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ARTICLE-A-DAY

The Road to the American Revolution

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Trouble Is Brewing: A Tax on Tea

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

In 1765, the British government imposed the Stamp Act on its North American colonies. This tax was heavily protested by colonists, who were upset that they had had no say in the decision.

Some of the most passionate protests against the Stamp Act took place in Boston, Massachusetts. There, angry crowds took their frustration out on tax collectors.

A new group of protestors formed in Boston in response to the Stamp Act. The group met under a tree that they called the Liberty Tree. They made public speeches against taxes and the British government. They cried, "No taxation without representation!" This group became known as the Sons of Liberty.

Eventually, after much protest, the British government decided to repeal the Stamp Act in 1766. Parliament eliminated the tax on paper products, but in 1767 it replaced it with other taxes-including taxes on imported goods, such as tea. These taxes were officially called the Townshend Acts.

Buying, selling, even drinking tea became a political act in 1773.

Teapot celebrating the repeal of the Stamp Act

Tea was a popular drink in the colonies, just as it was in Great Britain. However, many people decided they would not buy British tea if they had to pay an unfair tax. And they thought the new tax on tea was every bit as unfair as the old tax on paper. After all, the new tax had been approved by the same British Parliament in London, and there were still no representatives from the 13 colonies there.

Suddenly, deciding to take a sip of tea meant something more than just having a drink. If you bought British tea, you were paying a tax, and, indirectly, you were agreeing that Parliament had the right to tax the colonies. On the other hand, if you refused to buy British tea, you were making a statement of a different kind: you were saying that you did not approve of-and would not accept-taxation without representation.

Colonists who were angry about the new tax agreed not to buy British tea. But they didn't stop there. They also visited inns and other places that sold tea and asked the owners to stop selling it. Many establishments agreed to boycott British tea.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Members of the Aſſociation of the Sons of Liberty, are requeſted to meet at the City-Hall, t one o'Clock, To-morrow, (being Friday) on Buſi- neſs of the utmoſt Importance;—And every other Friend to the Liberties, and Trade of America, are hereby moſt cordially invited, to meet at the ſame Time and Place.

The Committee of the Aſſociation.

Thurſday, NEW-YORK, 16th December, 1773.

Advertisement for a Sons of Liberty meeting

Debates and protests about the British government's role in colonial affairs continued, especially in Boston.

The Shot Heard 'Round the World

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

It was April 19, 1775. Tensions between the British and American colonists were at a high point. Americans were already preparing for war. British soldiers were looking to stop a rebellion.

In Lexington, a town on the road to Concord, 80 American militiamen lined up in formation. They had their guns with them, but they were not planning to fire on the British redcoats. After all, a war had not been declared. Still, they knew there was a chance fighting might break out, and they wanted to be ready if it did.

As the British approached, John Parker, the leader of the Lexington militia, told his men, "Stand your ground; don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here."

A British officer told the armed men to go home. According to one report, he shouted, "Lay down your arms, you rebels!" However, as the militiamen were turning to go, a shot rang out.

Who fired that shot? Even today nobody knows for sure. The British soldiers thought the militiamen fired it. However, Parker and his men said later that they did not. The shot may have been fired by someone who was not part of Parker's militia. He may have been firing into the air to sound an alarm. In any case, the soldiers thought they were under attack. They fired a volley and-in a matter of seconds-guns were flashing and smoking on both sides.

Seven members of the militia were killed in Lexington that day, and nine more were wounded. On the other side, only one British soldier was wounded.

Next, the British soldiers marched on to Concord. They searched Concord and found a few cannons and some musket balls. By this time, word of the fighting was spreading rapidly. Hundreds of men made their way to Concord, ready to fight. One troop of militiamen met the British on the outskirts of Concord at North Bridge. The British fired. The militiamen fired back.

Soon the British commander decided to march his troops back to Boston. However, as the British soldiers made their way back, militiamen shot at them. The militiamen hid behind trees and stone walls. They fired on the British soldiers, one or two at a time. By the time the British made it back to Boston that night, 73 soldiers had been killed and another 174 had been

wounded. As for the colonists, 49 had died and 39 had been wounded. The colonists had stood up to the British, and the British had failed to capture the rebellious patriots Samuel Adams and John Hancock, which had been their initial goal. There was no going back-the Revolutionary War had begun!

