

# Chapter Seven:

## The Road To Revolution, 1754-1775

### Contents

<b>7.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>289</b>
7.1.1 Learning Outcomes .....	289
<b>7.2 THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR (1754-63)</b> .....	<b>291</b>
7.2.1 Pontiac's War (1763-64) .....	294
7.2.2 Before You Move On... ..	295
Key Concepts .....	295
Test Yourself .....	296
<b>7.3 THE END OF THE SEVEN YEARS WAR AND WORSENING RELATIONS, 1763-1772</b>	<b>296</b>
7.3.1 The French and Indian War and the End of Salutary Neglect .....	297
7.3.2 The Proclamation of 1763 .....	298
7.3.3 The Implications of the New British Approach: The Parliamentary Acts of 1764 ....	299
7.3.4 The Stamp Act of 1765 .....	300
The Stamp Act Riots and Congress .....	301
The Colonies Apply Economic Pressure .....	303
7.3.5 The Townshend Duties: External Taxes to Regulate Trade .....	304
7.3.6 Trouble Continues to Brew: The Boston Massacre .....	305
7.3.7 The Evolution of a Formal Theory of Revolt .....	306
7.3.8 Before You Move On... ..	307
Key Concepts .....	307
Test Yourself .....	307
<b>7.4 THE DOWNWARD SLIDE TO REVOLUTION, 1772-1775</b> .....	<b>308</b>
7.4.1 The Tea Act and Party of 1773 .....	309
7.4.2 The First Continental Congress, 1774 .....	311
7.4.3 Lexington and Concord, April 19, 1775 .....	313
7.4.4 Before You Move On... ..	318
Key Concepts .....	318
Test Yourself .....	318
<b>7.5 CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>320</b>
<b>7.6 CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES</b> .....	<b>321</b>
<b>7.7 KEY TERMS</b> .....	<b>322</b>
<b>7.8 CHRONOLOGY</b> .....	<b>323</b>
<b>7.9 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>324</b>
<b>7.10 END NOTES</b> .....	<b>325</b>
<b>ANSWER KEY FOR CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION, 1754-1775 ....</b>	<b>327</b>

## Chapter Seven: The Road To Revolution

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Americans became embroiled in a series of wars that were also fought on the European continent. King William's War, Queen Anne's War, and King George's War originated in Europe; the French and Indian War, on the other hand, began in the colonies two years before it "spread" to Europe and became known as the Seven Years' War. During most of the eighteenth century before 1763, the British had followed a policy that William Pitt nicknamed "salutary neglect." This theory was based on the notion that if the colonies were left alone to pursue their own economic interests, they would prosper and thereby ultimately benefit the mother country. This approach to colonial management ended in 1763 with the conclusion of the French and Indian War. Determined to make the colonies defray part of the expenses of the war and of their own domestic needs following the war, the Parliament enacted a series of measures designed, in the words of the colonists, to "raise a revenue." Colonial opposition to these policies became strident between 1763 and 1775, and the rallying cry "no taxation without representation" underscored the differences in the way the colonies and the mother country looked at taxation, regulation, and control.

The climax of the protests came in 1773 as tea from the East India Tea Company was dumped into the harbors of ports along the eastern seaboard. The British reacted with the "Intolerable" Acts, to which the colonies responded in spring, 1774, by sending a list of grievances to the king and Parliament. Matters were made worse when George III came to the conclusion late in the year that "blows must be exchanged to determine whether [the American colonies] are to be subject to this country or independent."

In May, 1775, a month after the firings at Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress convened to consider the response of George III to the petition submitted in spring, 1774, and ultimately to oversee the war. It would be in session until replaced by the Confederation Congress, which assembled in 1781.

#### 7.1.1 Learning Outcomes

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Analyze the evolution of British colonial policy towards the North American colonies from the end of the French and Indian War, 1763, to the firing at Lexington and Concord.

- Define salutary neglect and explain why the British abandoned this policy following the French and Indian War.
- Evaluate the impact of the French and Indian War on the British colonies and the Indians.
- Identify the important people and groups involved in the colonial protests leading up to the Revolution.
- Identify the significant Parliamentary acts passed in the years following the French and Indian War.
- Explain the various instances of inter-colonial cooperation in the years between 1763 and 1776, including the Committees of Correspondence, the Stamp Act Congress, the Continental Congresses, and the boycotts of British goods.
- Recognize that people living in Great Britain and in Colonial America saw the conflicts of the times very differently.

## 7.2 THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR (1754-63)

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was a time of warfare in the colonies and in Europe. Over the period, the British, French, and Spanish empires in North America clashed and vied for control of the continent. Each of the colonial powers engaged in a series of shifting alliances with native peoples, who participated in the colonial wars in order to ensure or bolster their own regional economic or political power. Much of the fighting in King William's, Queen Anne's, and King George's Wars had taken place at the periphery of the colonial borders, in Acadia and Spanish Florida. The next and greatest of these wars, the French and Indian War, emerged along the colonial boundaries in modern-day Pennsylvania. Unlike the previous colonial wars, which began in Europe and spread to the colonies, this war began in the colonies and spread to Europe and beyond. The name French and Indian War refers only to the engagement in North America; the greater global war is referred to as the Seven Years' War.

The French and Indian War arose from border tensions when Virginians crossed the Allegheny Mountains into the Ohio River Valley, an area claimed by both the British and the French. The French responded to this



**Figure 7.1 George Washington** | Washington wearing his French and Indian War colonel's uniform of the Virginia Regiment. This is the earliest authenticated portrait of Washington and appears in Woodrow Wilson's book *George Washington*.

**Artist:** Charles Willson Peale  
**Source:** *George Washington*

incursion by building a series of forts in western Pennsylvania. Tensions intensified as both sides tried to strengthen their hold on the region through increased presence and thwarted attempts to force the other power to leave the region. Militia leader George Washington was one of the prominent British officers in these actions.

In 1752, Washington was sent by Virginia lieutenant governor Robert Dinwiddie to negotiate a French removal from the area. Not surprisingly, the French refused to leave and asserted that the French claim to the region was stronger than England's. In the aftermath of the failed negotiations, both sides decided to focus their efforts on the convergence of the Monongahela, Allegheny, and Ohio Rivers, the site of modern-day Pittsburgh. In 1754, Washington, his regiment of

Virginians, and a small group of Mingo warriors, were charged to build a fort at the site. They arrived at the convergence of the rivers to find that the French had already constructed their own fort at this location. Washington and his men fell back and made camp; the next morning, they ambushed a small party of Frenchmen, killing many of them. The Battle of Jumonville Glen, named for French commander Joseph Coulon de Villers de Jumonville, was the first engagement of the French and Indian War. Although a British victory, overall, it was a completely botched mission that embarrassed Washington and damaged his reputation. To this day, historians do not know with any certainty what exactly happened at the Battle of Jumonville Glen. There is documentary evidence for two different accounts of the pivotal event of the day: the death of French commander Jumonville. Some sources assert that Washington effectively lost control of his Indian allies. After a ceasefire had been called, the leader of the Mingos split open Jumonville's skull, scalping him in what some historians have called a ritual slaying. Several sources assert that after this, the Mingo set about killing and scalping many of the wounded Frenchmen, to the horror of Washington. Other accounts suggest that Jumonville was shot and killed in the skirmish.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of the battle, Washington and his men retreated and hastily constructed Fort Necessity, where Washington was forced to surrender to attacking French forces a month later. The French and Indian War emerged from this series of blunders. British politician Horace Walpole remarked on the situation, "the volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire."<sup>2</sup> In effect, Washington's actions triggered a world war.

While Washington was fighting the French at Fort Necessity, colonial representatives from seven of the thirteen British colonies were meeting to discuss defensive measures against the French and improving foreign relations with the Indians. This meeting, called the Albany Congress, was the first time in the series of colonial wars when the colonies considered some kind of formal union. Great Britain's Board of Trade had called for the meeting in order to discuss Indian relations and to meet with the Iroquois, hoping for an alliance. They were disappointed; the Iroquois refused to commit themselves to the British. Much of the meeting instead was spent debating Benjamin Franklin's Plan of Union, which sought to create a formal colonial union. The plan



**Figure 7.2 Join or Die** | Franklin's cartoon encouraging membership in the Albany Congress has since been viewed by many as predictive of the formation of the United States, as many parts make up the whole.

**Artist:** Benjamin Franklin  
**Source:** Library of Congress

called for a colonial union comprising a “grand council,” which would pass legislation, and a president appointed by the Crown. Although the plan was approved by the delegates at the Albany Congress, the colonies rejected the plan and the Colonial Office, as they were all feared their powers being eroded by the proposed colonial union. Although the Plan of Union failed, it later became a tremendous influence on the 1777 Articles of Confederation and, eventually, the Constitution.

