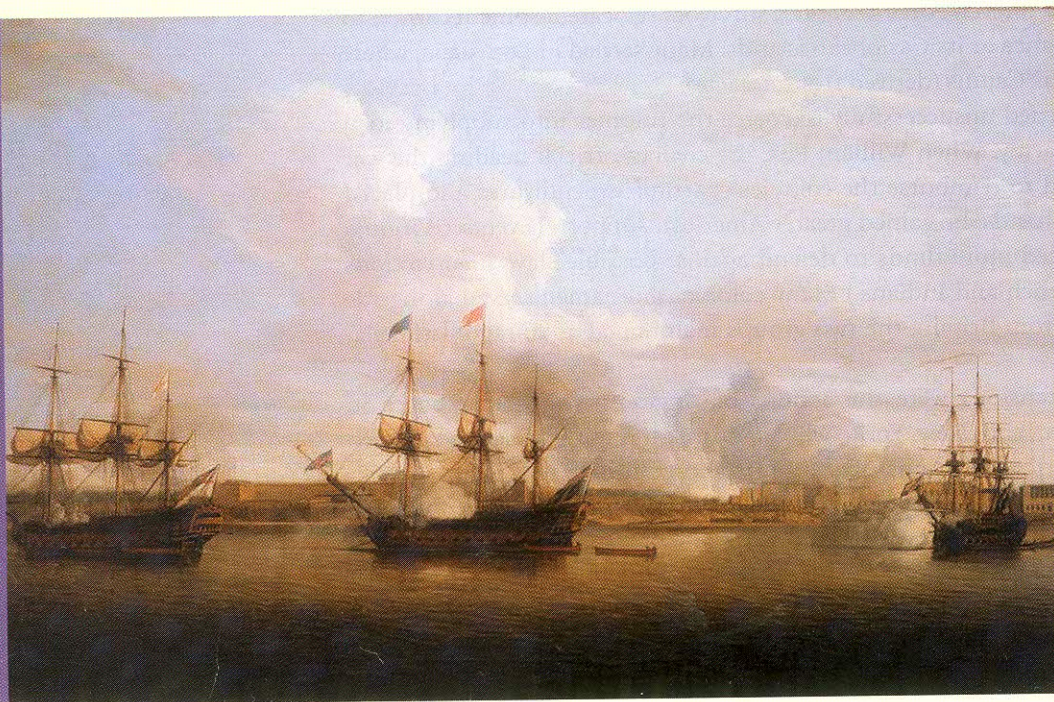
Today, we call two twentieth-century conflicts world wars, but the contest that historians term the “Great War for the Empire” was actually the first worldwide war. It began in spring 1754 in southwestern Pennsylvania, over whether Britain or France would build a fort at the forks of the Ohio. That it eventually involved combatants around the world attests to the growing importance of European nations’ overseas empires and the increasing centrality of North America to their struggles for dominance.

The contest at the forks of the Ohio helped to reinvigorate a conflict between Austria and Prussia that sent European nations scrambling for allies. Eventually England, Hanover, and Prussia lined up against France, Austria, Russia, Sweden, and Saxony, and, later, Spain. The war in Europe would last seven years. In 1763, these nations signed a peace treaty that returned the continent

to the prewar status, but in the rest of the world Britain had vanquished France and Spain.

In the Caribbean, Britain seized the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and took Havana from Spain. In North America, the British recaptured the French fortress of Louisbourg and conquered Quebec. In Africa, Britain overwhelmed France’s slave-trading posts in Senegambia. In India, British forces won control of Bengal. Late in the war, a British expedition took Manila in the Philippines from Spain.

Thus, the war that started in the American backcountry revealed the steadily growing links between North America and the rest of the world. Winners and losers had to pay for this first worldwide war. Financial struggles in Britain and France produced revolutions abroad (for Britain, in America) and at home (for France).



National Maritime Museum, London

In 1771, artist Dominic Serres, the Elder, depicted British naval vessels attacking the French fortress at Chandernagore in India in 1757 (at left in background). Cannon fire from the warships was critical to the British victory, one of the keys to the conquest of India during the Seven Years’ War.

took Quebec. Sensing a British victory, the Iroquois abandoned neutrality, hoping to gain a postwar advantage by allying with Britain. A year later, the British captured Montreal, the last French stronghold, and the American phase of the war ended.

In the **Treaty of Paris** (1763), France ceded its major North American holdings to Britain. Spain, an ally of France toward war's end, gave Florida to the victors. France ceded Louisiana west of the Mississippi to Spain, in partial compensation for its ally's losses elsewhere. The British thus gained control of the continent's fur trade. No longer would the English seacoast colonies have to worry about the threat posed by France's extensive North American territories.

The British triumph stimulated some Americans like Benjamin Franklin to predict a glorious future for British North America. Such men, who would lead the resistance to British measures after 1763, opposed laws that would retard America's growth and supported steps to increase Americans' control over their own destiny.

Treaty of Paris: Treaty by which France ceded most of its holdings to Great Britain and some smaller amounts to Spain.



Link to Benjamin Franklin's "Join or Die" cartoon.

1763: A Turning Point

Indigenous peoples of the interior first felt the impact of Britain's victory. After Britain gained the upper hand in the American war in 1758, Creeks and Cherokees lost their ability to force concessions by threatening to turn instead to France or Spain. In desperation and retaliation for British atrocities, Cherokees attacked the Carolina and Virginia frontiers in 1760. Though initially victorious, the Indians were defeated the following year. Late in 1761, a treaty allowed the construction of British forts in Cherokee territories and opened a large tract to European settlement.

How did colonists' ideas about government differ from those of the British in the 1760s?

Neolin and Pontiac

In the Ohio country, the Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomis reacted angrily when Great Britain, no longer facing French competition, raised prices on trade goods and ended traditional gift-giving practices. As settlers moved into the Monongahela and Susquehanna valleys, a shaman named Neolin urged Indians to oppose European settlement and influence on their culture. Contending that Indian peoples were destroying themselves by dependence on European goods (especially alcohol), Neolin advocated peaceful and armed resistance. If all Indians west of the mountains united to reject the invaders, Neolin declared, the Master of Life would replenish the depleted deer herds and look kindly upon his people.

