



## Causes & Events of the American Revolution Leading to the War of Independence

Detailed Version specifically for **DeLancey's Brigade Living History Association** (*Proposed*)

### I. Introduction

This document is based on my collected works on several subjects and has been reorganised into a hopefully useful read on the *Causes and Events* that eventually led to the War of Independence. In my notes and documents, I use an international date system (yyyy mm dd) to eliminate American and British styles, which can cause confusion. Most of the dates are converted to the modern British style (dd mm yyyy), even though the official format in Canada is the international style. Most official Acts start with a Preamble (a summary), and some are included, and then a few comments on the Act itself. There are footnotes to help you, with enough information to find the sources if you are really interested. Note that some references are behind paywalls so you may not find them – at least without paying! My spelling also tends to be in a British style. There is an Appendix following the main document that fleshes out a few items. Finally, there is a Bibliography that you might find useful. This is not a full-on academic work, simply a more detailed version of the important causes and events for the period.

The idea is to give everyone in the Brigade enough information to realise that you know more about this era than most people, and in my experience, including historians (professional and amateur) who are not specialists in the period. Someone always knows more than you or me, but I would suggest they won't be at our Tavern Talks in the future.

Between the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 and the outbreak of armed conflict at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, the relationship between Great Britain and its British American colonies experienced a significant transformation. British efforts to strengthen their imperial authority, cut administrative costs, and oversee a vast new territorial empire often clashed with colonial hopes for local self-governance and the rights of British subjects. Acts passed by Parliament, customs reforms, military deployments, and strict penalties sparked petitions, pamphlets, non-importation agreements, and eventually armed resistance. This document explores the key measures taken by the British government and the responses from the colonies during 1763 to 1775, relying on primary sources and some secondary, parliamentary statutes, colonial assembly journals, pamphlets, newspapers, and official letters, to understand the constitutional, political, and military roots of the American Revolution, which ultimately led to the War of Independence. Most of these documents are easily found on Google, although an explanation is provided for each event, with some explained in more detail. It took an average of six weeks for a ship to travel across the Atlantic Ocean each way, and at least two weeks to get a response in London. The dates identified in this document are when an Act was passed and, when possible, when the news of it was received.

In the last few years, a number of historians have finally suggested that those who became Loyalists, Patriots, or neutrals were all against the efforts of the British Government, but that did not mean they were against the King! I have personally adhered to this idea for many years, but until the victors rewrite their history, most will not hear about it. In 2014, 12 years ago, someone finally wrote a book on the subject: *The Royalist Revolution* by Eric Nelson made the first real dent in that concept.<sup>1</sup> It is still a good book. Info on that book in the Bibliography.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Nelson, *The Royalist Revolution : Monarchy and the American Founding* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).



## II. The Treaty of Paris (1763)

The Treaty of Paris, signed on 10 February 1763, ended the Seven Years' War and transferred Canada and all French territories east of the Mississippi River (except New Orleans) to Britain.<sup>2</sup> Britain emerged with a greatly expanded empire and a national debt that had nearly doubled during the war.<sup>3</sup> British officials concluded that the colonies should contribute more directly to imperial defence and administration. Colonial celebrations at the removal of the French threat soon gave way to anxiety about maintaining standing armies in peacetime and the prospect of new imperial taxation.<sup>4</sup> See Appendix on page 10.

## III. The Proclamation of 1763

This was *not* an Act of Parliament. On 7 October 1763, the Crown issued the Royal Proclamation establishing a boundary along the Appalachian Mountains beyond which colonial settlement was prohibited.<sup>5</sup> Intended to stabilize relations with Indigenous nations after Pontiac's War, the proclamation reserved western lands for Indigenous peoples and required official approval for land purchases.<sup>6</sup> News of the Treaty of Paris and the Proclamation reached the colonies in late 1763 and early 1764. Land speculators, veterans, and frontier settlers denounced the measure, and many ignored it.<sup>7</sup> Subsequent treaties, including the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1768), shifted the boundary westward, effectively weakening the proclamation.<sup>8</sup> See Appendix on page 11.