One measure of the Plan of Union that was enacted was the appointment of a supreme commander of British and colonial military forces. In 1775, General Edward Braddock arrived in the colonies and assumed command of the forces. His first action was to return to western Pennsylvania and Fort Duquesne, the fort at the convergence of the rivers. Braddock led his force 125 miles from Fort Cumberland, Maryland, to within six miles of Fort Duquesne. They traveled slowly, laden down with their cannons. Along the way, they constructed a road to ensure easy transport between Cumberland and the Ohio Valley, an area which Braddock fully expected easily to take from the French. The French, realizing that the fort could not withstand Braddock’s heavy artillery, decided to attack the British before the British could lay siege to the fort.

The French and Indian forces planned to ambush Braddock’s men; however, they were too late and were surprised to meet the British forces just after the British had crossed the Monongahela River. The resulting Battle of the Wilderness was fought on July 9, 1755. In the course of the battle, both the French commander and Braddock were shot; the French commander died on the field while Braddock lingered and died days later.

The Battle of the Wilderness is significant because it illustrates the dramatic differences between European warfare and an emerging “American way of war.”<sup>3</sup> Braddock tried in vain to make his troops hold formations and to maintain his own position on horseback in the manner of European warfare, only to have the French and Indian troops, concealed in the woods, make easy targets of his men and his horses: Braddock had several horses shot out from under him before he himself was shot. After Braddock was shot, George Washington managed to maintain order and disengage his forces. Washington was acclaimed for his actions at the Battle of the Wilderness, actions that led in part to his later appointment as commander in chief of the American forces in the Revolution.

From this unexpected beginning, the French and Indian war by 1756 had spread to Europe, becoming the Seven Years’ War. This war involved nine European powers. In the midst of the growing European involvement, William Pitt assumed the leadership of the British government. Pitt’s strategy named North America as the primary field of engagement against

France, where he mobilized an enormous force of 45,000 troops composed of both British regulars and colonial militiamen. Pitt was able to amass such a huge army because he offered the colonies subsidies for their wartime participation. His strategy also called for the British navy to blockade ports and cut off French reinforcements as well as French trade. This hurt the French army both directly and indirectly, as not only were they denied French troops, but also the lack of trade goods hurt their relationship with their Indian allies.

The turning point of the war came in 1759 in the so-called *Annus Mirabilis*, or Year of Miracles. Over the course of the year, the war turned in favor of the British. In North America, they conquered Quebec, drove the French out of the Ohio Valley, and captured the rich island of Guadeloupe. Victories in India, in Europe, and at sea further empowered the British. Although the British gained the upper hand globally, in North America, the war limped weakly on until 1763. The newly-ascended British monarch, King George III, desired to bring the war to an end; however, Spain's late entry into the Seven Years' War prevented his doing so. A second "year of miracles" in 1762 saw the capture of the Spanish ports of Havana, Cuba, and Manila, Philippines, and, by 1763, the French and Spanish both were defeated.

The Treaty of Paris of 1763 brought the Seven Years' War, and related French and Indian War in America, to an end. The treaty wrought enormous changes on the North American map, as the British were awarded everything east of the Mississippi River, including Spanish Florida and only excepting New Orleans and Louisiana. Great Britain was now the uncontested European power in eastern North America. The treaty was vociferously protested by France's Indian allies, who had been given no voice in the negotiations. Most groups asserted that France had no right to cede Indian lands to the British. From a European point of view, though, the lands of France's Indian allies now rightfully belonged to the British as these lands were ceded as spoils of war upon France's, and, by extension, its Indian allies', defeat. Though the European war had ended, many tribes consequently remained hostile to the British, and violence simmered beneath the surface.

### **7.2.1 Pontiac's War (1763-64)**

After the end of the war, many tribes of the Ohio Valley expected that British colonists would pour over the Appalachian Mountains into their lands. The British quickly moved into French forts in the valley and did not trade with the tribes. Pontiac of the Ottawa nation responded to the growth of British power in the area by calling for tribes to join forces against the British. Pontiac used the message of a prophet named Neolin to encourage

others to join his confederacy against the British. Neolin said that he had experienced a mystical vision in which he visited the realm of the Creator, that is, heaven, and seen the punishments of hell. In his vision, the route to heaven was obstructed by the British, because Indians had been neglecting their traditional ways, being corrupted instead by white ways. He attributed the misfortunes of the Indians to this corruption and so advocated restoring aboriginal rituals, beliefs, and practices. He concomitantly called upon Indians to exorcise white influences, such as alcohol and other European trade goods. The Indians, he said, must purify themselves through reforming their ways and driving the British from their lands.

Pontiac took advantage of Neolin's message, incorporating it into his own speeches and campaigns in order to win tribes into the confederacy. Ultimately, the group included the Shawnee, Munsee, Wyandot, Seneca, Delaware, Huron, Potawatomi, Ojibwa, and Ottawa. In May of 1763, the Ottawa attacked Fort Detroit; other groups led raids on British settlements in Ohio and western Pennsylvania. Over the course of the year, more than 600 Pennsylvanians were killed and more than a dozen soldiers were massacred in the destruction of Fort Sandusky. By the fall of 1764, the British military led invasions of the Ohio Valley to subdue the confederacy. The British were able to force the tribes to surrender because, cut off from trade, they were quickly running out of ammunition. Pontiac's War illuminated several things. First, it showed how reliant the Ohio Valley tribes had become on French trade. Second, it showed what a weak grasp Britain had over the Ohio Valley. In response to this war, Great Britain would enact the Proclamation of 1763, drawing a line east of the Appalachian Mountains where British colonists would be forced to live and setting aside the land west of the mountains for the Indians.

## 7.2.2 Before You Move On...

### Key Concepts

The French and Indian War was the most significant event of the century prior to the Revolutionary War. The war and the rejection of the Albany Plan of Union highlighted the fact that the British North American colonies had developed a fairly strong sense of individual autonomy that would take extraordinary efforts to overcome. Indeed, this colonial political structure would carry over into the early years of the United States in the context of the debate over states' rights and federal power. The war drastically changed the balance of power in North America, with the elimination of the French presence from the continent. This outcome not only had an impact on international affairs;



it also profoundly impacted the dynamics within the colonial situation. The ever-present enemy on the western border now disappeared. In the absence of such a threat, the colonists would be able to shift their focus to other problems, such as changing British colonial policies. Of course, the war was a major factor in changing British policy. The expenditures of war had driven up the imperial debt, and the removal of the French immediately precipitated a violent response from the Indians of the Ohio Valley region in what became known as Pontiac's War. The British government's responses to these problems would ultimately lead to conflict with the colonies.

### Test Yourself

1. An increasing sense of common identity among the colonists was one of the legacies of the French and Indian War.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
2. The Proclamation of 1763 was enacted in part as a response to Pontiac's War.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
3. The Ohio Valley was one of the major points of contention between the French and British in the French and Indian War as well as the British and Indians in Pontiac's War.
  - a. True
  - b. False

[Click here to see answers](#)

## 7.3 THE END OF THE SEVEN YEARS WAR AND WORSENING RELATIONS, 1763-1772

Prior to the Seven Years' and ensuing Pontiac Wars, the British had practiced in America their unwritten policy of salutary neglect. This policy, maintained throughout much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was based on the ideas of Robert Walpole, the first Prime Minister of Great Britain. Walpole believed that the colonies would flourish if left alone; thus, he did not believe in enforcing Parliamentary restrictions like the Acts of

Trade and Navigation. The term “salutary neglect” was actually coined by Edmund Burke who, in an address to Parliament in 1775, reminded its members that the colonies had flourished not by being “squeezed” by a “watchful and suspicious government,” but rather through a “wise and salutary neglect.” However, this policy, which had worked so well in the past, ended as the French and Indian War concluded with the Peace of Paris.

### 7.3.1 The French and Indian War and the End of Salutary Neglect

The French and Indian War was a great success, at least the colonists and the English so believed. Though the two allies shared this opinion, they saw their individual contributions to the war effort in very different ways. The British believed that they had fought an expensive war in order to protect the colonists from enemies on the western frontier and were convinced that they had done more than their share to finance the war costs: fully two-fifths of the monies the colonists spent in recruitment, clothing, and paying the troops came from the mother country. The colonists, on the other hand, believed that they had performed splendidly in the war and that their reward would be opening the western territories to settlement. They did not anticipate that the British would tighten their control of the colonies in an attempt to gain additional revenues to offset war costs.