Battle of Lexington

The Stamp Act

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

Between 1754 and 1763, the British fought the French and Indian War. They fought the French for control of land in North America. Although the British eventually won, their victory came with some serious costs.

The British government had borrowed a lot of money to fight this war. A lot of that money had been spent on protecting the colonists from the French and their Native American allies. All of the money had to be paid back, and the British government felt that the colonists should pay their share. In addition, more money was continually needed to protect the colonies as well as the newly acquired land.

To raise the needed funds, the British government imposed new taxes, including several that would have to be paid by the colonists. In 1765, King George III and his government proposed the Stamp Act.

Stamps were imprinted or embossed on paper.

The Stamp Act was a tax on printed materials. Colonists were required to buy stamps when they bought printed items such as newspapers, pamphlets, even playing cards. These were not gummed stamps, but rather impressions imprinted or embossed on paper. Many people were upset about the Stamp Act. They thought it was unfair that the king and his government in London were making decisions about taxes the colonists had to pay, while the colonists had no say in the matter.

The British government had generally allowed the colonies to raise taxes themselves. For example, if the government of Virginia needed money, an assembly of representatives from different parts of Virginia would meet. This assembly was called the House of Burgesses. Members of the House of Burgesses would determine the best way to raise money. They would propose taxes, and they would vote. If many representatives thought the taxes were unfair, they would not vote for them and, therefore, the taxes would not be approved. Because the House of Burgesses included representatives from different parts of Virginia, most everyone felt the process was fair.

Every colony had an assembly similar to the Virginia House of Burgesses. The assemblies weren't all called the House of Burgesses, but they did the same thing: a group of representatives met to discuss new laws and taxes.

Although the colonists continued to raise their own taxes even after 1765, they felt that, rather than imposing a new tax on the colonies, the king and his government should have asked these assemblies to find a way to raise the money that was needed. Instead, without even as much as a dialogue, the king and his government created the Stamp Act. They did not send it to the colonial assemblies, but directly to Parliament, part of the British government responsible for passing laws and raising taxes.

The Stamp Act was very unpopular.

The colonists agreed that there were bills that had to be paid, and they wanted to contribute.

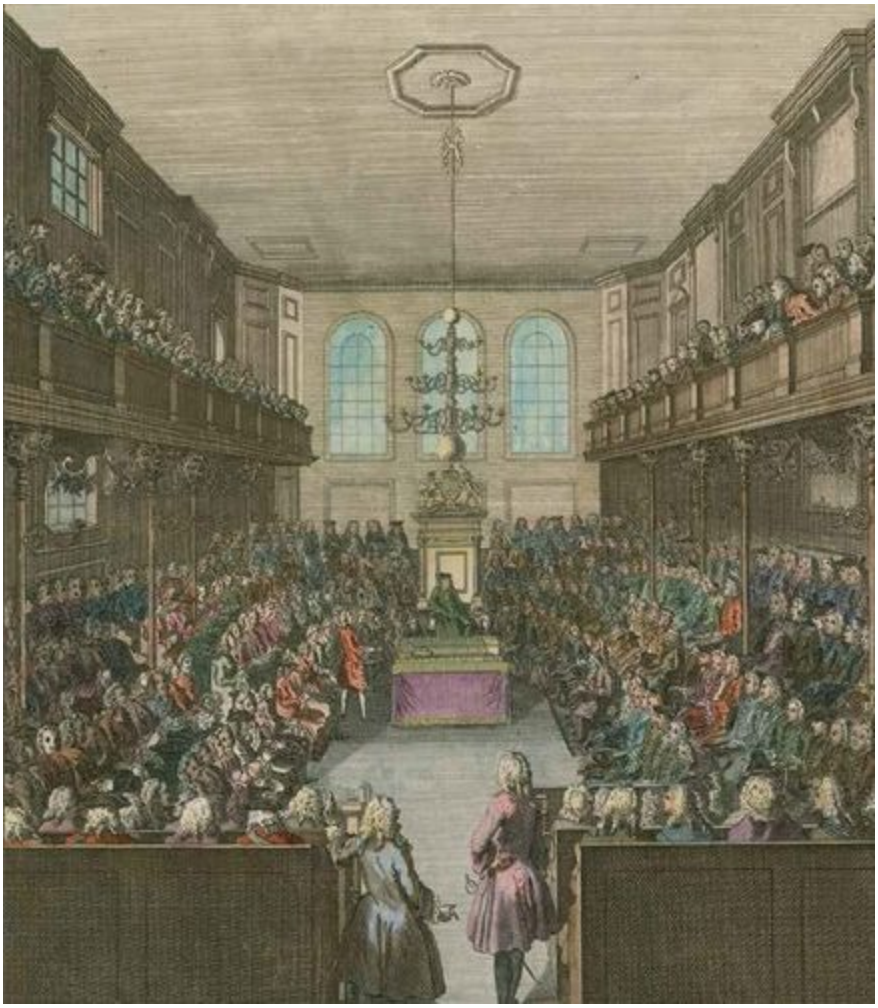
But they also wanted some say in how the money was raised. They were concerned that important decisions about taxes were being made thousands of miles away, by a parliament