Heeding Neolin's call, in spring 1763, Ottawa war chief Pontiac forged an unprecedented alliance among Hurons, Chippewas, Potawatomis, Delawares, Shawnees, and Mingoes (Pennsylvania Iroquois). Pontiac besieged Fort Detroit while war parties attacked other British outposts in the Great Lakes. Detroit withstood the siege, but by late June the other forts west of Niagara and north of Fort Pitt had fallen. Indians then raided the Virginia and Pennsylvania frontiers, slaying at least two thousand settlers. They carried off many enslaved African Americans, frightening planters, who feared an Indian-black alliance. In early August, colonial militiamen defeated an Indian force at Bushy Run, Pennsylvania. Pontiac ended the Detroit siege in late October; a treaty ending the war was negotiated three years later.

For nearly eighty years, European settlers and Indians in "Penn's Woods" avoided major conflicts. But the Indian attacks and settlers' response—especially the massacre of several families of defenseless Conestoga Indians in December 1763 by

fifty Scots-Irish men known as the Paxton Boys—revealed that violence in the region would become endemic.

Proclamation of 1763: England's attempt to end Indian problems by preventing westward movement by colonists.

Proclamation of 1763 London officials had no experience managing an area as vast as the territory it acquired from France, which included French settlers along the St. Lawrence and many Indian communities. In October, the ministry issued the **Proclamation of 1763**, designating the headwaters of rivers flowing into the Atlantic from the Appalachians as the temporary western boundary for colonial settlement (see Map 5.1). Its promulgators expected to prevent clashes by forbidding colonists to move onto Indian lands. But it infuriated colonists who had squatted west of the line and land speculation companies from Pennsylvania and Virginia.

After 1763, the latter groups (which included such men as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Benjamin Franklin) lobbied vigorously to have their claims validated by colonial governments and London administrators. At a treaty conference at Fort Stanwix, New York, in 1768, they negotiated with Iroquois

representatives to push the boundary line farther west and south. The Iroquois, still claiming to speak for the Delawares and the Shawnees agreed to the deal, which yielded valuable trade goods and did not affect their own territories. Although the Virginia land companies eventually gained the support of the House of Burgesses, they never made headway in London because administrators worried that western expansion would require funds they did not have.



Benjamin West, the first well-known American artist, engraved this picture of a prisoner exchange at the end of Pontiac's Uprising, with Colonel Henry Bouquet supervising the return of settlers abducted during the war. In the foreground, a child resists leaving the Indian parents he had grown to love. Many colonists were fascinated by the phenomenon West depicted—the reluctance of captives to abandon their adoptive Indian families.

George III

Financing Britain's debt from the Seven Years' War—and defending newly acquired territories—bedeviled King George III, who in 1760 succeeded his grandfather, George II. During the crucial years between 1763 and 1770, when the rift with the colonies widened and various political crises beset England, the twenty-two-year-old king replaced ministries rapidly. Although determined to assert the power of the monarchy, George III stubbornly regarded adherence to the status quo as the hallmark of patriotism.

Selected as prime minister in 1763, George Grenville confronted a financial crisis: England's indebtedness had nearly doubled since 1754, from £73 million to £137 million. Prewar annual expenditures amounted to no more than £8 million; now the yearly interest on the debt reached £5 million. Grenville's ministry needed funds, but the British were already heavily taxed. Because the colonists benefited from wartime expenditures, Grenville concluded that Anglo-Americans should pay a larger share of the empire's costs.

Theories of Representation

Americans believed they could be represented only by men who lived nearby and for whom they or their property-holding neighbors actually voted. Grenville and his English contemporaries, however, believed that Parliament—king, lords, and commons acting together—represented all British subjects (even overseas) and whether or not they could vote. In Parliament, the particular constituency that chose a member of the House of Commons had no special claim on that member's vote, nor did the member have to live near his constituents. According to this theory, called virtual representation, all Britons—including colonists—were represented in Parliament. Thus, their consent to acts of Parliament could be presumed. In the colonies, by contrast, members of the assemblies' lower houses were viewed as specifically representing the regions that elected them. Before Grenville proposed to tax the colonists, the two notions coexisted. But events of the 1760s revealed their incompatibility.

Real Whigs

Colonists had become accustomed to a central government with limited authority. They believed that a good government was one that largely left them alone, a view matching the theories of British writers known as the Real Whigs. Drawing on a tradition of dissenting thought reaching back to John Locke, Real Whigs stressed the dangers inherent in a powerful government, particularly a monarchy. Some favored republicanism, which proposed to eliminate monarchs and rest power more directly on the people. Real Whigs warned the people to guard constantly against government's attempted encroachments on their liberty and property.

As Britain tightened the reins in the 1760s and early 1770s, many Americans saw parallels in their circumstances and Real Whig ideology. Excessive and unjust taxation, they believed, could destroy their freedoms, and they saw oppressive designs behind the actions of Grenville and his successors. In the mid-1760s, however, colonial leaders merely questioned the wisdom of Grenville's proposed laws.

Sugar and Currency Acts

In 1764, Parliament passed the Sugar and Currency Acts. The **Sugar Act** (also known as the Revenue Act) revised existing customs regulations and laid new duties on some foreign imports into the colonies. Its key provisions, advocated in London by influential Caribbean sugar planters, aimed at discouraging American rum distillers from smuggling French West Indian molasses. Although the Sugar Act resembled the Navigation Acts, it broke with tradition by deliberately seeking to raise revenue rather than channel American trade through Britain. The Currency Act outlawed most colonial paper money, because British merchants had complained that Americans paid debts in inflated local currencies.

The Sugar and Currency Acts were imposed on an already depressed economy. A business boom accompanied the Seven Years' War, but prosperity ended in 1760 when the war shifted overseas. Urban merchants found few buyers for imported goods, and the loss of military demand for foodstuffs hurt American farmers. The bottom dropped out of the European tobacco market, threatening the livelihood of Chesapeake planters. Sailors and artisans had little work. Thus, the prospect of increased import duties and inadequate currency aroused merchants' hostility.