## IV. The Sugar Act (1764)

The American Revenue Act, as it is sometimes called, received royal assent on 5 April 1764.<sup>9</sup> An act for granting certain duties in the British colonies and plantations in America; for continuing, amending, and making perpetual, an act passed in the sixth year of the reign of his late majesty King George the Second, (intituled, An act for the better securing and encouraging the trade of his Majesty's sugar colonies in America;) for applying the produce of such duties, and of the duties to arise by virtue of the said act, towards defraying the expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the said colonies and plantations; for explaining an act made in the twenty fifth year of the reign of King Charles the Second, (intituled, An act for the encouragement of the Greenland and Eastland trades, and for the better securing the plantation trade;) and for altering and disallowing several drawbacks on exports from this kingdom, and more effectually preventing the clandestine conveyance of goods to and from the said colonies and plantation, and improving and securing the trade between the same and Great Britain. One very long preamble.

The Sugar Act reduced the duty on foreign molasses, strengthened enforcement, expanded customs jurisdiction, and required new documentation for merchants. Its preamble declared its purpose to be "raising a revenue in your Majesty's dominions in America".<sup>10</sup> Colonial newspapers reported the act in spring 1764.<sup>11</sup> Boston's town meeting instructed its agent to oppose the measure, arguing that duties imposed solely to raise

<sup>2</sup> Treaty of Paris (1763).

<sup>3</sup> Parliamentary debates on the national debt are summarized in the Annual Register (1763).

<sup>4</sup> See reports in the *Boston Evening-Post*, March–April 1763.

<sup>5</sup> Royal Proclamation of 1763.

<sup>6</sup> See Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1768) for later boundary adjustments.

<sup>7</sup> Reports in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 1763.

<sup>8</sup> Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1768).

<sup>9</sup> American Revenue Act (1764).

<sup>10</sup> American Revenue Act (1764), preamble.

<sup>11</sup> *Boston Evening-Post*, April 1764.



revenue violated the English rights of subjects.<sup>12</sup> James Otis Jr.'s pamphlet *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* expressed the constitutional argument against taxation without representation.<sup>13</sup>

#### V. The Currency Act (1764)

An act to prevent paper bills of credit, hereafter to be issued in any of his Majesty's colonies or plantations in America, from being declared to be a legal tender in payments of money; and to prevent the legal tender of such bills as are now subsisting, from being prolonged beyond the periods limited for calling in and sinking the same. The Currency Act of 1764, passed on 1 September, prohibited the colonies from issuing new bills of credit and from making existing paper currency legal tender.<sup>14</sup> Parliament cited complaints from British merchants about the depreciation of colonial currencies.<sup>15</sup> Colonial assemblies protested that the act would drain the colonies of specie (metal coinage) and cripple commerce.<sup>16</sup>

#### VI. The Quartering Act (1765)

The Quartering Act of 1765, passed as part of the annual Mutiny Act,<sup>17</sup> required colonial assemblies to provide barracks or lodging for British troops and to supply firewood, bedding, candles, and other necessities.<sup>18</sup> This was a result of the Seven Years' War. The Province of New York was particularly resistant to these measures, leading to tensions and the suspension of its colonial assembly. New York, where many troops were stationed, resisted compliance, prompting Parliament to suspend the assembly's legislative powers in 1767.<sup>19</sup> These acts (this one and the Act of 1774) were intended to manage the high cost of maintaining British troops in North America. For the 1774 Act, see XV, D.

#### VII. The Stamp Act (1765) and the Crisis of 1765–66

The Stamp Act, passed on 22 March 1765, required the use of stamped paper for legal documents, newspapers, almanacs, and playing cards.<sup>20</sup> It was explicitly framed as a revenue measure to support troops in America. Interestingly, Britain had had a Stamp Act since 1694. News of the Proclamation reached the colonies by May of 1765. Newspapers published the act and commentary warning of its implications.<sup>21</sup> Lawyers, printers, and merchants recognized it as a direct internal tax. Crowds in Boston destroyed the home of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson (who was against the Act but felt it was his duty to administer it) and forced the resignation

<sup>12</sup> Boston Town Meeting Minutes, May 1764.

<sup>13</sup> James Otis Jr., *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (Boston, 1764).

<sup>14</sup> Currency Act (1764).

<sup>15</sup> See petitions of London merchants in Journals of the House of Commons, 1764.

<sup>16</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, October 1764.

