

# Timeline of Major Events Leading to the American Revolution

## 1763

**The Proclamation Act of 1763.** Now that the French threat was removed from North America, American settlers wanted to occupy the land to the west that had been defended by the French and their Indian allies. The British government, overdrawn and tired at the end of seven years of war, desired to avoid the additional financial burdens of protecting western settlers from the Native Americans who would defend against their encroachments. To avoid the confrontation, expense, and bother, King George declared there was to be no settlement without permission west of the Appalachian Mountains. The act was unenforceable and was not effective in halting American westward expansion. Farmers and speculators continued to demand access to the land.

## 1764

**Sugar Act.** Parliament, desiring revenue from its North American colonies, passed the first law specifically aimed at raising colonial money for the Crown. The act increased duties on non-British goods shipped to the colonies.

**Currency Act.** This act prohibited American colonies from issuing their own currency, angering many American colonists.

**Beginnings of Colonial Opposition.** American colonists responded to the Sugar Act and the Currency Act with protest. In Massachusetts, participants in a town meeting cried out against taxation without proper representation in Parliament, and suggested some form of united protest throughout the colonies. By the end of the year, many colonies were practicing nonimportation, a refusal to use imported English goods.

## 1765

**Quartering Act.** The British further angered American colonists with the Quartering Act, which required the colonies to provide barracks and supplies to British troops.

**Stamp Act.** Parliament's first direct tax on the American colonies, this act, like those passed in 1764, was enacted to raise money for Britain. It taxed newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, broadsides, legal documents, dice, and playing cards. Issued by Britain, the stamps were affixed to documents or packages to show that the tax had been paid.

**Organized Colonial Protest.** American colonists responded to Parliament's acts with organized protest. Throughout the colonies, a network of secret organizations known as the Sons of Liberty was created, aimed at intimidating the stamp agents who collected Parliament's taxes. Before the Stamp Act could even take effect, all the appointed stamp agents in the colonies had resigned. The Massachusetts Assembly suggested a meeting of all the colonies to work for the repeal of the Stamp Act. All but four colonies were represented. The Stamp Act Congress passed a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances," which claimed that American colonists were equal to all other British citizens, protested taxation without representation, and stated that, without colonial representation in Parliament, Parliament could not tax colonists. In addition, the colonists increased their nonimportation efforts.

## 1766

**Repeal of the Stamp Act.** Although some in Parliament thought the army should be used to enforce the Stamp Act (1765), others commended the colonists for resisting a tax passed by a legislative body in which they were not represented. The act was repealed, and the colonies abandoned their ban on imported British goods.

**Declaratory Act.** The repeal of the Stamp Act did not mean that Great Britain was surrendering any control over its colonies. The Declaratory Act, passed by Parliament on the same day the Stamp Act was repealed, stated that Parliament could make laws binding the American colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

**Resistance to the Quartering Act in New York.** New York served as headquarters for British troops in America, so the Quartering Act (1765) had a great impact on New York City. When the New York Assembly refused to assist in quartering troops, a skirmish occurred in which one colonist

was wounded. Parliament suspended the Assembly's powers but never carried out the suspension, since the Assembly soon agreed to contribute money toward the quartering of troops.

## 1767

**Townshend Acts.** To help pay the expenses involved in governing the American colonies, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which initiated taxes on glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea.

**Nonimportation.** In response to new taxes, the colonies again decided to discourage the purchase of British imports.

### "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies."

Originally published in a newspaper, this widely reproduced pamphlet by John Dickinson declared that Parliament could not tax the colonies, called the Townshend Acts unconstitutional, and denounced the suspension of the New York Assembly as a threat to colonial liberties.

## 1768

**Massachusetts Circular Letter.** Samuel Adams wrote a statement, approved by the Massachusetts House of Representatives, which attacked Parliament's persistence in taxing the colonies without proper representation, and which called for unified resistance by all the colonies. Many colonies issued similar statements. In response, the British governor of Massachusetts dissolved the state's legislature. **British Troops Arrive in Boston.** Although the Sons of Liberty threatened armed resistance to arriving British troops, none was offered when the troops stationed themselves in Boston.

## 1769

**Virginia's Resolutions.** The Virginia House of Burgesses passed resolutions condemning Britain's actions against Massachusetts, and stating that only Virginia's governor and legislature could tax its citizens. The members also drafted a formal letter to the King, completing it just before the legislature was dissolved by Virginia's royal governor.

## 1770

**Townshend Acts Cut Back.** Because of the reduced profits resulting from the colonial boycott of imported British goods, Parliament withdrew all of the Townshend Act (1767) taxes except for the tax on tea.

**An End to Nonimportation.** In response to Parliament's relaxation of its taxation laws, the colonies relaxed their boycott of British imported goods (1767).

**Conflict between Citizens and British Troops in New York.** After a leading New York Son of Liberty issued a broadside attacking the New York Assembly for complying with the Quartering Act (1765), a riot erupted between citizens and soldiers, resulting in serious wounds but no fatalities.