For their part, the British disliked the self-satisfied post-war colonial attitude that gave too little credit or assistance to the mother country. Indeed, the Commander-in-Chief in the Americas complained: “It is the constant study of every province here to throw every expense on the Crown and bear no part of the expense of this war themselves.”<sup>4</sup> Colonial America historian Curtis Nettles points out that there were three sources of colonial opposition to assuming the responsibility for war expenses as the British expected. On the one hand, some colonial leaders argued that their respective colony was simply too poor to contribute to the war effort. Other colonies, like the Quaker colonies of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, were opposed to warfare generally by virtue of their pacifist leanings and had no intention of funding a military action. And then there were those colonies, such as Rhode Island, Delaware, and New Jersey, that did not have frontier borders and were therefore uninterested in contributing to a war that so little concerned their own experiences.<sup>5</sup> Another problem to surface frequently in inter-colonial relations was that each colony waited to see how much the others would contribute before making any sort of commitment of its own. Thus the British and the colonists could only see the issue of military monies from their own particular standpoint; the British thought the colonies should be grateful, while the colonists thought the British were lucky to have had any of their support at all. As they saw it, the French and

Indian War was just another extension of a war that began in Europe. Of course, this view was mistaken, a fact that the British underscored in dozens of communications with America.

Adding to the growing disharmony in American-British relations came the question of the western lands. The colonies with frontiers abutting the Appalachian and Allegheny Mountains fully expected that, upon the signing of the Peace of Paris, these lands to be opened to settlement. Their characteristic thirst for land would thereby be quenched. The colonists had fought and won the “European” War and were now headed west. Not surprisingly, the British viewed the question of the western lands very differently. First, the mother country no longer needed colonists to settle along the frontiers as a defense against the French and Indians. Second, their allowing colonists to settle beyond the Appalachians would put an increasing number out of Parliament’s reach; consequently, taxes would be more difficult to collect and imperial laws harder to enforce. Finally, once remote from the control of royal officials in America, the colonists would become increasingly independent-minded.

### 7.3.2 The Proclamation of 1763

Ignoring the obstructionist messages coming from the colonies, the British government in 1763 threw caution to the winds and issued the Proclamation of 1763. Established in large part “to pacify the Indians,” the British saw what came to be known as the “proclamation line” as a temporary measure that would give them time to define a more permanent policy. They worded the Proclamation so as to make it appear advantageous to the colonies:

WHEREAS, we have taken into Our Royal Consideration the extensive and valuable Acquisitions in America, secured to our Crown by the late Definitive Treaty of Peace concluded at Paris the 10<sup>th</sup> Day of February last; and being desirous that all Our loving Subjects, as well as our Kingdom as of our Colonies in America, may avail themselves with all convenient Speed, of the great Benefits and Advantages which must accrue therefrom to their Commerce, Manufactures, and Navigation. We have thought fit, with the Advice of our Privy Council to issue this Royal Proclamation. <sup>6</sup>

Members of Parliament believed this settlement to be extremely generous, especially in light of what they saw as the potential benefits to the colonies from the war.

Expecting to assuage American fears and mistrust with the Proclamation, the British used it to outline their new policy, one that left no doubt as to the motivation of Parliament and the Crown. Most importantly, the Proclamation specified that colonists could not settle beyond the Allegheny-Appalachian

Mountain chain. The British reserved this territory for the Indian tribes. The only exception was that white traders could apply for licenses to trade with the Indians. The British militia would enforce the Proclamation.<sup>7</sup> The colonists, long used to salutary neglect, ignored this law: “scores of wagons headed westward.”<sup>8</sup>

### **7.3.3 The Implications of the New British Approach: The Parliamentary Acts of 1764**

The British followed the Proclamation of 1763 with two equally contentious acts of Parliament: the Sugar Act and the Currency Act. The Sugar Act, drafted by George Grenville, First Lord of the Treasury, replaced and lowered the taxes on imported sugar created by the Molasses Act of 1733; this act had long been ignored by the colonists for whom smuggling was acceptable. The difference between the Sugar Act and the Molasses Act, however, was that Parliament intended to collect the tax created by the former; in addition, the tax was intended, as the colonists saw it, not to regulate trade but to “raise a revenue.” It would do so by cutting British taxes on molasses in half, a decrease that would reduce the need to smuggle in tax-free molasses from the French West Indies.

According to Grenville, the tax money would be used to defend the colonies. But James Otis, Chair of the Massachusetts Bay House of Representatives, insisted that measures like the Sugar Act “have a tendency to deprive the Colonies of some of their most essential Rights as British Subjects, and... particularly the Right of assessing their own Taxes.”<sup>9</sup> While the Sugar Act lowered the tariff on sugar, it increased the powers of the Admiralty Courts as well as ending the lucrative sugar and slave trade with the West Indies. It is interesting to note that although Otis claimed that citizens of the British Empire had the right to assess taxes on themselves, nowhere in the Empire was this “right” recognized. The House of Commons was elected by the wealthy and landholders, not by the citizens as a whole, and it legislated accordingly.

The Currency Act, passed the same year, gave Parliament control of the colonial currency system. The act specified that from 1765 onward, “no act, order, resolution, or vote of assembly, in any of his Majesty’s colonies or plantations in America, shall be made, for creating or issuing any paper bills, or bills of credit of any kind or denomination whatsoever, declaring such paper bills, or bills of credit, to be legal tender in payment of any bargains, contracts, debts dues or demands.”<sup>10</sup> Thus the Act abolished the use of paper money altogether and put the colonists at a further economic disadvantage in their trade relations with British merchants. This move in turn caused a severe shock to the colonial economy already depressed due to war expenses.

### 7.3.4 The Stamp Act of 1765

If the Sugar Act was the first act intended to raise a revenue, then the second was the Stamp Act, which levied the first internal tax. The Stamp Act specified that stamps were to be placed on newspapers, pamphlets, almanacs, wills, deeds, licenses, insurance policies, bills of lading, college diplomas, and even playing cards. While the colonists did not necessarily object to the principle of taxation as such, they did draw lines as to how and why taxes should be applied. Indeed, ample precedent already existed for British taxation to regulate colonial trade, even if tax revenues went directly to the British government. However, the colonial legislatures had for some time assumed the role of levying taxes for what they deemed as “internal” applications; these internal applications included paying colonial officials, supporting the militia, internal improvements, and the mail service. Therefore, the colonists drew a fine if definite line between such “internal” taxes and taxes of an external nature, which were for the purpose of regulating trade. In *Reasons Why the British Colonies in America Should Not Be Charged with Internal Taxes*, Governor Thomas Fitch of Connecticut argued that “If these internal taxations take place and the principles upon which they must be founded are adopted and carried into execution, the colonies will have no more than a shadow of legislation left.”<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, colonial political systems and ideologies had largely developed within the context of direct representation, which assumed that taxes of an internal nature could only be levied by those who directly represented the electorate. Therefore, when Parliament attempted to levy taxes that would be used to pay for defense of the colonial frontier and the housing and supply of British soldiers in the colonies, some colonists began to raise the cry of “no taxation without representation,” claiming that such taxes could be imposed only by the colonial legislatures; if imposed on them by Parliament, then the colonies must be directly represented in that body.

The response from England to the argument regarding “actual” representation was that the colonies were in fact represented in Parliament, only virtually. Members of Parliament had long assumed that they represented the interests of all groups in England and her colonial possessions, rather than only narrow, local interests. Thus, according to the theory of virtual representation, Parliament legislated for the well-being of the Irish, the Scots, and the American colonists, in addition to those who lived in England proper. Moreover, the British government was quick to point out that the French and Indian War had been very costly, that Americans paid fewer taxes than the remainder of those in the British possessions, and that the monies raised by the stamp tax would pay for the defense of the colonies.

These arguments fell on deaf ears, as virtual representation had no meaning for the Americans. Colonial leaders responded to the new tax

laws by counter-arguing that, because they had not voted for them, these taxes could not be imposed on their colonies. Later writers also pointed out that the Vice-Admiralty courts that enforced the revenue laws excluded juries and put the burden of proof on the defendants. All of these practices infringed on their rights as British citizens. James Otis for one insisted:

...the colonists, black and white, born here are freeborn British subjects, and entitled to all the essential civil rights of such is a truth not only manifest from the provincial charters, from the principles of the common law, and acts of Parliament, but from the British constitution, which was re-established at the [English] Revolution with a professed design to secure the liberties of all the subjects to all generations.<sup>12</sup>

The colonial response to the notion of “virtual” representation was much like their reaction to internal taxation. Governor of Rhode Island, one of the only two colonies that elected its governor, Stephen Hopkins, insisted that England and her empire was “an imperial state, which consists of many separate governments each of which hath peculiar privileges...all laws and taxations which bind the whole must be made by the whole.”<sup>13</sup> The impasse over these different views of representation and taxation would ultimately lead to armed conflict.