Without precedent for a united campaign against acts of Parliament, Americans in 1764 took uncoordinated steps. Eight colonial legislatures sent petitions to

Sugar Act: Act passed by British Parliament that sought to raise revenues by taxing colonial imports, notably the sugar trade.

Parliament requesting the Sugar Act's repeal. They argued that its commercial restrictions would hurt Britain as well as the colonies and that they had not consented to its passage. Their protests had no effect.

The Stamp Act Crisis

How did the Stamp Act raise issues that would lead to the American Revolution?

Stamp Act: Obligated colonists to purchase and use special stamped (watermarked) paper for newspapers, customs documents, various licenses, college diplomas, and legal forms used for recovering debts, buying land, and making wills.

The **Stamp Act** (1765), Grenville's most important proposal, required tax stamps on most printed materials, placing the heaviest burden on merchants and the colonial elite, who used printed matter more than ordinary folk. Anyone who purchased a newspaper, made a will, transferred land, accepted a government appointment, or borrowed money would have to pay the tax. Never before had a revenue measure of such scope been proposed for the colonies. The act also required that tax stamps be purchased with scarce sterling coin. Violators would be tried by vice-admiralty courts, where judges rendered decisions, leading Americans to fear the loss of their right to trial by jury. Finally, such a law broke with the colonial tradition of self-imposed taxation.

James Otis's *Rights of the British Colonies*

The young Massachusetts attorney James Otis Jr., penned the most important colonial pamphlet protesting the Sugar Act and the proposed Stamp Act: *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*. Otis exposed the dilemma that confounded colonists for the next decade. How could they oppose certain acts of Parliament without questioning Parliament's authority over them? On the one hand, Otis asserted, Americans were "entitled to all the natural, essential, inherent, and inseparable rights" of Britons, including the right not to be taxed without their consent. On the other, Otis admitted that, under the British system since the Glorious Revolution, "the power of parliament is uncontrollable but by themselves, and we must obey . . . till they will be pleased to relieve us."

Otis's first contention implied that Parliament could not constitutionally tax the colonies because Americans were not represented in its ranks. Yet his second point accepted the prevailing theory of British government: that Parliament was the sole, supreme authority in the empire. To resolve the dilemma, Otis proposed colonial representation in Parliament, but the British believed that colonists were already virtually represented in Parliament, and Anglo-Americans knew that a handful of colonial delegates to London would easily be outvoted. When Americans learned of the act's adoption in the spring of 1765, they reacted indecisively. Few colonists publicly favored the law, but colonial petitions failed to prevent its adoption. Perhaps Otis was correct: the only course was to pay the stamp tax, reluctantly but loyally.

Patrick Henry and the Virginia Stamp Act Resolves

A twenty-nine-year-old lawyer serving his first term in the Virginia House of Burgesses, Patrick Henry was appalled by his fellow legislators' complacency. "Alone, unadvised, and unassisted, on a blank leaf of an old law book," he wrote the Virginia Stamp Act Resolves.

Little in Henry's earlier life foreshadowed his political success. The son of a prosperous Scots immigrant to western Virginia, Henry had little formal education.



Link to the Virginia Stamp Act resolutions.

After marrying at eighteen, he failed at farming and storekeeping before turning to the law to support his wife and six children. Henry lacked legal training, but his oratorical skills made him an effective advocate, first for his clients and later for his political beliefs.

Patrick Henry introduced his seven proposals near the end of the legislative session, when many burgesses had already departed. The few burgesses remaining in Williamsburg adopted five of Henry's resolutions by a bare majority. But some colonial newspapers printed Henry's seven original resolutions as if they had been uniformly passed by the House. One was rescinded and two others were never voted on.

The four propositions adopted by the burgesses repeated Otis's arguments, asserting that colonists had never forfeited their rights as British subjects, which included consent to taxation. The other three resolutions went further. The repealed resolution claimed the burgesses had the "exclusive right" to tax Virginians, and the two never considered asserted that Virginians need not obey tax laws passed by other legislative bodies (namely, Parliament).

Continuing Loyalty to Britain

Though contending for their rights, the colonists did not seek independence. Maryland lawyer Daniel Dulany, who's *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes on the British Colonies* was the most widely read pamphlet of 1765, expressed the consensus: "The colonies are dependent upon Great Britain, and the supreme authority vested in the king, lords, and commons, may justly be exercised to secure, or preserve their dependence." But, warned Dulany, there was a distinction between a condition of "dependence and inferiority" and one of "absolute vassalage and slavery."

Over the next ten years, America's political leaders searched for a way to control their internal affairs, especially taxation, but remain under British rule. The notion that Parliament could exercise absolute authority over colonial possessions inhered in the British theory of government. Even Britain's harshest critics in the 1760s and 1770s questioned only the wisdom of specific policies, not the principles on which they rested. In effect, the Americans wanted British leaders to revise their fundamental understanding of government.

Anti-Stamp Act Demonstrations

In August, the Loyal Nine, a Boston artisans' social club, organized an anti-Stamp Act demonstration.

Hoping to show that people of all ranks opposed the act, they approached leaders of the city's rival laborers' associations, based in Boston's North End and South End neighborhoods. The two groups, composed of unskilled workers and poor tradesmen, often battled each other, but the Loyal Nine convinced them to lay aside their differences for the demonstration.

On August 14, the demonstrators hung an effigy of Andrew Oliver, the province's stamp distributor, from a tree on Boston Common. That night a large crowd led by



In 1795 the artist Lawrence Sully painted the only known life portrait of Patrick Henry. The old man's fierce gaze reflects the same intensity that marked his actions thirty years earlier, when he introduced the Virginia Stamp Act Resolves in the House of Burgesses.

Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts. Bequest of Herbert L. Pratt (Class of 1895)
AC 1945.115



Link to Hutchinson's account of the destruction of his house.

fifty well-dressed tradesmen paraded the effigy around the city. The crowd built a bonfire near Oliver's house and added the effigy to the flames. Demonstrators broke most of Oliver's windows and threw stones at officials. During the melee, the North End and South End leaders toasted their union. Oliver publicly promised not to fulfill the duties of his office.