that had no colonial representatives. This process didn't seem fair to them.

[. . .]

When the colonists became upset about the Stamp Act, they expressed their unhappiness in various ways. They held protest meetings. They wrote pamphlets. They sent petitions to London. They tried to explain why they thought the Stamp Act was unfair.

The Stamp Act was seen as an unfair tax.



The British Parliament made decisions on laws and taxes, including those that affected the colonies.

Many of the colonists were proud British subjects. But they also felt that they had rights-rights that the king and his government could not take away. Opposition to the Stamp Act spread. Colonists began protesting the tax. Tensions between colonists and the British grew . . . and they would only grow more with time.

Complaints, Grievances, and Preparations

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

In 1774, in response to rebellious acts in the American colony of Massachusetts, the British Parliament approved a series of new laws. These laws, called "the Intolerable Acts" by colonists, punished the people of Massachusetts. The colonists were very angry about these new laws. So in September, 1774, representatives from twelve of the thirteen colonies went to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for a meeting known as the First Continental Congress.

The 56 members of the First Continental Congress drafted a list of complaints and grievances against the king and his government. They agreed that all 13 colonies would stop importing goods from Great Britain-not just tea and other items that were taxed, but all British goods. They also agreed that, unless Parliament repealed the Intolerable Acts, the colonies would stop exporting colonial goods to Great Britain.

Some colonists began to think a war was unavoidable. They thought it was time to start stockpiling muskets and gunpowder. Others believed that it was not too late to patch up relations with the king and his government.

Representatives from Virginia debated this issue in March 1775. Several representatives argued that Virginia should do whatever it could to keep the peace and restore good relations with the king. But others felt that it was too late for that. A country lawyer named Patrick Henry proposed that it was time to stop talking about peace and to start fighting for liberty:

"Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace-but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! . . . Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? . . . Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

-Patrick Henry

Many people in Massachusetts agreed with Patrick Henry. They were organizing militias, stockpiling guns, and preparing to fight. Some of the Massachusetts militiamen were known as minutemen. These special troops were created to be ready to fight at a moment's notice!

The British government knew that these preparations were underway. In response, they sent

a large army to Boston. British generals were told to confiscate any weapons they could find. They were also told to find and arrest the biggest troublemakers among the Sons of Liberty- Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

Patrick Henry addressing Virginia representatives

Unrest in Boston

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

In 1767, the British government imposed the Townshend Acts on its American colonies. These placed a tax on many imported goods, including tea. Colonists protested these taxes, not just because they did not want to pay them, but because the taxes were imposed without colonial representation in Parliament. Many protests were centered in Boston.

The Boston Massacre

In 1768, in response to the protests about the new taxes, the British government sent soldiers to Boston to keep an eye on the Sons of Liberty. Because the British soldiers wore red uniforms, the colonists sometimes referred to them as "redcoats" or "lobster backs."

In March 1770, several Bostonians got into a tussle with a redcoat. The Bostonians surrounded the soldier and called him names. They threw snowballs at him, and some members of the crowd even threatened him with sticks and clubs.

More British soldiers arrived on the scene. They ordered the Bostonians to go home, but the angry protestors refused. The situation became more serious when even more people poured into the streets. Soon a crowd of 300 angry Bostonians was pressing in on the outnumbered British soldiers.

Some of the Bostonians shouted at the soldiers, daring them to fire their guns. One of the Bostonians threw something at the soldiers. It may have been a snowball. It may have been a rock. Whatever it was, it hit one of the soldiers and knocked him down. Perhaps thinking his life was in danger, the soldier fired his musket. One of the Bostonians fought back, attacking the soldier with a club. After that, the other British soldiers responded. They fired into the crowd. When it was over, five people were dead.