### The Stamp Act Riots and Congress

In 1765, the Stamp Act was soon followed by the Quartering Act which delineated where and how British soldiers found room and board in the colonies. Immediately after these acts’ enactment, the colonists sprang into action. Patrick Henry stirred the Virginia House of Burgesses with a speech opposing the Stamp Act. He proclaimed that if his condemnation of this Act “be treason...make the most of it!”<sup>14</sup> The Sons of Liberty in Boston burned a mock figure of Andrew Oliver, the Stamp Master in Boston, destroyed one of his buildings at the docks, and smashed the windows, furniture, and paneling in his home. A week or so after these events, another mob stormed the home of Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson, destroying a collection of books and old documents that Hutchinson was planning to use to write a history of Massachusetts. Hutchinson described the action thus:

Not contented with tearing off all the wainscot and hangings and splitting the doors to pieces they beat down the Partition walls and although that alone cost them near two hours they cut down the cupola and they began to take the plate and boards from the roof...The garden fence was laid flat and all my trees &c broke down to the ground. Such ruins were never seen in America.<sup>15</sup>

Intimidated, most of the tax collectors resigned from their posts.

These “Sons of Liberty,” as the rebels became known, led similar riots in Newport, Rhode Island, New York City, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and South Carolina. In each case, mobs took to the streets and Stamp Masters were burned in effigy, or worse. As the recently-arrived Governor of New York commented in November, 1765:

The Tumults which have been raised in different parts of the Continent and which have been artfully fomented by ill designing people, have spread so much terror, that the Officers appointed for the execution of the Act, have resigned their posts and I am sorry to observe that the Power of Govern[men]t was too weak to protect them from the insults they were threatened with.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, in August, 1765, the Massachusetts House of Representatives had issued a circular letter calling on all of the colonies to send representatives to a Congress that would consider the nature and implications of the Stamp Act. Nine colonies sent 27 representatives to the meeting, which convened in New York on October 7, 1765. The Congress issued the following: a *Declaration of the Rights and Grievances of the Colonies*, a petition to the king for economic relief, and a petition to Parliament for repeal of the Stamp Act. It was, the drafters insisted,

...the indispensable duty of these colonies, to the best of sovereigns, to the mother country, and to themselves, to endeavour by a loyal and dutiful address to his Majesty, and humble applications to both Houses of Parliament, to procure the repeal of the Act for granting and applying certain stamp duties, of all clauses of any other Acts of Parliament, whereby the jurisdiction of the Admiralty is extended as aforesaid, and of the other late Acts for the restriction of American commerce.<sup>17</sup>

Although only nine colonies sent representatives to the Congress, with the important colony of Virginia being absent, the legislatures of all of the colonies except one voted to accept the Resolves. The Congress was an important first step toward united colonial action.



**Figure 7.3 Thomas Hutchinson** | At different times Lt. Governor and Acting Governor of Massachusetts, 1758-1774 Thomas Hutchinson, was a thorn in the side of the Massachusetts patriots throughout the pre-Revolutionary War years and vice versa. Hutchinson had an ardent interest in the history of the colonies, and before his death began work on a three volume History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay; the third volume was published posthumously. He was replaced as Governor by General Thomas Gage in 1774. This image is taken from *The Life of Thomas Hutchinson, Royal Governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay* by James K. Hosmer

**Artist:** Copley  
**Source:** *The Life of Thomas Hutchinson, Royal Governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*

## The Colonies Apply Economic Pressure

Perhaps more important than the actions of the Stamp Act Congress, and even the “Stamp Act Riots” that rocked almost every colony, were the boycotts the colonists imposed on British goods. New York merchants first boycotted British goods; those in other colonial cities soon followed. Colonial women agreed not to buy or drink tea or buy British cloth for their dresses. “Sage and sassafras” took the place of tea, and homespun garments became the fashion. British merchants reacted by pressing Parliament to realize the extent to which the welfare of the mother country was tied to the economic well-being of the American colonies. When the Marquis of Rockingham followed George Grenville as Prime Minister, the temperament of Parliament changed. This new attitude was reflected by the aging William Pitt who insisted that, while he was “no courtier of America[,]...the Stamp Act [must] be *repealed absolutely, totally, and immediately.*” At the same time, he also recommended that “the sovereign authority of this country over the colonies, [should] be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised.”<sup>18</sup>

Thus pressured by British merchants and its own members, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in February, 1766, with the following comment read into Parliamentary record:

Whereas an Act was passed in the last session of Parliament entitled, An Act for granting and applying certain stamp duties...and whereas the continuance of the said Act would be attended with many inconveniencies, and may be productive of consequences greatly detrimental to the commercial interests of these kingdoms; may it therefore please your most excellent Majesty that it may be enacted...in this present Parliament assembled...that from and after the first day of May, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-six, the above-mentioned Act...shall be, and is and are hereby repealed and made void to all intents and purposes whatsoever.<sup>19</sup>

When news of the repeal of the Stamp Act reached America, general rejoicing ensued, so much so that the colonists paid little attention to the accompanying Declaratory Act. This act echoed William Pitt’s sentiments by delineating clearly the relationship between the colonies and the mother country. In all future endeavors, the colonies were

...to be subordinate unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and parliament of Great Britain; and that parliament...assembled, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.<sup>20</sup>



### 7.3.5 The Townshend Duties: External Taxes to Regulate Trade

The following year, the colonists learned the implications of the Declaratory Act when Parliament created the Townshend Duties. Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed a new set of taxes for the colonies, one based on the colonists' distinctions between internal and external taxation. The Americans did not like internal taxes, so he planned to give them external ones. There were three primary Townshend Acts. The first, the Restraining Act, was aimed at New York for its refusal to provide for British troops. It nullified all legislation of the New York colonial assembly. The second act tightened British control of colonial trade. The most onerous was the third act, which placed duties on colonial imports of glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea. It also set up a Board of Customs Commissioners in Boston to oversee collection of these duties. The Townshend Acts also established four Vice-Admiralty courts in the colonies that would try those who attempted to evade the taxes by smuggling.

The colonialists had reacted to earlier acts by intimidating stamp tax collectors. They were not constrained by the British Navy that would be anchored off the harbors of major ports in order to collect the duties. An added aggravation was the fact that the new taxes were intended to pay British government officials residing in the colonies. Up to this time, the colonial assemblies had paid the salaries of royal government officials and therefore were able to influence officials by using what has been called "the power of the purse." Threats of withholding payment of salaries or other benefits often influenced a stubborn governor or tax collector in the colonies' favor. Once imposed, these new taxes clearly would release British officials from financial dependence on the colonial assemblies.

Again, as with their reactions to the Sugar and Stamp Acts, the colonials were galvanized into action. They put boycotts into effect, and colonists like John Dickinson argued that Parliament did not have the power to levy either internal or external taxes on the colonies. Dickinson declared in his *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer*: "We are taxed without our own consent, expressed by ourselves or our representatives. We are therefore ----- SLAVES!"<sup>21</sup> These essays were printed in nearly every colonial newspaper and became as popular and influential as *Common Sense*, published in 1776.

Similarly, Sam Adams and James Otis wrote a circular letter in which they agreed that all parliamentary taxation was illegal, warned that the new duties would be used to pay colonial officers, and invited the other colonies to join in the boycott taking place in Massachusetts. Colonial women also formed groups called the Daughters of Liberty, which agreed not to drink tea or buy any English products, just as they had done in an earlier boycott.

The women got down spinning wheels from their attics and began to make their clothes rather than buy the English products. When Townshend died in 1768, all duties except that on tea were repealed.

### 7.3.6 Trouble Continues to Brew: The Boston Massacre

Because the Sons of Liberty continued to intimidate merchants and enforce the boycott, Thomas Hutchinson, now acting governor of Massachusetts, requested that British soldiers be relocated to Boston. Not surprisingly, the arrival of the troops created great consternation among the Bostonians. Benjamin Franklin mused on the presence of troops in Boston from his perspective in England:

I am glad to hear that Matters were yet quiet at Boston, but fear that they will not continue long so. Some Indiscretion on the part of their warmer People, or of the Soldiery, I am extreamly [sic] apprehensive may occasion a tumult; and if Blood is once drawn, there is no foreseeing how far the Mischief may spread.”<sup>22</sup>

Franklin was correct in his fear that blood might be shed. On one wintry day in March, 1770, a crowd of boys threw rocks and snowballs at the British



**Figure 7.4 Crispus Attucks** | Crispus Attucks was among the first colonials killed in the skirmish between the Bostonians and British soldiers in what was called the “Boston Massacre.”

**Author:** Unknown  
**Source:** Library of Congress

soldiers standing guard outside the Boston Customs House. There were some men in the crowd who worked in the local shipyards, one of them being Crispus Attucks, a black man of Wampanoag and African descent. According to bystanders, one soldier was knocked down by the rock-laced snowballs, and someone, perhaps even an onlooker wishing to stir up trouble, yelled “fire.” Regardless of who cried out, the soldiers fired on the crowd, and, when the smoke cleared, five people lay dead or dying, and eight more were wounded. Crispus Attucks was among the first to die.