But another crowd action twelve days later, aimed at Oliver's brother-in-law, Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, drew no praise from respectable Bostonians. On August 26, a mob attacked the homes of several customs officers and destroyed Hutchinson's elaborately furnished townhouse. But Hutchinson took some comfort in the fact that "the encouragers of the first mob never intended matters should go this length and the people in general express the utmost detestation of this unparalleled outrage."

Americans' Divergent Interests

Few colonists sided with Britain during the 1760s, but groups had divergent goals. The skilled craftsmen who composed the Loyal Nine and merchants, lawyers, and other educated elites preferred orderly demonstrations. For the city's laborers, economic grievances may have been paramount. Certainly, their "hellish Fury" as they wrecked Hutchinson's house suggests resentment against his display of wealth.

Colonists, like Britons, had a long tradition in which disfranchised people took to the streets to redress grievances. But the Stamp Act controversy for the first time drew ordinary urban folk into transatlantic politics, including recent non-English-speaking immigrants targeted by the double taxation of foreign-language newspapers. Matters that previously concerned only the gentry or colonial legislatures were now discussed everywhere.

The entry of unskilled workers, slaves, and women into imperial politics threatened and aided elite men who wanted to oppose British measures. Anti-Stamp Act demonstrations occurred in cities and towns stretching from Halifax in the north to the Caribbean island of Antigua in the south. They were so successful that, by November 1, when the law was to take effect, not one stamp distributor would carry out his duties. But wealthy men recognized that mobs composed of the formerly powerless could endanger their dominance of society.

Sons of Liberty

They therefore attempted to channel resistance into acceptable forms by creating an intercolonial association, the **Sons of Liberty**. Composed of merchants, lawyers, and prosperous tradesmen, the Sons of Liberty by early 1766 linked protest leaders from New York to those in Charleston, South Carolina, and those in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. With taverns as settings for the exchange of news and opinions, many members were tavern owners.

In Charleston (formerly Charles Town) in October 1765, a crowd shouting, "Liberty Liberty and stamp'd paper" forced the resignation of the South Carolina stamp distributor. But the Charleston chapter of the Sons of Liberty was horrified when in January 1766 local slaves paraded through the streets similarly crying, "Liberty!" Freedom from slavery was not what elite slaveowners had in mind.

Sons of Liberty: Groups formed to resist the Stamp Act.

In Philadelphia, resistance leaders were dismayed when an angry mob threatened to attack Benjamin Franklin's house. Laborers believed Franklin to be partly responsible for the Stamp Act because he had obtained the post of stamp distributor for a friend. But Philadelphia's artisans—the backbone of the opposition movement there and elsewhere—were loyal to Franklin, one of their own who had made good and protected his home. The resulting split between Philadelphia's better-off tradesmen and common laborers prevented an alliance as successful as Boston's.

Opposition and Repeal During fall and winter 1765–1766, Stamp Act opponents pursued various strategies. Colonial legislatures petitioned Parliament to repeal the law, and courts closed because they could not obtain the stamps now required for legal documents. In October, nine colonies sent delegates to a general congress—the first since 1754—in New York to draft a protest stressing the law's adverse economic effects. Meanwhile, the Sons of Liberty held mass meetings to rally public support. Finally, American merchants organized non-importation associations to pressure British exporters, expecting that since one-quarter of all exports went to the colonies by the 1760s, London merchants whose sales suffered would lobby for repeal.

In March 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act. The nonimportation agreements had created allies for the colonies among wealthy London merchants. But the main factor in winning repeal then was the appointment of a new prime minister. Lord Rockingham, who replaced Grenville in summer 1765, opposed the Stamp Acts as an unwise and divisive law. Thus, Rockingham linked repeal to passage of a **Declaratory Act**, which asserted Parliament's authority to tax and legislate Britain's American possessions.

News of the repeal arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, in May, and the Sons of Liberty dispatched messengers throughout the colonies. They organized celebrations commemorating the event and Americans' loyalty to Britain. Their goal achieved, the Sons of Liberty dissolved.

Declaratory Act: Affirmed parliamentary power to legislate its colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

Resistance to the Townshend Acts

In summer 1766, another change in the ministry in London revealed how fragile the colonists' victory had been. The new prime minister, William Pitt, fostered cooperation between the colonies and Britain during the Seven Years' War. But Pitt fell ill, and Charles Townshend became the dominant force in the ministry. An ally of Grenville, Townshend renewed efforts to obtain funds from Britain's American possessions (see Table 5.2).

The duties Townshend proposed in 1767 seemed to extend the Navigation Acts by focusing on trade goods like paper, glass, and tea. But they differed first by applying to British imports, not to those from foreign countries. Second, the revenues would pay some colonial officials, thereby eliminating assemblies' ability to threaten to withhold salaries from uncooperative officials. Additionally, Townshend's scheme established an American Board of Customs Commissioners and vice-admiralty courts at Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. This angered merchants, whose profits would be threatened.

How did the Sons of Liberty politicize ordinary Americans during resistance to the Townshend Acts?

TABLE 5.2 British Ministries and Their American Policies

Head of Ministry	Major Acts
George Grenville	Sugar Act (1764) Currency Act (1764) Stamp Act (1765)
Lord Rockingham	Stamp Act repealed (1766) Declaratory Act (1766)
William Pitt/ Charles Townshend	Townshend Acts (1767)
Lord North	Townshend duties (except for the tea tax) repealed (1770) Tea Act (1773) Coercive Acts (1774) Quebec Act (1774)

**John Dickinson's
Farmer's Letters**

Passage of the Townshend Acts drew quick response from the colonies. One series widely-published essays, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, by prominent lawyer John Dickinson, expressed a broad consensus. Dickinson contended that Parliament could regulate colonial trade but could not raise revenue. By distinguishing between trade regulation and taxation, Dickinson avoided the sticky issues of consent and the colonies' relationship to Parliament. But his argument obligated the colonies to assess Parliament's motives in passing trade laws before deciding whether to obey them.

The Massachusetts assembly responded to the Townshend Acts by drafting a letter to the other colonial legislatures, suggesting a joint protest petition. When Lord Hillsborough, recently named to secretary of state for America, learned of the Massachusetts circular, he ordered that colony's Governor Francis Bernard to insist that the assembly recall it. He also directed other governors to prevent their assemblies from discussing it. Hillsborough's order motivated colonial assemblies to unite against this new threat to their prerogatives. In late 1768, the Massachusetts legislature resoundingly rejected recall by a vote of 92 to 17. Bernard immediately dissolved the assembly, and other governors similarly responded.