Paul Revere's engraving of the event that became known as the Boston Massacre

The Sons of Liberty were outraged. They began making speeches about the incident, which became

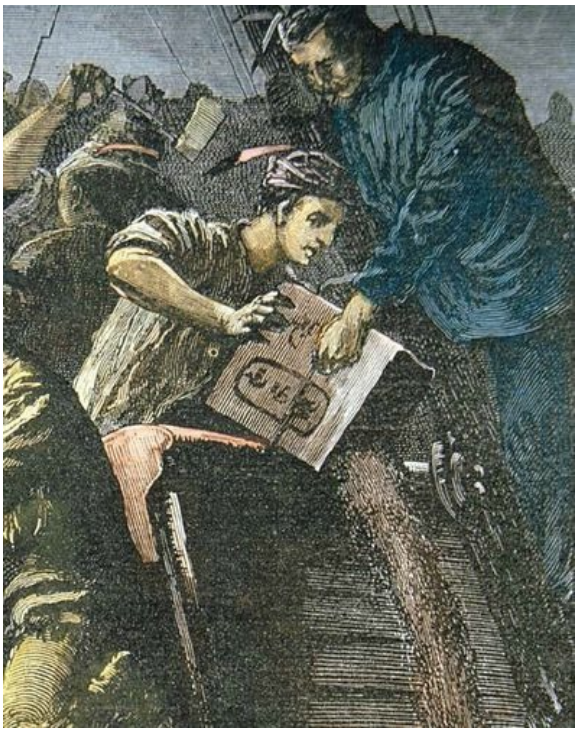
known as the Boston Massacre. They insisted that the Bostonians had been protesting peacefully and the British had no reason to fire on them. One of the Sons of Liberty, a man named Paul Revere, created an engraving that showed British soldiers firing into a crowd of peaceful protestors. It was not an entirely accurate picture of what had happened, but many colonists thought it was.

The World's Largest Tea Party

In December 1773, there was another incident in Boston. Three ships loaded with tea were docked in Boston Harbor. The captains had orders to unload the tea so it could be sold in Boston.

The Sons of Liberty refused to let this happen. They had spent a lot of time convincing the people of Boston not to buy or sell British tea. There was no way they were going to let the captains unload all that tea. The Sons of Liberty demanded the captains raise anchor and sail away.

The captains weren't sure what to do, so they did not do anything. The ships sat in the harbor until the Sons of Liberty finally decided to get rid of the tea once and for all. Dressed as Native Americans, they and other members of the patriot movement boarded the ships and threw the tea into Boston Harbor. They dumped approximately 340 chests of tea-worth hundreds of thousands of dollars in today's money-into the Atlantic Ocean. Later, this act of protest came to be known as the Boston Tea Party.



Boston Tea Party

The Night Rider

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

By the year 1775, tensions were high between Britain and its American colonists. Some colonists had already begun preparing for war. In Massachusetts, special troops were created to be ready to fight at a moment's notice. The men in these units were called minutemen.

The British government knew that these preparations were underway. In April 1775, the British tried to capture some weapons that members of the patriot movement had hidden in Concord, west of Boston. Approximately 700 British soldiers marched out of Boston on the night of April 18, hoping to surprise the militia in Concord. But the patriots were watching every move the British soldiers made.

One of the men keeping an eye on the British was Paul Revere. He had heard that the British soldiers were getting ready to march out to Concord. He knew there were only two ways to get to Concord from Boston. One was to march there on foot. The other was to cross the Charles River in boats and then march the rest of the way. It was not possible to tell which way the British would go until they set out. Revere came up with a clever plan. He told a friend to hang lanterns in the belfry of the North Church in Boston. If the soldiers left Boston on foot, Revere's comrade was to hang one lantern; if they set off in boats, he was to hang two lanterns.