Boston went into an uproar. A mass meeting was held at Faneuil Hall where those in attendance issued a statement calling for the removal of troops from the city. Thomas Hutchinson moved the

troops to an island in the harbor and promised to put to trial the soldiers involved in the massacre. But no lawyer wanted to take the case; even those who were loyal to the crown refused. Finally John Adams, a well-known patriot and cousin of Sam Adams, agreed to defend the soldiers. He made this unpopular move because Adams believed that the men had a right to be represented in court. He may also have wanted to avoid any embarrassing questions about who first yelled “fire.” When the trials ended, all but two of the soldiers were acquitted. The two who were found guilty of manslaughter were sentenced only to branding on their thumbs.

The two years following the Boston Massacre were ones in which colonial tempers simmered without coming to a full boil. The Townshend duties were repealed, except for that on tea (which the colonies continued to smuggle in from Holland). Although, the Stamp Act was gone, the Sugar, Currency, and Quartering Acts remained as reminders of America’s colonial status. And though British soldiers had been withdrawn from Boston, they remained in the colony while the British navy still patrolled the Massachusetts coastline.

### **7.3.7 The Evolution of a Formal Theory of Revolt**

During this period, a philosophy of revolt crystallized in American thinking. The elements, logically laid out, were these:

- the American colonists were citizens of the British Empire;
- their aim was not independence from Britain but only to be given the “natural rights” to which they were entitled;
- one of these rights was the right to be taxed only by elected bodies in which they were actually represented;
- the colonies were not represented in Parliament, did not recognize virtual representation, and therefore could not be taxed by Parliament.

Throughout this theory ran the issues on which the colonies and the mother country could not agree as well as reflections of the impact of the colonial experience on their thinking. Colonists insisted that they had a right to be represented in Parliament by representatives they elected and that they could not be taxed by councils in which they were not represented. As an inevitable conclusion of Locke’s natural rights theory also came just the suggestion of an idea that the colonists were only beginning to consider: if the natural rights of British colonists were not protected, then the only option was to separate from the mother country.

### 7.3.8 Before You Move On...

#### Key Concepts

In the nine years following the end of the French and Indian War, the colonies and the mother country clashed on issues involving taxation, regulation of trade, and the rights of English under the British constitution. These rights, defined most recently in the English Bill of Rights of 1689, were cited repeatedly as the colonists argued that, because they were not represented in Parliament, they were not subject to the laws, and especially to the taxes, created by that body. While the British adhered to the idea of “virtual” representation, the colonists decried the notion as inappropriate to their peculiar circumstances.

During these years, the British government made several attempts to tighten its control on the colonies. The Proclamation Line was designed to keep the colonists on the eastern seaboard, while the Sugar Act and the Townshend duties attempted to regulate trade and the Sugar and Stamp Acts to raise revenues to defray the costs of maintaining the colonies. For the colonists, the “internal” taxes of the latter were anathema and beyond the accepted authority of a mother country. Although a two-year lull followed the violence of the Boston Massacre, problems were far from being resolved, and the first shots of the Revolutionary War were only a few short years away.

#### Test Yourself

1. The purpose of the Proclamation Line of 1763 was to
  - a. keep the colonists on the eastern seaboard.
  - b. raise a revenue to defray the costs of war.
  - c. encourage colonial movement past the Appalachian Mountains.
  - d. reward the colonists for their participation in the French and Indian War.
2. Which of the following Parliamentary acts were designed to “raise a revenue”?
  - a. Proclamation Line of 1763
  - b. Currency Act
  - c. Sugar Act
  - d. Declaratory Act

3. The act that claimed Parliament's right to legislate for the colonies in "all cases whatsoever" was the
  - a. Declaratory Act.
  - b. Currency Act.
  - c. Proclamation Line of 1763.
  - d. Townshend Act.
  
4. The most effective tools used by the colonists in getting the Stamp Act repealed was
  - a. the Boston Massacre.
  - b. rioting against the Stamp Masters.
  - c. the boycott of English goods.
  - d. the arguments of the colonists against internal taxation.
  
5. The colonies made a very clear distinction between
  - a. internal and external taxation by Parliament.
  - b. taxes to regulate trade v. those designed to raise a revenue.
  - c. actual v. virtual representation in Parliament.
  - d. All of the above
  - e. None of the above

[Click here to see answers](#)

## 7.4 THE DOWNWARD SLIDE TO REVOLUTION, 1772-1775

Two incidents in June 1772 marked the beginning of the end of the calm that followed the Boston Massacre. The first involved a British schooner, the *Gaspee*, which had been patrolling for smugglers when it ran aground near Providence, Rhode Island. The townspeople boarded the vessel, removed the crew, and destroyed the ship. Though a commission of inquiry looked into the incident, no one could be found to testify. The second occurrence centered in Boston, a city that had long been a thorn to the Empire and the royal governor, Thomas Hutchinson. Concerned about a recent announcement from Hutchinson that salaries of royal officials would come from customs revenues rather than the colonial assembly, Sam Adams persuaded the Boston town meeting to create a Committee

of Correspondence. This committee would facilitate the exchange of ideas between those in Boston and other towns of Massachusetts. Other colonies soon followed the example of Massachusetts with their own Committees of Correspondence that became one more example of inter-colony cooperation. These Committees were effective in stirring up and coordinating colonial expressions of resentment about British rule.

### 7.4.1 The Tea Act and Party of 1773

The lull before the storm ended permanently in 1773. At that time, in a move designed to help the nearly bankrupt British East India Company, the British passed the Tea Act. This Act made it easier for the British East India Company to sell tea in the colonies by eliminating the duties on the tea coming into England. The Act also permitted the company to sell its tea directly to customers in the colonies, instead of going through colonial merchants. Tea was thus cheaper than previously and, in fact, the colonists could now buy tea more cheaply than could those living in England.

If members of Parliament and the ministers of George III thought that the Americans would be pleased with the act and the ability of colonials to buy cheap tea, they were sadly mistaken. American leaders and the Committees of Correspondence railed against the act, declaring it to be an underhanded means for getting the colonists to pay a tax on tea. They argued that not only would the act deprive American merchants of profits but also the tax money would be used to pay public officials in the colonies, thus depriving the colonial assemblies of the “power of the purse.” A member of the Sons of Liberty in the state of New York put it bluntly: “Whoever shall aid or abet, or in any manner assist, in the introduction of tea from any place whatsoever, into this colony...shall be deemed an enemy to the liberties of America.”<sup>23</sup>

The colonial reaction to the Tea Act was strong and swift. The Sons of Liberty in many of the major towns forced company agents to resign and many ships loaded with tea to return to England. In Boston, however, when Governor Hutchinson refused to let the ships depart, meetings were held to protest this unconscionable action. One meeting was held on December 16, 1773 at the Old South Church in Boston, during which the delegates drafted one last plea to Hutchinson to address their grievances. When the town meeting reconvened the following day to receive the governor’s response, the members were greeted by the sheriff of Suffolk who held a command from Hutchinson for them to disband.

Several people at the meeting knew that, if Hutchinson still refused to let the tea ships sail, they had an alternative plan. When news of the Hutchinson’s final refusal reached Sam Adams, he ended a speech with



**Figure 7.5 Boston Tea Party** | On December 16, 1773, a group of “Indians” stormed a British tea ship anchored in the Boston harbor and dumped 342 chests of tea overboard. The reaction of the British would eventually lead the colonies to revolution and independence.

**Author:** Lithograph by Sarony & Major  
**Source:** Library of Congress

words some had been anticipating: “This meeting can do no more to save the country.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, disguised as Indians, fifty young men left the church and headed for the docks. A crowd watched as the “Indians” threw 342 chests of tea overboard. When their job was completed, the crowd broke up and awaited the reaction of the British government. John Adams, who was not nearly the revolutionary that his cousin Sam was, wrote in his diary: “3 Cargoes of Bohea Tea were emptied into the Sea. This is the most magnificent moment of all. There is a Dignity, a Majesty, a Sublimity, in this last Effort of the patriots that I greatly admire.”<sup>25</sup>

In early 1774, just months after the Tea Party, the British Crown and Parliament decided that the time had come to punish Boston and all of Massachusetts Bay for its continuing recalcitrant activities. A furious Parliament quickly enacted four Coercive Acts:

1. The *Boston Port Bill* closed the port of Boston until the town paid for the tea.
2. The *Massachusetts Government Act* revoked the Massachusetts charter and changed the legislative assembly so that no longer would the upper house be elected. Rather it would now be appointed by the crown. A final insult was the provision that in no town in Massachusetts could there be more than one town meeting a year.
3. The *Administration of Justice Act* specified that any person charged with committing murder while enforcing royal authority in Massachusetts was to be tried in England or in another colony. The Act was modestly entitled: *An act for the impartial administration of justice in the cases of persons questioned for any acts done by them in the execution of the law, or for the suppression of riots and tumults, in the province of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England.*<sup>26</sup>
4. The *Quartering Act* directed the royal governor of Massachusetts to requisition houses for quartering British troops.