Rituals of Resistance

The number of votes cast against recalling the circular letter—92—assumed ritual significance for the resistance.

The number 45 was already symbolic because **John Wilkes**, a radical Londoner sympathetic to the American cause, had been jailed for publishing an essay entitled *The North Briton*, No. 45. In Boston, the silversmith Paul Revere made a punchbowl weighing 45 ounces that held 45 gills (half-cups). Charleston's tradesmen decorated a tree with 45 lights, set off 45 rockets, and carrying 45 candles, adjourned to a tavern where 45 tables were set with 45 bowls of wine, 45 bowls of punch, and 92 glasses.

Such public rituals taught illiterate Americans about the reasons for resistance. When Boston's revived Sons of Liberty invited hundreds of residents to dine with them each August 14 to commemorate the first Stamp Act demonstration, crowds gathered. Likewise, the public singing of songs supporting the American cause helped spread the word.

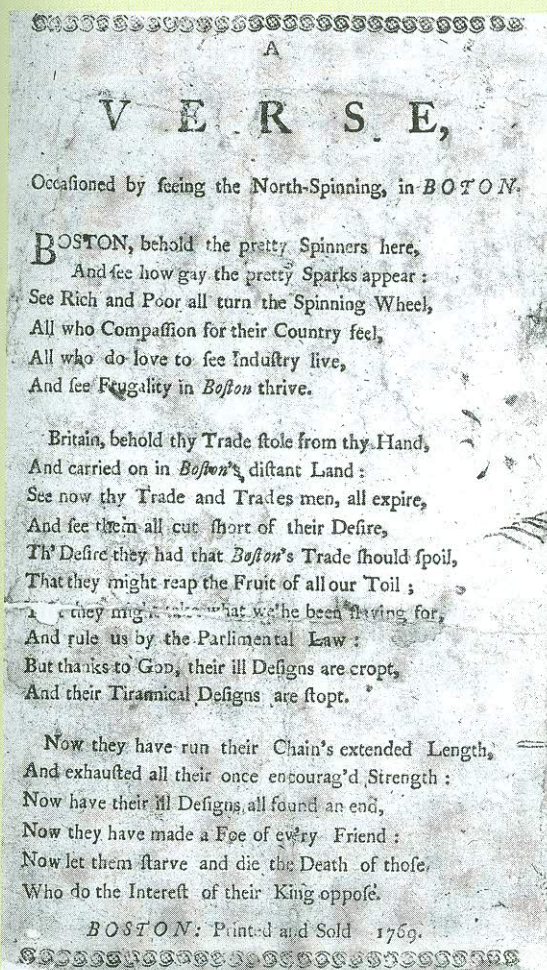
John Wilkes: British opponent of King George III who became a hero to American colonists.

Visualizing the Past

The Revolutionary Symbolism of Female Spinners

By the 1760s, middling and well-to-do urban colonists purchased fabric and ordered clothing from tailors and dressmakers. Only the poorer residents of rural America continued to spin wool or flax into yarn, then wove that yarn into cloth and made their own wearing apparel. Urban dwellers, accustomed for decades to following the latest English fashions, had long looked

down on rustics who wore homespun—and yet the ability to spin was still seen as a quintessentially feminine occupation, with many young girls being taught that skill. One wealthy Philadelphia poet wrote that working at her wheel reminded her of “a train of Female Hands/ Cheerful uniting in Industrious Bands.” And so when colonists joined to boycott British goods, one of the key ways in which women could publicize their support for American resistance was to bring their wheels to a public location. What message does the poem convey about the spinners’ aims and impact? What was the importance of women undertaking in public a task usually performed in their own homes, if at all?



A Boston poet in 1769 produced this broadside verse to praise spinners who had gathered in the North End of the City



An eighteenth-century American flax wheel of the sort that would have been used in a public spinning demonstration. Wheels for spinning wool were too large to move easily.

The Sons of Liberty and other American leaders made a deliberate effort to involve ordinary folk in the campaign against the Townshend duties. Most important, they urged colonists of all ranks and both sexes to sign agreements not to purchase or consume British products. The new consumerism that had linked colonists economically now supplied them with a ready method of displaying their allegiance.

Daughters of Liberty As the primary purchasers of textiles and household goods, women played a central role in the nonconsumption movement. More than three hundred Boston matrons publicly promised not to buy or drink tea, “Sickness excepted.” As Janet Schaw later noted, the women of Wilmington, North Carolina, burned their tea after walking through town in a solemn procession. Women exchanged recipes for tea substitutes or drank coffee instead. The best known of the protests, the so-called Edenton Ladies Tea Party, was actually a meeting of prominent North Carolina women who pledged to work for the public good and support resistance to British measures.

In many towns, young women calling themselves Daughters of Liberty met to spin in public squares to persuade other women to make homespun and wear homespun clothing, thereby ending the colonies’ dependence on British cloth. These patriotic displays served the same purpose as male rituals involving the numbers 45 and 92. When young ladies from well-to-do families sat outdoors at spinning wheels all day, eating only American food, drinking local herbal tea, and listening to patriotic sermons, they served as political instructors, a role they proudly accepted.

Divided Opinion over Boycotts Colonists were by no means united in support of nonimportation and nonconsumption. Resistance to the Townshend Acts exposed new splits in American ranks.

The most significant rifts divided urban artisans and merchants, allies in 1765.

The Stamp Act boycotts had helped revive a depressed economy by creating demand for local products and reducing merchants’ inventories. But in 1768 and 1769, merchants enjoyed boom times and had no incentive to support boycotts. Artisans supported nonimportation enthusiastically, recognizing that the absence of British goods would create a market for their manufactures. Thus tradesmen formed the core of the crowds that coerced importers and their customers by picketing stores, publicizing offenders’ names, and sometimes destroying property.