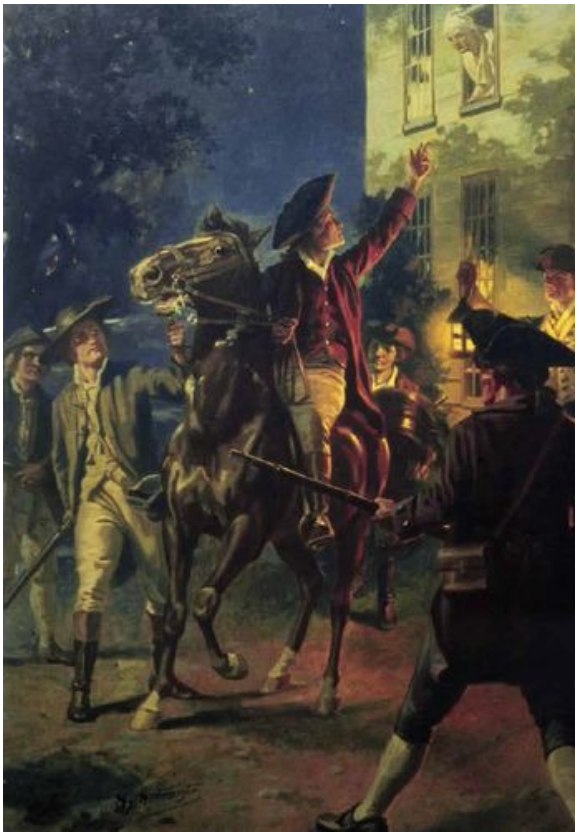
Lantern

On the night of April 18, 1775, Revere's friend ran up to the belfry and hung two lanterns. Then, Revere and several other patriots jumped into action. Revere got into a rowboat and rowed across the Charles River-right past a British warship! Once he made it across, he jumped onto a horse and set off along the same road the soldiers would be taking. Paul Revere and other riders, including William Dawes and Samuel Prescott, rode through the night to awaken the sleeping colonists.

Paul Revere, well-known for the popular cry, "The British are coming!" never actually spoke those words, let alone yelled them into the darkness. Today, historians believe it is more likely he quietly warned colonists, "The regulars are coming out!" Paul Revere never made it to Concord that night. But he did ride to Lexington to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock, who were wanted by the British and in hiding there.

Because of Revere and the other riders, people who lived along the road knew the British soldiers were headed toward Concord. Hundreds of minutemen grabbed their guns and prepared to defend their homeland.

The Revolutionary War was about to begin.



This painting of Paul Revere's ride was created more than 100 years after the night of April 18, 1775. The scene depicted is not an entirely accurate account of what happened. However, it does convey the tension and drama of the events that took place that night.

The Fight Begins: The British Punish Boston

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

In December of 1773, American colonists in Boston dumped approximately 340 chests of tea into the ocean. They did this as a protest against a tax on tea, imposed by the British government, that they considered unfair. The act of protest became known as the Boston Tea Party.

When news of the Boston Tea Party reached Great Britain in 1774, many people were shocked. Many members of the British government were furious. They made a decision to punish the people of Boston.

Over the next few months, Parliament approved a series of new laws. The Boston Port Act declared that Boston Harbor would remain closed until the colonists paid for the tea that had been destroyed. No ships were allowed to enter or leave without British permission.

The Massachusetts Government Act declared that the people of the colony were now under stricter control in terms of meetings and electing their own officials. From that point on, the British king and his ministers would make all decisions about which colonists would serve in important positions in Massachusetts.

The Administration of Justice Act made new rules for trials. Bostonians accused of a crime would no longer be tried in Boston by fellow Bostonians. Instead, they would be sent either to another colony, such as Canada, or even to London. They would also be tried in a special Admiralty court by a judge handpicked by the king.

The Quartering Act declared that the colonists had to provide quarters, or temporary places to live, for the British soldiers stationed in the colonies. The colonists also had to provide supplies such as food, bedding, candles, and firewood. This was significant because the British government was getting ready to send more soldiers to Boston.

Alfred Thompson, Redcoats Sack New England

Members of the First Continental Congress gather at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia

The people of Massachusetts were very angry about these new laws. How could they make a living if goods could not be shipped in or out of Boston? How would they get a fair trial if they were sent to faraway courts? And how could they trust the government if all of the top officials were selected by the king? The Bostonians called these new laws the Intolerable Acts. They would not stand for them!

News did not travel fast back then. People did not have television, cell phones, or e-mail. But when people in other colonies heard about the events unfolding in Massachusetts, they became alarmed. Some were angry, too. They thought the same could happen to them! Twelve of the 13 colonies decided to send representatives to a meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, known as the First Continental Congress. The First Continental Congress met in September 1774. Of the 13 colonies, only Georgia did not attend.