These acts were followed the same year by the *Quebec Act* which confirmed the following: Roman Catholicism was the official religion in Quebec; there would be no elected legislature in Canada; and that the new boundaries of

Quebec included the western lands north of the Ohio River, lands that had long been claimed by Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Connecticut. All of these provisions were anathema to the colonists, who had come to prize religious toleration and representative government, and who still looked to the land west of the mountains as theirs to settle.

The four *Coercive Acts* and the *Quebec Act* quickly became known in America as the “Intolerable Acts.” The message spread throughout the colonies that, while Boston may be the target at the moment, none of the colonies were safe from the long arm of the British Crown. While Parliament had issued the *Coercive Acts* to punish Massachusetts, the acts had the effect of uniting the colonies. In Virginia, Thomas Jefferson called on the Virginia Assembly to set aside June 1, the date when the *Boston Port Act* went into effect, as a day of prayer and fasting. When dissolved by the royal governor of Virginia, the assembly met in a nearby tavern and drew up a resolution calling for a Continental Congress.

#### 7.4.2 The First Continental Congress, 1774

Several previous instances displayed inter-colonial cooperation; none was as significant as the Continental Congress that met in Philadelphia in September, 1774. Its proceedings explained that, “justly alarmed at the arbitrary proceedings of Parliament,” the colonies had elected representatives to consider a response to Parliament.<sup>27</sup> An impressive array of colonial leaders were in attendance, including Samuel Adams and John Adams of Massachusetts, John Jay of New York, Joseph Galloway and John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, and Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington of Virginia. Participation in the Congress was better than in the Stamp Act Congress, with only Georgia withholding a delegation.

The Congress set to work and moved quickly to make American displeasure with the *Intolerable Acts* known to the British Crown. First, the delegates approved the *Suffolk Resolves*, which declared the Intolerable Acts null and void. Second, they drafted a *Declaration of American Rights* specifying that Parliament had no right to pass legislation that interfered with the internal workings of the colonies and including a list of grievances leveled at the Crown and Parliament. According to the statement of rights, each colonist was entitled to protection under the law of the realm, including the 1689 Bill of Rights and Act of Religious Toleration; any person could petition the king; and all colonists were entitled to “life, liberty and property.” It further reminded the British government that the Americans had “never ceded to any foreign power whatever a right to dispose of [these privileges] without their consent.”<sup>28</sup> Most probably, few Americans expected this tactic to bring



the relief they wanted, however. Indeed, John Adams wrote to Patrick Henry, “I expect no redress, but, on the contrary, increased resentment and double vengeance.”

The list of grievances against George III and Parliament included in the *Declaration of American Rights* was not unlike those that would appear in the *Declaration of Independence*. The delegates railed against the Admiralty Courts, which had always been intended to deprive the colonists of the right to a fair trial, against the establishment of the Catholic Church in the Canadian provinces, against the forcible quartering of British troops in American homes, and against the maintenance of a standing army in times of peace. Before concluding the meeting, the Congress created the Continental Association of 1774, whose purpose was to oversee a boycott of all British goods. The representatives vowed:

1. That from and after the first day of December next, we will not import into British America, from Great-Britain or Ireland, any goods, wares or merchandize whatsoever...
2. That we will neither import, nor purchase any slave imported, after the first day of December next; after which time, we will wholly discontinue the slave trade...
3. As a non-consumption agreement, strictly adhered to, will be an effectual security for the observation of the non-importation, we, as above, solemnly agree and associate, that, from this day, we will not purchase or use any tea imported on account of the East-India Company, or any on which a duty hath been or shall be paid.<sup>29</sup>

The boycott was to be put into effect by September 5, 1774. The Congress gave power to the Committees of Correspondence, along with the Continental Association, to oversee the boycott of British goods and to make sure that violators be “universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty.”<sup>30</sup>

During the meeting, discussion inevitably arose about the relationship of the colonies to the mother country. In the course of these conversations, Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania proposed an imperial union with Britain, in which Parliament could legislate for the colonies, but the legislation would not take effect until approved by an American Assembly. The proposal was defeated by one vote only; the “independent thinking” of the colonists, as George III called it, was fully evident. Before disbanding, the Congress agreed to meet one year later to consider the response of the Crown to its enactments. By the time the Second Continental Congress convened in May, 1775, however, the firing at Lexington and Concord had occurred and the first Americans lay dead.

It soon became evident that the colonists would not get their hoped for response from the King and Parliament. Shortly after the arrival of the petitions from the colonies, George III complained that “blows must be exchanged to determine whether [the American colonies] are to be subject to this country or independent.”<sup>31</sup> And in early 1775, Parliament declared that Massachusetts was in rebellion and specified that New England could not trade with any country outside of the British Empire. In May, 1775, Lord North, the Prime Minister, presented a *Conciliatory Proposition*, which was as far as Parliament would go to meet the demands of the Americans. The *Proposition* affirmed that Parliament would continue to legislate for the colonies, but that any taxes imposed would be to regulate trade. In addition, the monies collected would go to the individual colonies, as long as they agreed to assume partial responsibility for their own defense. These provisions, while perfectly reasonable in the eyes of the British, far from met colonial expectations, and when the Second Continental Congress convened in May, 1775, they were faced with both an unsatisfactory response and with British “aggression” at Lexington and Concord.

### 7.4.3 Lexington and Concord, April 19, 1775

In 1775, the situation in Massachusetts Bay was delicate and deteriorating. The citizens of the colony chafed at the continuing British occupation of Boston. The British, too, were on edge, expecting a colonial uprising at any time. Colonial militia existed throughout the colonies, composed of volunteer forces of local men who provided emergency defense against enemies, such as hostile Indians. They were originally formed to provide protection in the absence of available British forces. By 1775, the British were the enemy that concerned the militia. To prepare for their defense, the militia maintained stores of weapons, shot,

#### Sidebar 7.1: Battles At Lexington and Concord

- **Location:** Middlesex County, Massachusetts Bay, the road from Boston to Concord
- **American Commanders:** Colonel James Barrett, Colonel John Buttrick, Dr. Joseph Warren, Captain John Parker, Brigadier General William Heath
- **British Commanders:** Lieutenant-General Hugh Percy, Major John Pitcairn, Major-General Francis Smith
- **American Force:** 3,800 total: 77 at Lexington, 400 at Concord and fewer numbers at other points
- **British Force:** 1,500 total: 400 at Lexington, 100 at Concord; number varies at other points
- **American Losses:** 49
- **British Losses:** 73
- **Who won?** The Americans

### Sidebar 7.2: Colonial Fighting Forces

The colonial militia had been created in most of the colonies in the seventeenth century. This militia was composed of able-bodied men in every colony (except Pennsylvania where Quakers eschewed violence) who were responsible for furnishing and caring for their own weapons. The Minutemen grew out of the tension following the Tea Party of December, 1773. In most colonies they were an elite arm of the colonial militia, ready to assemble at a moment's notice, hence the name. The Continental Army was created by the second Continental Congress and charged with fighting the war against Britain. The colonial militia continued to participate in the fighting until the war's end.

and powder at various locations. General Gage, the British military commander in Massachusetts, learned that the militia had such a store in Concord. He had received orders to disarm the rebels and arrest their leaders. By all accounts, Gage was sympathetic to the Americans; he had personal ties to the colonies, as his wife was from New Jersey. He therefore tried not to provoke the people of Massachusetts, even as he did his duty for the British Crown.

At the same time, by early spring, George III had lost all patience with the American colonies, believing it time to teach them a lesson. He and his ministers were well aware that each of the colonies had formed colonial militia, the Minutemen, so called by their vow to be ready for military action at a moment's notice. The British were also under the impression, as Major John Pitcairn commented, "that one active campaign, a smart action, and burning two or three of their towns, will set everything to rights."<sup>32</sup> As it turned out, Pitcairn was overly optimistic. On April 14, Thomas Gage, commander of the British garrison in Boston, sent 1,000 troops to move against the colonials at Lexington and then Concord, where, he had heard, the Americans were stockpiling weapons and gunpowder.

Despite Pitcairn's best efforts to keep the colonists in the dark about his plans, by mid-April, the Americans were receiving alarming information concerning British intentions. They knew through sources that Gage was ordered to seize the munitions and leaders of the rebellion, such as Samuel Adams and John Hancock. When Gage took action to prevent news of the British movements from leaving Boston and to locate the leaders, his actions confirmed the colonists' fears. Worse for Gage, he was too late. As the British made preparations to march, both Samuel Adams and John Hancock had already slipped away from Boston and were staying with Hancock's relatives in Lexington. The militia stores in Concord had been moved out to other towns for safekeeping, and Paul Revere and William Dawes were riding towards Lexington, spreading the word that the British were on their way.