Such tactics were effective: colonial imports from England dropped dramatically in 1769, especially in New York, New England, and Pennsylvania. But the tactics also aroused heated opposition. Some Americans who supported resistance questioned the use of violence to force others to join the boycott. The threat to private property inherent in the campaign frightened wealthier and more conservative men and women. Political activism by ordinary colonists challenged the ruling elite’s domination, as many had feared in 1765.

Disclosures that leading merchants had violated the nonimportation agreement caused dissension in the ranks of the boycotters, so Americans were relieved when news arrived in April 1770 that the Townshend duties had been repealed, except for the tea tax. A new prime minister, Lord North, persuaded Parliament that duties on trade within the empire were ill-advised. The other Townshend Acts remained in force, but provisions for paying officials’ salaries and tightening customs enforcement appeared less objectionable.

Confrontations in Boston

On the day Lord North proposed repeal of the Townshend duties, a confrontation between civilians and soldiers in Boston led to five Americans' deaths. The decision to base the American Board of Customs Commissioners in Boston ultimately caused the confrontation.

Mobs targeted the customs commissioners from their arrival in November 1767. In June 1768, their seizure of patriot leader John Hancock's sloop *Liberty* on suspicion of smuggling caused a riot in which customs officers' property was destroyed. The ministry brought in troops to maintain order. The assignment of two regiments to their city confirmed Bostonians' worst fears about the oppressive potential of British power. Guards on Boston Neck, the entrance to the city, checked travelers and their goods. Redcoat patrols roamed the city, questioning and

How did Samuel Adams's Committees of Correspondence mark a turning point in Americans' political thinking?



Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Shortly after the Boston Massacre, Paul Revere printed this illustration of the confrontation near the customs house on March 5, 1770. Offering visual support for the patriots' version of events, it showed the British soldiers firing on an unresisting crowd (instead of the aggressive mob described at the soldiers' trial) and—even worse—a gun firing from the building itself, which has been labeled "Butchers Hall."

sometimes harassing passersby. Parents feared for the safety of daughters, who were subjected to soldiers' coarse sexual insults. Additionally, many redcoats sought off-duty employment, competing for unskilled jobs with the city's workingmen. The two groups brawled repeatedly in taverns and on the streets.

Boston Massacre:

Confrontation between colonists and British troops in which five colonists were shot and killed.



[Link to accounts from the Boston Massacre trial.](#)

Boston Massacre

On the evening of March 5, 1770, a crowd of laborers threw snowballs at soldiers guarding the Customs House. Against orders, the sentries fired on the crowd, killing four and wounding eight, one of whom died a few days later. Reportedly the first to die was Crispus Attucks, a sailor of mixed Nipmuck and African origins. Resistance leaders idealized Attucks and the other dead rioters as martyrs for liberty, holding a solemn funeral and later commemorating March 5 annually.

Despite the political benefits patriots derived from the massacre, they probably did not approve the crowd action that provoked it. Since the destruction of Hutchinson's house in August 1765, men allied with the Sons of Liberty had supported orderly demonstrations. Thus, when the soldiers were tried in November, John Adams and Josiah Quincy Jr., both unwavering patriots, acted as their defense attorneys. Almost all were acquitted, and the two men convicted were released after being branded on the thumb. Undoubtedly, this favorable outcome persuaded London officials not to retaliate against the city.

A British Plot?

For more than two years after the Boston Massacre, a superficial calm emerged. In June 1772, Rhode Islanders, angry with overzealous customs enforcement by the British naval schooner *Gaspée*, attacked and burned it in Narragansett Bay near Providence. Because the perpetrators were never identified, there were no adverse consequences for colonists. The most outspoken newspapers, such as the *Boston Gazette*, the *Pennsylvania Journal*, and the *South Carolina Gazette*, published essays drawing on Real Whig ideology and accusing Great Britain of scheming to oppress the colonies. After the Stamp Act's repeal, the protest leaders praised Parliament; following repeal of the Townshend duties, they warned of impending tyranny. The single ill-chosen stamp tax now seemed part of a plot against American liberties. Essayists pointed to the stationing of troops in Boston and the growing number of vice-admiralty courts as evidence of plans to enslave the colonists. Indeed, patriot writers repeatedly used the word *enslavement*. Most free colonists had direct knowledge of slavery, and the threat of enslavement by Britain must have had peculiar force.

Although some colonists were increasingly convinced that they should seek freedom from parliamentary authority, they continued to acknowledge their British identity and allegiance to George III. They began to envision a system that would enable them to be ruled by their own elected legislatures while remaining subordinate to the king. But any such scheme violated Britons' conception of their government, which posited that Parliament—which they believed encompassed the king as well as lords and commons—wielded sole, undivided sovereignty over the empire. Then, in fall 1772, the North ministry began to implement the Townshend Act that would pay governors and judges from customs revenues. In early November, voters at a Boston town meeting established a **Committee of Correspondence** to publicize the decision by exchanging letters with other Massachusetts towns. Heading the committee was Samuel Adams.

Committees of

Correspondence: Local committees established throughout colonies to coordinate anti-British actions.

Samuel Adams and Committees of Correspondence

Fifty-one in 1772, Samuel Adams was about a decade older than the other American resistance leaders. He had been a Boston tax collector, a member and clerk of the Massachusetts assembly, an ally of the Loyal Nine, and one of the Sons of Liberty. Adams drew a sharp contrast between a corrupt, vice-ridden Britain and the colonies, peopled by simple, liberty-loving folk. An experienced political organizer, Adams's Committee of Correspondence sought to create an informed consensus among the residents of Massachusetts.

Until 1772, the protest movement was confined largely to the seacoast and major cities and towns. Adams wanted to widen the movement's geographic scope. Accordingly, the Boston town meeting directed the Committee of Correspondence "to state the Rights of the Colonists and of this Province in particular;" to list "the Infringements and Violations thereof that have been, or from time to time may be made;" and to send copies to other towns.

The statement of colonial rights declared that Americans had absolute rights to life, liberty, and property. The idea that "a British house of commons, should have a right, at pleasure, to give and grant the property of the colonists" was "irreconcilable" with "the first principles of natural law and Justice . . . and of the British Constitution." They complained of taxation without representation, the presence of unnecessary troops and customs officers on American soil, the use of imperial revenues to pay colonial officials, and the expanded jurisdiction of vice-admiralty courts.