Some Laws Are Intolerable

by W.M. Akers

Have you ever heard the expression about the straw that broke the camel's back? This is used to talk about a big negative consequence of a seemingly innocuous act. Well, in 1774, during the buildup to the American Revolution, the British government decided to pile on more straw. Four laws were passed that year limiting the freedom of colonists in Massachusetts. The colonists hated them so much that they called them "The Intolerable Acts."

The laws came in response to the night of December 16, 1773, when a colonial group called the Sons of Liberty tossed 342 chests of British tea into Boston Harbor. This was a protest against the Tea Act, a tax on tea that the colonists considered unlawful. The cost was huge-around $1 million in today's money-and the British government responded angrily.

From the perspective of the British, the time had come to stamp out the colonies' rebellious spirit. As far as they could tell, this rebelliousness was rooted in Massachusetts. They thought that if they crushed the spirit of that colony, the rebellion would die before it even began. Parliament planned a series of four acts, or laws, intended to stifle opposition in Massachusetts. They hoped that when the one colony was punished, the other 12 colonies would turn against it and remain loyal to the crown. The lawmakers in Parliament got more than they bargained for.

The first act passed on June 1, 1774. Called "The Boston Port Act," it closed Boston Harbor to all commerce-a disastrous blow to a waterfront city. This had a crippling effect on Boston's economy, punishing every person in the city in response to the act of the Sons of Liberty.

The port would remain closed, the law said, until the East India Company was compensated for all of the tea that had been destroyed. Many in the colony strongly considered paying for the tea. Even among those who supported the colonial cause, some were upset by the destruction of property. But despite the debate, the tea was never paid for, and the port's

closure went on.

The next two acts were passed later that summer and upset the colonists even more. The first was the "Massachusetts Government Act," which had profound effects on everyone in the colony. Since the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, citizens in the region had been allowed to vote for their elected officials in Massachusetts's own system of government-a right not given to all the colonies. This act took that right away, allowing the king to make appointments as he pleased. Suddenly, the people of the colony had no say in who was running their government.

This enraged many of the colonists, but not quite as much as the "Administration of Justice Act," which upset George Washington so much that he renamed it the "Murder Act." What could a law do to upset people so much? The Administration of Justice Act allowed for British officials accused of a crime in Massachusetts to stand trial in Great Britain. In those days, it could take as long as six hard months to cross the Atlantic, meaning it would be excruciating for any colonial witnesses to go and testify in London. A British official could harass colonists however he pleased and then return home to avoid justice. In theory, an employee of the crown could actually get away with murder!

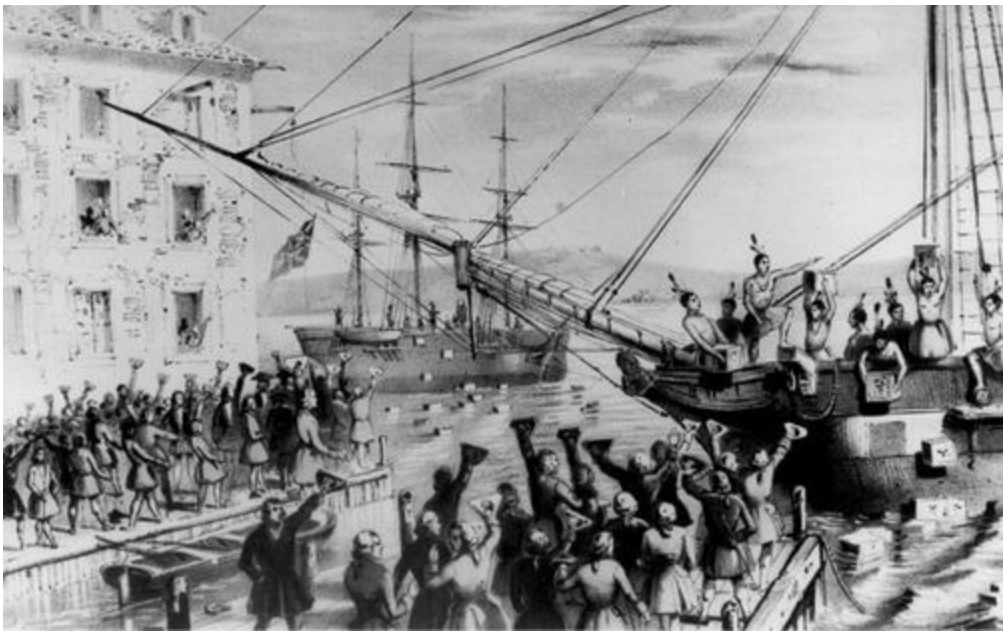
The fourth act is known as the "Quartering Act of 1774." While the other three affected only Massachusetts, this applied to all 13 colonies. It required colonies to provide housing to British soldiers. If they could not build barracks for the soldiers, they had to allow the soldiers to sleep in abandoned houses or on public land.