By the time the British left Boston in the early hours of April 19, Adams and Hancock were safely out of Lexington. The riders, Revere, Dawes, and others, continued to pass the news. A system of alarm was engaged using bonfires, bells, and other means to alert the people of Massachusetts to the approach of the possibly hostile British forces. The Lexington militia assembled, and more volunteers in the surrounding countryside answered the call as well. As for the British, their morning was a miserable affair. Boston in 1775 was almost an island, with only one narrow passage connecting it to the mainland. Rather than march on foot out of Boston, the British troops were packed onto barges and transported across the bay, where they were then forced to disembark in deep water. The 700 wet and muddy troops formed up and began to make the seventeen-mile journey to Concord, passing through difficult, swampy terrain. The British had hoped to catch the militia unaware. Instead, they were surprised and alarmed to see that everyone on the road to Concord already knew they were coming. Colonel Smith sent Major Pitcairn and his troops ahead, hoping that the speed of a quick march might still be somewhat of a surprise to the militia. He also sent word back to Boston for reinforcements.

On April 19, the first “battle” of the Revolutionary war then took place. Pitcairn arrived in Lexington to find the militia of seventy-seven awaiting the British on the green; the seventy-seven included the Minutemen, who had been quickly assembled after the warnings of Revere and Dawes. There was also a crowd of about 130 bystanders. Evidently these colonials had planned a protest only; rather than ignoring the militia and continuing to march down the road adjacent to the green, however, the officer leading the march, Marine Lieutenant Jesse Adair, decided to form up on the green



**Figure 7.6 Routes of the British Expedition and the Patriot Messengers** | This map is a depiction of the outbound routes taken by Patriot riders and British troops in the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775.

**Author:** United States National Park Service  
**Source:** Wikimedia Commons

itself in order to disperse the militia. But the militia stood their ground, facing the hundreds of British troops, even as Major Pitcairn arrived and ordered the colonists to leave, shouting “Disperse, you damned rebels! You dogs, run!” Some records say the militia did begin to do just that when suddenly a shot rang out. It seems clear that whoever fired the shot was not actually on the green. Other than that, nothing is known about the person who, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, fired the “shot heard round the world,” so called because it marked the beginning not only of the American Revolution, but the inspiration for the French Revolution as well.<sup>33</sup>

In the moments before the shot was fired, both the militia and the British were in disarray; the sound of the shot was all that was needed to set off tragedy. The British troops, tired from lack of sleep and the wet march and nervous at being in hostile territory, opened a volley on the militia. While some of the Minutemen ran, others did not. After firing their volleys, the British troops charged the remaining militia with bayonets. Eight militiamen were killed, including Captain Parker’s cousin, Jonas Parker, who was bayoneted. Ten were wounded, including a slave, Prince Estabrook. The British troops then turned their attention to the village, firing at will. Colonel Smith, who was still travelling with the slower troops, heard the sounds of the gunfire and hurried to Lexington. He brought the British back in line and then moved them off towards Concord, leaving the people of Lexington to tend to their own dead and wounded.

Colonel Smith later sent the following account to General Gage, governor of Massachusetts:

[When Pitcairn approached Lexington] a body of country people drawn up in military order, with arms and accoutrements, and, as appeared after, loaded; and that they had posted some men in a dwelling and Meeting-house. Our troops advanced towards them, without any intention of injuring them, further than to inquire the reason of their being thus assembled... [when] one of them fired...and three or four more jumped over a wall and fired from behind it among the soldiers; on which the troops returned it, and killed several of them.”<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, the militia in Concord did not know what had happened in Lexington, other than that shots had been fired. They had intended to confront the British but retreated when they saw Colonel Smith’s full force on the road, a force which outnumbered theirs by almost three to one. Their commander, Colonel James Barrett, decided to surrender the town and moved his men out of Concord to a nearby hillside where they could watch the British. They were joined by militia from surrounding towns, which increased their number to several hundred.

The British combed the town for supplies as the militia looked on; most of the provisions had been removed, but the troops under Smith were able to seize and destroy some food and munitions. The British, now outnumbered, fell back across a bridge where command fell to Captain Laurie, a less experienced officer. Laurie, with fewer than one hundred soldiers, was facing possibly as many as 400 colonials. The Americans killed fourteen British troops at the North Bridge, and, within an hour of fighting, Colonel Smith turned his troops back on the road to Boston. By this time, the militia and Minutemen numbered over a thousand.

Colonel Smith well understood the position he and his troops were in. The road from Concord to Boston meanders in a general west to east direction. In 1775, it was narrow by today's standards and had in many places walls along its sides, confining the troops marching along it and forcing them to form columns. The militia and minutemen were able to leave their towns and villages and come near the road and wait for the long red line of British soldiers. Then they could take their shots, retreat into the shelter of the woods, and move down the road to find a new position from which to attack. The British, marching on foot and having to follow the road, could neither outrun nor hide from the colonists. They were exposed and had no cover from enemy fire for the full seventeen miles back through Lexington to Boston with the militia firing on them. A British soldier explained the situation thus:

...upon on our leaving Concord to return to Boston, they began to fire on us from behind the walls, ditches, trees, etc., which, as we marched, increased to a very great degree, and continued without the intermission of five minutes altogether, for, I believe, upwards of eighteen miles; so that I can't think but it must have been a pre-concerted scheme in them, to attack the King's troops the first favourable opportunity that [was] offered.<sup>35</sup>

By the time the redcoats reached Boston, they had lost three times more men than had the colonists. In commenting on the shots exchanged at Lexington, Benjamin Franklin expressed outrage to a member of Parliament: “[You] have doomed my country to destruction. You have begun to burn our towns and murder our people”<sup>36</sup> As if the situation at Lexington and Concord were not bad enough, news reached the southern colonies that a member of Parliament had suggested several months earlier, in January 1775, that a general emancipation of American slaves would “humble the high aristocratic spirit of Virginia and the southern colonies.”<sup>37</sup> The measure did not pass, but that did nothing to reassure the Americans.

The actions at Lexington and Concord were accidents, but given the high tension of the times, they were all that was needed to spark a war. General Gage, in his attempt to prevent a war, helped to cause one. His

miscalculations concerning the people of Massachusetts Bay and the poor security and mishandling of his internal communications led to his failure to preserve the peace. Afterwards, he would be blamed by the colonists throughout New England, members of the British government, and even his own soldiers for the events of April 19, 1775.

#### 7.4.4 Before You Move On...

##### Key Concepts

The lull in action that followed the Boston Massacre ended in 1773 with the passage of the Tea Act. Although this act actually lowered the price of the tea in the colonies, making it cheaper than in the mother country, the colonists were enraged, and insisted that the tea ships return to England. When this did not happen, and after petitioning Governor Thomas Hutchinson with unsatisfactory results, a group of “Indians” boarded the tea ship in the Boston Harbor and threw its content overboard. At this point, there was no turning back, and in the next year and a half relations between mother country and colonies deteriorated. Britain responded to the action of Massachusetts with a series of acts designed not only to punish, but also to bring sweeping changes to the government and economic endeavors of the Bay colony. The Boston port was closed to traffic and even the long-revered New England town meetings were disbanded.

In a spirit of cooperation reflective of the Committees of Correspondence, the colonists, with the exception of Georgia, sent representatives to the First Continental Congress, whose purpose it was to respond formally to the Intolerable Acts by drafting a list of grievances and a statement of the rights of the colonists. The delegates agreed to meet in one year’s time to consider the Crown’s response, but before this Second Continental Congress could assemble, the first shots of the Revolutionary War had been fired at Lexington and Concord, and this Congress would become involved in leading the war effort and providing a government for the new American states.

##### Test Yourself

1. The colonists did not necessarily object to the principle of taxation, but rather how the tax money would be applied.
  - a. True
  - b. False

2. Which of the following Parliamentary Acts was not one of the Intolerable Acts?
  - a. Boston Port Bill
  - b. Massachusetts Government Act
  - c. Quebec Act
  - d. Tea Act
  
3. The purpose of the First Continental Congress was to
  - a. raise an army.
  - b. draft a declaration of war against Great Britain.
  - c. compile a list of grievances against the British government.
  - d. draft a Declaration of American Rights.
  
4. Which of the following as a provision of the Quebec Act?
  - a. Quebec was to be annexed to Massachusetts Bay.
  - b. The boundaries of Quebec were extended into the Ohio Valley.
  - c. A state of war existed between England and France.
  - d. Tea ships forced to leave the colonies would be re-directed to the St. Lawrence Seaway.

[Click here to see answers](#)



## 7.5 Conclusion

The twenty years beginning with the onset of war in 1754 were ones of turmoil between Great Britain and her American colonies. British-American success in the French and Indian War had given the American colonists the expectation that they would be rewarded for their participation in the war and, among other things, allowed to enter into the area west of the Allegheny and Appalachian Mountains. But the Crown had other ideas, and, rather than giving the colonists access to the land they had so recently fought for, the British government decided to tighten its reins on its American subjects. Salutary neglect, long the policy toward the colonies, was discarded as Parliament passed a series of acts designed to raise monies to defray the costs of protecting and maintaining the colonies. American leaders quickly created and publicized arguments in which they defined their rights under the British constitution. They argued vehemently against virtual representation, maintaining that they could only be taxed by a legislature that they themselves elected. Nor would they accept taxes that were designed to raise revenues rather than regulating trade, and internal taxes were equally unacceptable.