The document, which was printed as a pamphlet for distribution to the towns, exhibited none of the hesitation of 1760s' claims against Parliament. No longer were resistance leaders—at least in Boston—preoccupied with defining the limits of parliamentary authority, nor did they mention the necessity of obedience to Parliament. They placed American rights first, loyalty to Great Britain a distant second.

The towns' response to the pamphlet must have thrilled Samuel Adams. While some towns disagreed with Boston's assessment, most aligned with the city. The town of Holden declared that "the People of New England have never given the People of Britain any Right of Jurisdiction over us." The citizens of Petersham commented that resistance to tyranny was "the first and highest social Duty of this people." Beliefs like these made the next crisis in Anglo-American affairs the last.

Tea and Turmoil

The tea tax was the only Townshend duty still in effect by 1773. After 1770, some Americans continued to boycott English tea; others resumed drinking it. Tea figured prominently in the colonists' diet and social lives, so the boycott meant forgoing a favorite beverage and altering habitual forms of socializing.

Reactions to the Tea Act

In May 1773, Parliament passed the **Tea Act** to save the East India Company from bankruptcy. The company, which held a monopoly on British trade with the East Indies, was important to the British economy and to the prominent British politicians who invested in its stock. Under the act, only the East India Company's agents

How did the Tea Act push the country to the brink of revolution?

Tea Act: England's attempt to bail out East India Company that heightened tensions between the British and the colonies.

could legally sell tea in America. That enabled the company to avoid intermediaries and to price its tea competitively with that of smugglers. Resistance leaders, however, interpreted the measure as designed to make them admit Parliament's right to tax them, for the less expensive tea would still be taxed under the Townshend law. Others saw the Tea Act as the first step in an East India Company monopoly on all colonial trade. Residents of the four cities to receive the first tea shipments prepared to meet this perceived threat to their freedom.

In New York City, tea ships never arrived. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's governor persuaded the captain to return to Britain. In Charleston, the tea was unloaded; some was destroyed, the rest sold in 1776 by the new state government. The only confrontation occurred in Boston, where both sides—the town meeting and Governor Thomas Hutchinson, two of whose sons were tea agents—rejected compromise.

The first of three tea ships, the *Dartmouth*, entered Boston harbor on November 28. Customs laws required cargo to be landed and the duty paid within twenty days of a ship's arrival; otherwise, the cargo would be seized and sold at auction. After several mass meetings, Bostonians voted to post guards on the wharf to prevent the tea from being unloaded. Hutchinson refused to permit the vessels to leave the harbor.

On December 16, one day before the cargo would have been confiscated, more than five thousand people (nearly a third of the city's population) crowded into Old South Church. Chaired by Samuel Adams, the meeting hoped to convince Hutchinson to send the tea back. But he refused. In the early evening, Adams reportedly announced "that he could think of nothing further to be done—that they had now done all they could for the Salvation of their Country." Cries then rang out from the crowd: "Boston harbor a tea-pot tonight!" Within minutes, about sixty men crudely disguised as Indians assembled at the wharf, boarded the ships, and dumped the cargo into the harbor. By 9 P.M., 342 chests of tea worth approximately £10,000 floated on the water.

Among the "Indians" were many Boston artisans, including the silversmith Paul Revere. Five masons, eleven carpenters and builders, three leatherworkers, a blacksmith, two barbers, a coachmaker, a shoemaker, and twelve apprentices have been identified as participants. That their ranks also included four farmers from outside Boston, ten merchants, two doctors, a teacher, and a bookseller illustrated the resistance movement's widespread support.

Coercive (Intolerable) Acts: A series of restrictive laws comprised of the Boston Port Bill, the Massachusetts Government Act, the Justice Act, the Quartering Act, plus the unrelated Quebec Act. Intended by the British Parliament to primarily punish Massachusetts, the acts instead pushed most colonies to the brink of rebellion.

Coercive and Quebec Acts

Responding to the tea party, in March 1774, Parliament adopted the first of four laws that became known as the **Coercive, or Intolerable, Acts**. Parliament ordered Boston's

port closed until the tea was paid for, prohibiting all but coastal trade in food and firewood. Later in the spring, Parliament passed three other punitive measures. The Massachusetts Government Act altered the province's charter, substituting an appointed council for the elected one, increasing the governor's powers, and forbidding most town meetings. The Justice Act provided that a person accused of committing murder while suppressing a riot or enforcing the laws could be tried outside the colony. Finally, the Quartering Act allowed military officers to commandeer privately owned buildings to house their troops.



Legacy for a People and a Nation

Women's Political Activism

In the twenty-first century, female citizens of the United States participate at every level of American public life. Nancy Pelosi was elected Speaker of the House, third in line for the presidency, in January 2007; Hillary Rodham Clinton ran for president in 2008 and became Secretary of State in 2009; and Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan joined the Supreme Court as its second and third current female members in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Nearly one hundred women sit in the House and Senate; many serve in state offices. But before the 1760s, American women were seen as having no appropriate public role. A male essayist expressed the consensus in the mid-1730s: "the Governing Kingdoms and Ruling Provinces are Things too difficult and knotty for the fair Sex, it will render them grave and serious, and take off those agreeable Smiles that should always accompany them."

That changed when colonists resisted new British taxes and laws in the 1760s. Because women made household purchasing decisions, and because with spinning and cloth manufacture their labor could replace imported clothing, their participation was vital. For the first time in American history, women took political stands, deciding whether to boycott British goods. The groups they established to promote home manufactures—dubbed "Daughters of Liberty"—constituted the first American women's political organizations.

Since then, American women have taken part in many political movements, among them antislavery societies, pro- and anti-woman suffrage organizations, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the civil rights movement. The legacy of revolutionary-era women continues today. Contemporary Americans would find it impossible to imagine their country without female activists of all affiliations.

