

Events Leading to the Revolution

SUGAR ACT (1764)

The act created a tax on non-British imports of sugar products (molasses), as well as some luxury goods (wine, silk, linen), meant to discourage colonists from smuggling cheap sugar and alcohol from the Caribbean, which was governed primarily by the French. The act also lowered the duty (import tax) on British sugar products to encourage colonists to purchase them at cheaper rates from England. The drink of choice for many well-off Americans was madeira from Portugal—the Sugar Act meant that this beverage was now taxed at a rate 14 times more than port, a similar wine the was imported from England. Many colonial merchants' businesses were already damaged by an economic depression from the French & Indian War because people began to significantly limit personal spending. The additional tax levied by the Sugar Act hurt merchants even more. Bostonians proposed a boycott of some British imports, which spread to other towns with ports. Prime Minister Lord Grenville stated that the colonists had to help pay the costs of running the empire, of which they were a part, and that a tax was the best way to do this. As a result, Parliament later passed the Stamp Act.

STAMP ACT (1765)

In addition to the reaction of the Sons of Liberty, Patrick Henry sponsored the Virginia Stamp Act Resolutions in the Virginia House of Burgesses denouncing the Stamp Act and calling KGIII a tyrant. The House of Burgesses did not pass most of the Resolutions because they were too hardcore, but the resolutions themselves were printed and distributed throughout the colonies. Eight other colonies began to proclaim, "No taxation without representation" after Massachusetts invited other colonies to send delegates to a congress—the Stamp Act Congress—in order to discuss the act. Colonists also burned effigies of tax collectors and government leaders who supported the act.

DECLARATORY ACT (1766)

The act reinforced Parliament's power over the colonies. The Stamp Act was repealed, but the Declaratory Act essentially told the colonists that it could still tell the colonies what to do. Colonial Response: none—they thought they got what they wanted

TOWNSHEND ACTS (1767)

The act taxed lead, glass, paint, paper, and tea.

"The Townshend Acts took Americans by surprise, but colonial leaders were hard put to find a legal argument against the duties. They wished to deny Parliaments' power to tax them, yet to acknowledge Parliament's power to regulate their commerce, for they were not prepared to break loose from the protective system of the Acts of Trade and Navigation" (70). –The Revolution Precipitated

INTOLERABLE ACTS (1774)

The act closed Boston harbor (Boston Port Bill), canceled the colonial charter of Massachusetts (Gov't Act), protected British officials from being prosecuted in colonial courts by moving their trials to Britain (Administration of Justice Act), made it legal to force colonists to provide room and board to British troops in private homes (Quartering Act), and established a permanent British government in the territory gained from Canada in the F&I War and extended the territory into the Ohio Valley (Quebec Act). The colonists were frightened by the Quebec Act because it violated the sea-to-sea provisions of the various colonies' charters, and showed them that Britain was not afraid to force itself on its colonies.