In many ways, even in 1763, the year the French and Indian War ended, it was almost too late to achieve any type of consensus between the colonies and the mother country; the American experience of the former had led the colonists to take for granted ideas that were foreign to the British. Measures like the Sugar and Stamp Acts, which raised revenues and taxed the colonies internally, the Declaratory Act, which proclaimed the right of Parliament to legislate for the colonies in “all cases whatsoever,” and the Intolerable Acts, which punished Massachusetts for the Tea Party, only heightened the tension that was building. And while conditions worsened between mother country and colonies, there was developing in America a spirit of inter-colony cooperation reflected in the Committees of Correspondence and the First and Second Continental Congresses. The First Continental Congress, representing all of the colonies except Georgia, drafted a statement of American rights, and the Second Continental Congress would conduct a war against Britain and draft a *Declaration of Independence*. In the words of Thomas Paine, whose influential work *Common Sense* was published in 1776, the “cause of America” was becoming “in great measure the cause of all mankind.”<sup>38</sup>

## 7.6 CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES

- Read the following accounts of the skirmish at the Lexington Common on April 19, 1775 and answer the following questions:
  1. Do you detect differences in the events recounted?
  2. Why do you think these differences do or do not exist?
  3. Which account do you believe is most accurately describes what actually occurred on April 19, 1775?
- *From the Annals of the Second Continental Congress:* “In April of 1775, general Gage, who in the course of the last year had taken possession of the town of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts-Bay, and still occupied it a garrison, on the 19th day of April, sent out from that place a large detachment of his army, who made an unprovoked assault on the inhabitants of the said province, at the town of Lexington, as appears by the affidavits of a great number of persons, some of whom were officers and soldiers of that detachment, murdered eight of the inhabitants, and wounded many others. From thence the troops proceeded in warlike array to the town of Concord, where they set upon another party of the inhabitants of the same province, killing several and wounding more, until compelled to retreat by the country people suddenly assembled to repel this cruel aggression.”
- *From Colonel Smith, a British soldier to General Gage, governor of Massachusetts Bay:* “[As we approached the Lexington Green] a body of country people drawn up in military order, with arms and accoutrements, and, as appeared after, loaded; and that they had posted some men in a dwelling and Meeting-house. Our troops advanced towards them, without any intention of injuring them, further than to inquire the reason of their being thus assembled... [when] one of them fired...and three or four more jumped over a wall and fired from behind it among the soldiers; on which the troops returned it, and killed several of them.”<sup>39</sup>
- What did the Americans mean by “no taxation without representation”? On what experiences did they base this idea? Why did the British Parliament have a hard time understanding this concept?
- Why did the colonists believe that it was all right for Parliament to impose taxes to regulate trade, but not to raise revenues?

## 7.7 KEY TERMS

- Albany Congress
- John Adams
- Samuel Adams
- Battle of the Wilderness
- Boston Massacre
- Boston Tea Party
- Edward Braddock
- Coercive Acts and Quebec Act (Intolerable Acts)
- Colonial Militia
- Committees of Correspondence
- *Conciliatory Proposition*
- Currency Act, 1764
- John Dickinson: *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer*
- First Continental Congress: *Statement of Rights of the American People*
- French and Indian War
- The *Gaspee*
- George III
- George Grenville
- John Hancock
- Patrick Henry
- Internal v. external taxation
- Thomas Jefferson
- Lexington and Concord
- Mercantilism
- Minutemen
- “No taxation without representation”
- Thomas Paine: *Common Sense*
- Plan of Union
- Pontiac’s War
- Proclamation Line of 1763
- Redcoats
- Paul Revere
- Salutary Neglect
- Second Continental Congress: *Declaration of Independence*
- Seven Years’ War
- Sons of Liberty
- Stamp Act, 1765
- Sugar Act, 1764
- Taxation to regulate trade v. taxation to raise a revenue
- Tea Act of 1773
- Townshend Duties
- Treaty of Paris, 1763
- Vice Admiralty Courts
- Virtual v. actual representation
- Robert Walpole
- George Washington

## 7.8 CHRONOLOGY

The following chronology is a list of important dates and events associated with this chapter.

Date	Event
1754-1763	French and Indian War
1754	Albany Congress; Plan of Union
1755	Battle of Wilderness
1759	Annus Mirabilis (Year of Miracles)
1763	End of the Seven Years' War; Peace of Paris; Proclamation Line of 1763
1763-1764	Pontiac's War
1764	Sugar Act and Currency Act passed by Parliament
1765	The Stamp Act and Quartering Act (both create internal taxes) enacted by Parliament; Stamp Act Congress met in New York City
1766	Declaratory Acts; Riots in New York City over enforcement of the Quartering Act
1767	Townshend Acts passed; Colonial Resistance built
1769	Virginia Resolves introduced into the House of Burgesses; Royal Governor closed the House
1770	Boston Massacre; Townshend Acts repealed
1772	Gaspee Incident; Committees of Correspondence created in many colonies
1773	Tea Act went into effect; Boston Tea Party
1774	Coercive Acts and Quebec Act (Intolerable Acts) passed by Parliament; First Continental Congress assembled in September and approved Declaration of Rights and Grievances; Continental Association formed to enforce boycotts
1775	Lexington and Concord; Second Continental Congress convened; drafted the Olive Branch Petition; Patrick Henry's "Give me Liberty or give me Death"; Minutemen and Redcoats clash at Lexington and Concord
1776	Paine's Common Sense Published; Second Continental Congress accepted the Declaration of Independence

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## 7.10 END NOTES

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## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION, 1754-1775

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## ANSWER KEY FOR CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION, 1754-1775

Check your answers to the questions in the Before You Move On Sections for this chapter. You can click on the questions to take you back to the chapter section.

Correct answers are **BOLDED**

### Section 7.2.2 - p296

1. An increasing sense of common identity among the colonists was one of the legacies of the French and Indian War.  
**A. TRUE**  
b. False
2. The Proclamation of 1763 was enacted in part as a response to Pontiac's War.  
**A. TRUE**  
b. False
3. The Ohio Valley was one of the major points of contention between the French and British in the French and Indian War as well as the British and Indians in Pontiac's War.  
**A. TRUE**  
b. False

### Section 7.3.8 - p307

1. The purpose of the Proclamation Line of 1763 was to  
**A. KEEP THE COLONISTS ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD.**  
b. raise a revenue to defray the costs of war.  
c. encourage colonial movement past the Appalachian Mountains.  
d. reward the colonists for their participation in the French and Indian War.
2. Which of the following Parliamentary acts were designed to "raise a revenue"?  
a. Proclamation Line of 1763  
b. Currency Act  
**C. SUGAR ACT**  
d. Declaratory Act
3. The act that claimed Parliament's right to legislate for the colonies in "all cases whatsoever" was the  
**A. DECLARATORY ACT.**  
b. Currency Act.  
c. Proclamation Line of 1763.  
d. Townshend Act.
4. The most effective tools used by the colonists in getting the Stamp Act repealed was  
a. the Boston Massacre.  
b. rioting against the Stamp Masters.  
**C. THE BOYCOTT OF ENGLISH GOODS.**  
d. the arguments of the colonists against internal taxation.
5. The colonies made a very clear distinction between  
a. internal and external taxation by Parliament.  
b. taxes to regulate trade v. those designed to raise a revenue.  
c. actual v. virtual representation in Parliament.  
**D. ALL OF THE ABOVE**  
e. None of the above



**Section 7.4.4 - p318**

1. The colonists did not necessarily object to the principle of taxation, but rather how the tax money would be applied.
  - A. TRUE**
  - b. False
  
2. Which of the following Parliamentary Acts was not one of the Intolerable Acts?
  - a. Boston Port Bill
  - b. Massachusetts Government Act
  - c. Quebec Act
  - D. TEA ACT**
  
3. The purpose of the First Continental Congress was to
  - a. raise an army.
  - b. draft a declaration of war against Great Britain.
  - c. compile a list of grievances against the British government.
  - D. DRAFT A DECLARATION OF AMERICAN RIGHTS.**
  
4. Which of the following as a provision of the Quebec Act?
  - a. Quebec was to be annexed to Massachusetts Bay.
  - B. THE BOUNDARIES OF QUEBEC WERE EXTENDED INTO THE OHIO VALLEY.**
  - c. A state of war existed between England and France.
  - d. Tea ships forced to leave the colonies would be re-directed to the St. Lawrence Seaway.