Parliament then turned to reforming Quebec's government. Intended to ease strains emerging since the British conquest of the formerly French colony, the Quebec Act granted greater religious freedom to Catholics—alarming Protestant colonists, who equated Roman Catholicism with despotism. It also reinstated French civil law, which had been replaced by British procedures in 1763, and it established an appointed council (rather than an elected legislature). Finally, to protect northern Indians against Anglo-American settlement, the act annexed to Quebec the area west of the Appalachians, east of the Mississippi River, and north of the Ohio River—thereby removing the region from the jurisdiction of seacoast colonies. Wealthy colonists who hoped to develop the Ohio country now faced the prospect of dealing with officials in Quebec.

Members of Parliament who voted for the punitive legislation believed they had solved the problem posed by the troublesome Americans. But to resistance leaders, the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act proved what they had feared since 1768: that Britain had planned to oppress them.

The Boston Committee of Correspondence urged all colonies to join an immediate boycott of British goods. But Rhode Island, Virginia, and Pennsylvania suggested convening another intercolonial congress to consider an appropriate response, and in mid-June 1774 Massachusetts acquiesced. Even the most ardent patriots hoped for reconciliation. Americans were approaching confrontation but had yet to reach an irrevocable break. So the colonies agreed to send delegates to Philadelphia in September to a Continental Congress.

Summary

At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in western Pennsylvania, no one could have predicted such dramatic change in Britain's mainland colonies. Yet that conflict simultaneously removed France from North America and created a huge debt that Britain had to repay, developments with major implications for the imperial relationship.

After the war ended in 1763, the number of colonists who defined themselves as political actors increased substantially. Once linked unquestioningly to Great Britain, they began to develop an American identity. Their concept of the political process differed from that of the mother country, and they held a different definition of what constituted representation and consent to government actions. They also came to understand that their economic interests did not necessarily coincide with those of Great Britain. Parliamentary acts such as the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts elicited colonial responses that produced further responses from Britain. Tensions escalated and climaxed when Bostonians destroyed the East India Company's tea.

In late summer 1774, Americans were committed to resistance but not independence. During the next decade, they would forge a new American nationality.

Chapter Review

Renewed Warfare Among Europeans and Indians

What was at stake in the Seven Years' War?

The Seven Years' War was ultimately a contest over land between the British, French, Native Americans, and some settlers. All parties vied for control of large tracts of western land. The Iroquois, believing themselves the voice of the Delawares and Shawnees, negotiated to cede the land to Pennsylvania; the two tribes then moved west onto land claimed by Virginia and Pennsylvania, while France sought to hold and expand its possessions along the Ohio River, which it relied on for trade. After battling with Indians, France continued to push southward in its land grabbing, and Anglo-American colonists gathered in Albany, New York, to address the French threat. England declared war in 1756 and, after winning the protracted battle, the issue of land between European nations was settled when France ceded most of its North American territories to Britain.

1763: A Turning Point

How did colonists' ideas about government differ from those of the British in the 1760s?

British authorities believed that Parliament—which included the king, lords, and Commons—represented *all* British subjects regardless of where they lived. In this system of virtual representation, the people's consent to Parliament's actions was assumed. Americans, on the other hand, increasingly believed in direct representation, that they could only be represented by men who lived nearby and whom they elected. Moreover, they understood the lower houses as representing the regions that elected them. Living on the other side of the ocean, colonists were also accustomed to a central government with limited authority and embraced the Real Whig notion that good government was one that left them alone to manage their affairs. As England imposed taxes and greater control over the colonies beginning in 1763, many Americans felt their freedom was endangered and questioned whether authority should lie with the monarchy or the people.

The Stamp Act Crisis

How did the Stamp Act raise issues that would lead to the American Revolution?

Angry about the heavy taxes and questioning Britain's right to impose them, colonists began to wonder how they might resist Parliament yet remain British subjects. At issue for essayists such as James Otis was that as British subjects, they possessed the right to consent to taxation—which had not been granted under the Stamp Act. On the other hand, Parliament was a supreme authority to which they must yield. Other leaders, such as Patrick Henry and the Virginia House of Burgesses, were unwilling to relinquish the right to consent to taxation. For ten years, Americans struggled with how to control their internal affairs yet remain under British rule. Protests led to the act's repeal in 1766, but questions about government nonetheless remained.

Resistance to the Townshend Acts

How did the Sons of Liberty politicize ordinary Americans during resistance to the Townshend Acts?

Ordinary Americans were not accustomed to being involved in political affairs, which they understood as handled by elites. But the Sons of Liberty made a conscious effort to draw people from all ranks into their anti-Townshend campaign, partly because they needed widespread participation for their boycott of British products designed in protest to the act. To rally a wider populace, they created rituals that would teach illiterate Americans about the reasons for resistance, including celebrations commemorating previous demonstrations and political songs. Women helped, too, by spinning yarn outdoors in public, symbolically displaying their patriotism for all to see.

Confrontations in Boston

How did Samuel Adams's Committees of Correspondence mark a turning point in Americans' political thinking?

An original member of the Sons of Liberty, Adams wanted to widen the movement's scope beyond its stronghold in New England cities and seacoast towns and create consensus among Massachusetts residents for the cause of liberty. The pamphlet he produced for the Boston Committee of Correspondence in 1772 was widely distributed. It stated the rights of colonists to life, liberty, and property, and it outlined complaints against England for taxation without representation, unnecessary troops and customs officers on American soil, the use of imperial revenues to pay colonial officials, and the expanded jurisdiction of vice-admiralty courts. Far more radical than earlier documents, this one did not seek to define the limits of Parliamentary authority but instead declared colonists' allegiance to America first and England a distant second.

Tea and Turmoil

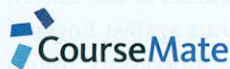
How did the Tea Act push the country to the brink of revolution?

When Parliament imposed the Tea Act on the colonies in May 1773, it was attempting to save the East India Company from bankruptcy, but colonists thought it was designed to make them admit Parliament's right to tax them. Citizens in several cities wanted to prevent the tea from being unloaded from ships; in Boston, that led to a protest in which the tea was dumped in the harbor by men dressed as Indians. Parliament responded with punitive laws, known as the Coercive or Intolerable Acts, ordering the city to pay for the tea and closing the port until it did. Other acts reorganized the state's government, banned town meetings, and allowed officers to commandeer private buildings to house troops. Colonists saw such measures as proof that Britain would oppress them and sent delegates to a Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1774 to decide how to respond.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (2008)



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