**Boston Massacre.** The arrival of troops in Boston provoked conflict between citizens and soldiers. On March 5, a group of soldiers surrounded by an unfriendly crowd opened fire, killing three Americans and fatally wounding two more. A violent uprising was avoided only with the withdrawal of the troops to islands in the harbor. The soldiers were tried for murder, but convicted only of lesser crimes; noted patriot John Adams was their principal lawyer.

## 1772

**Attack on the "Gaspee."** After several boatloads of men attacked a grounded British customs schooner near Providence, Rhode Island, the royal governor offered a reward for the discovery of the men, planning to send them to England for trial. The removal of the "Gaspee" trial to England outraged American colonists.

**Committees of Correspondence.** Samuel Adams called for a Boston town meeting to create committees of correspondence to communicate Boston's position to the other colonies. Similar committees were soon created throughout the colonies.

## 1773

**Tea Act.** By reducing the tax on imported British tea, this act gave British merchants an unfair advantage in selling their tea in America. American colonists condemned the act, and many planned to boycott tea.

**Boston Tea Party.** When British tea ships arrived in Boston harbor, many citizens wanted the tea sent back to England without the payment of any taxes. The royal governor insisted on payment of all taxes. On December 16, a group of men disguised as Indians boarded the ships and dumped all the tea in the harbor.

## 1774

**Coercive Acts.** In response to the Boston Tea Party, Parliament passed several acts to punish Massachusetts. The Boston Port Bill banned the loading or unloading of any ships in Boston harbor. The Administration of Justice Act offered protection to royal officials in Massachusetts, allowing them to transfer to England all court cases against them involving riot suppression or revenue collection. The Massachusetts Government Act put the election of most government officials under the control of the Crown, essentially eliminating the Massachusetts charter of government.

**Quartering Act.** Parliament broadened its previous Quartering Act (1765). British troops could now be quartered in any occupied dwelling.

**The Colonies Organize Protest.** To protest Britain's actions, Massachusetts suggested a return to nonimportation, but several states preferred a congress of all the colonies to discuss united resistance. The colonies soon named delegates to a congress -- the First Continental Congress -- to meet in Philadelphia on September 5.

**The First Continental Congress.** Twelve of the thirteen colonies sent a total of fifty-six delegates to the First Continental Congress. Only Georgia was not represented. One accomplishment of the Congress was the Association of 1774, which urged all colonists to avoid using British goods, and to form committees to enforce this ban.

**New England Prepares for War.** British troops began to fortify Boston, and seized ammunition belonging to the colony of Massachusetts. Thousands of American militiamen were ready to resist, but no fighting occurred. Massachusetts created a Provincial Congress, and a special Committee of Safety to decide when the militia should be called into action. Special groups of militia, known as Minute Men, were organized to be ready for instant action.

## 1775

**New England Restraining Act.** Parliament passed an act banning trade between the New England colonies and any other country besides Great Britain.

**New England Resists.** British troops continued to attempt to seize colonial ammunition, but were turned back in Massachusetts, without any violence. Royal authorities decided that force should be used to enforce recent acts of Parliament; war seemed unavoidable.

**Lexington and Concord.** British troops planned to destroy American ammunition at Concord. When the Boston Committee of Safety learned of this plan, it sent Paul Revere and William Dawes to alert the countryside and gather the Minute Men. On April 19, Minute Men and British troops met at Lexington, where a shot from a stray British gun led to more British firing. The Americans only fired a few shots; several Americans were killed. The British marched on to Concord and destroyed some ammunition, but soon found the countryside swarming with militia. At the end of the day, many were dead on both sides.

**The Second Continental Congress.** The Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia on May 10. John Hancock was elected president of Congress.

**George Washington is named commander-in-chief.** On June 10, John Adams proposed that Congress consider the forces in Boston a Continental army, and suggested the need for a general. He recommended George Washington for the position. Congress began to raise men from other colonies to join the army in New England, and named a committee to draft military rules. On June 15, Washington was nominated to lead the army; he accepted the next day. To pay for the army, Congress issued bills of credit, and the twelve colonies represented in the Congress promised to share in repaying the bills.

**Bunker Hill.** On June 12, British General Gage put martial law in effect, and stated that any person helping the Americans would be considered a traitor and rebel. When Americans began to fortify a hill against British forces, British ships in the harbor discovered the activity and opened fire. British troops -- 2,400 in number -- arrived shortly after. Although the Americans -- 1,000 in number -- resisted several attacks, eventually they lost the fortification.

**Olive Branch Petition.** Congress issued a petition declaring its loyalty to the king, George III, and stating its hope that he would help arrange a reconciliation and prevent further hostilities against the colonies. Four months later, King George III rejected the petition and declared the colonies in rebellion.

**Congress Treats with the Indians.** Acting as an independent government, Congress appointed commissioners to create peace treaties with the Indians.

**Congress Creates a Navy.** Congress began to plan for aggressive action against British ships stocked with ammunition. It authorized the building of four armed ships, and began to formulate rules for a navy. On December 22, Congress named Esek Hopkins commodore of the fledgling American navy. Soon after, Congress authorized privateering, and issued rules for dealing with enemy vessels and plunder.

**Congress Searches for Foreign Aid.** When a congressional committee began to investigate the possibility of foreign aid in the war against Great Britain, France expressed interest.

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