If Parliament's goal had been to isolate Massachusetts, passing a law affecting all the colonies was not the way to do it. Colonists throughout all the colonies considered all of these laws unreasonable. They felt that the acts were designed to force colonists in Massachusetts to give in to the crown. (This force is known as "coercion," and this is why the Intolerable Acts are also sometimes known as the "Coercive Acts.") Despite Parliament's hope, the other colonies did not turn on Massachusetts. Instead, colonists in other colonies pledged support, sending food and supplies to the people of Boston and pledging to find a way to reverse these four intolerable laws.

On September 5, 1774, colonists from 12 colonies came together in Philadelphia to form the First Continental Congress. This was the first step on the road to the Declaration of Independence, and it wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the Intolerable Acts-together the straw that broke the camel's back.

A Very Messy Tea Party

by W.M. Akers



If you know anything about English people, you probably know that many of them love tea. Ever since tea was first imported to Great Britain from China, the English have enjoyed a nice, hot cup of strong tea in the afternoon, and in the 1700s, they brought this habit with them to their colonies in North America.

In the early 1700s, the British government made a special deal with the East India Company, an English organization doing trade in the East Indies. They granted the East India Company a monopoly on tea by agreeing that no other company was allowed to sell tea in Britain or its colonies. This was a great deal for the East India Company, since it meant that the company could charge whatever it wanted for its products. It already cost a lot to get a crate of tea from India to England, and government taxes made the cost of tea even higher.

In the British colonies of North America, colonists did not like having to pay such high prices. Rather than overpay for tea from England, they turned to Dutch smugglers, who sneaked in tea that was just as good-and much less expensive. This was a violation of the English monopoly and against the law, but the colonists didn't care. They got the same cup of tea and had enough money left over to buy cookies for dipping.

The East India Company, however, didn't like this one bit. By the 1760s, they were losing

hundreds of thousands of pounds per year to Dutch smugglers-a fortune in a time when £60 a year was considered a good income. Rather than change their prices to compete with the Dutch smugglers, the company asked the British government for help. Parliament agreed and passed a series of acts in 1767 that would change the course of history.

A Tax on Tea?

With a stroke of the pen, the Townshend Acts raised the prices the colonists paid on all sorts of things. Lead, glass, paints, and paper all became more expensive. But today, the acts are best remembered for raising the price colonists had to pay for tea.

The colonists were outraged, and not just because they had to spend more money at the market. This was the second time the British government had taxed them to pay for the government's expenses-after the incredibly unpopular Stamp Act of 1765-and the colonists did not think it was fair. According to the British tradition, a tax could only be enacted-or "levied"-after elected officials agreed on it. For people living in England, this meant that taxes had to be voted on by Parliament. But the colonists didn't have any representatives in Parliament. They didn't have any representatives at all.

The common phrase "No taxation without representation!" became popular then, referring to the government taxing people without their consent.

The Sons of Liberty

With the Tea Act of 1773, Parliament allowed the East India Company to sell tea to the colonists for less money than ever before. With this act, the East India Company was able to cut American merchants out of the picture, selling tea directly to American distributors. Suddenly, English tea was cheaper than smuggled Dutch tea, which should have made the colonists happy. The act, however, had a negative effect on the American economy, which angered the colonists. Moreover, the Townshend tax was still in effect, and colonists didn't want a shilling of their money going toward something they considered unfair. It was a question of principle, and a few colonists in Boston were very principled indeed. There was no legal way for the colonists to fight back. And so they decided to break the law.

In November 1773, the *Dartmouth*, a tea ship, arrived in Boston Harbor, carrying thousands of pounds of discounted, yet taxed tea. But the people of Boston didn't want to buy this tea.

They didn't want to drink it. They didn't even want to let it off the ship. Led by Samuel Adams, protestors calling themselves the Sons of Liberty did everything they could to make the captain of the ship turn around and go home. But the British governor would not let the *Dartmouth* leave.

Finally, on December 16, a sizable group of colonists sneaked aboard the *Dartmouth* disguised as Native Americans. Working quietly, they emptied the holds of the *Dartmouth* and two other ships that had recently docked in port. Three hundred forty-two chests of tea went into the frigid Boston Harbor-a statement that Britain and the East India Company could not ignore. No matter how cheap the product, if it was taxed, the colonists didn't want it.

It was more than two years after the Boston Tea Party that the Declaration of Independence was signed, but once that tea went into the harbor, the path to revolution was assured. Tons of tea were thrown out, and the whole course of colonial history was changed that night.

Paul Revere's Ride

by Justin Moy

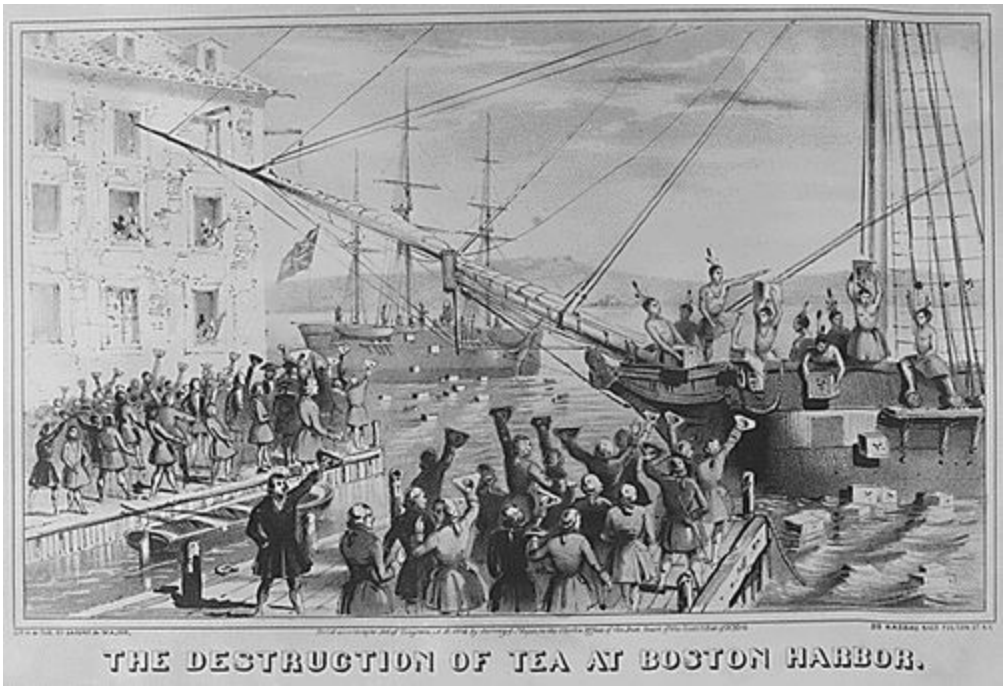
A man named Paul Revere lived a long time ago. He lived in America. He heard some important news. The news was that British soldiers planned to attack the Americans. The British could come by sailing across the sea. They could also come by going across the land. Paul wanted to tell the other Americans the news! He thought about how to tell them.

Paul asked his friend to help. He told his friend to put up lanterns in a church. His friend would hang one lantern if the British came across the land. His friend would put up two lanterns if they came across the sea.

Later, two lanterns were hung. Then Paul rode on a horse to warn other Americans.

Boston Tea Party

by Justin Moy



A long time ago Britain had 13 colonies in North America. A colony is a place ruled by a country far away.

Britain sent things to the colonies. One popular thing was tea. In 1773, Britain made some strict rules about buying tea. Then the people in the colonies became very mad.

One of Britain's 13 colonies was Massachusetts. The people there did not want the tea from Britain. On December 16, 1773, some of these people put on costumes. Then they went onto some boats in Boston Harbor. The boats had tea from Britain. They threw 342 chests of tea into the water. Britain was very mad when it found out! This event is now called the Boston Tea Party.