<sup>17</sup> Before the Glorious Revolution (1688), James VII & II gathered a sizable army on Hounslow Heath to intimidate London. The 1689 Bill of Rights clarified that maintaining a standing army in peacetime required Parliament's approval, leading to the adoption of the annual Mutiny Act, which established military discipline. Starting in 1689, the Mutiny Acts gave the Crown the authority to maintain a standing army even in peacetime, ensuring that military discipline was upheld through courts-martial for offences such as desertion and mutiny. They served as an important constitutional safeguard, adding an extra layer of protection and stability. The Acts required annual approval to maintain the army, helping prevent the Crown from maintaining a permanent military force without Parliament's approval. They also established Articles of War and courts-martial, creating a unique military justice system separate from civil law, often imposing strict penalties on soldiers. These Acts were renewed annually until 1879, when they were replaced by the Army Discipline and Regulation Act. Overall, they governed the administration, pay, and discipline of the English Army, and later the British Army. Ref: Army Discipline and Regulation Act, 42 & 43 Vict. c. 33 (1879). It was consolidated and amended in 1881.

<sup>18</sup> Mutiny Act (1765).

<sup>19</sup> New York Restraining Act (1767).

<sup>20</sup> Stamp Act (1765).

<sup>21</sup> *Maryland Gazette*, May 1765.



of stamp distributor Andrew Oliver.<sup>22</sup> Similar events occurred in other colonies. By 1 November, nearly all stamp distributors had resigned.<sup>23</sup> Pamphlets such as John Dickinson's *The Late Regulations* and the Virginia Resolves declared that only colonial assemblies could levy taxes on the colonists.<sup>24</sup> Delegates from nine colonies met in New York in October 1765 and issued the Declaration of Rights and Grievances, asserting the rights of English subjects and condemning taxation without representation.<sup>25</sup> Merchants in major ports adopted non-importation agreements, pressuring British exporters to be concerned about their loss of exports to the colonies.<sup>26</sup> The British Parliament repealed the Stamp Act on 18 March 1766, but simultaneously passed the Declaratory Act, asserting full legislative authority over the colonies.<sup>27</sup> See the following: VIII.

### VIII. The Declaratory Act (1766)

The Declaratory Act stated that Parliament had authority to legislate for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."<sup>28</sup> Colonial newspapers printed the act alongside reports of the Stamp Act's repeal. Some observers warned that the act threatened colonial liberties by asserting unlimited parliamentary power.<sup>29</sup>

### IX. The Townshend Acts (1767–1770)

The Townshend Acts, also known as the Townshend Duties, were a series of laws passed by British Parliament in 1766 and 1767. These laws placed taxes and regulations on the American colonies. They are named after The Right Honourable Charles Townshend, MP, who was the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the one who proposed the program. Charles Townshend passed away on 1767 Sep 04, before the full impact of these laws was felt.

Historians vary slightly as to which acts should be included under the heading "Townshend Acts"; these are the five favourites:

- The Revenue Act (1767) was passed on 29 June 1767.
- The Commissioners of Customs Act (1767) was passed on 29 June 1767.
- The Indemnity Act (1767) was passed on 2 July 1767.
- The New York Restraining Act of 1767 was passed on 2 July 1767.
- The Vice Admiralty Court Act (1768) was passed on 8 March 1768.

Between June 1767 and July 1768, Parliament enacted duties on glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea; created an American Board of Customs Commissioners; expanded vice admiralty courts; and suspended the New York Assembly.<sup>30</sup> The acts aimed to generate revenue in the colonies to pay the salaries of governors and judges, securing their loyalty to Great Britain. They also sought to improve enforcement of trade laws, to respond to the Province of New York's non-compliance with the 1765 Quartering Act, and to affirm that the British Parliament had the authority to tax the colonies. These Townshend Acts faced opposition and provoked widespread debate, including discussions in colonial newspapers. Over time, some protests became violent, culminating in the Boston Massacre of 1770. This was Townshend's solution to the failure of the 1765 Stamp Act, the first direct tax on British America. Not surprisingly, these import duties sparked more debate, prompting colonists to

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, *Diary and Letters*, August 1765.

<sup>23</sup> *New Hampshire Gazette*, November 1765.

<sup>24</sup> John Dickinson, *The Late Regulations Respecting the British Colonies* (Philadelphia, 1765).

<sup>25</sup> Declaration of Rights and Grievances (1765).

<sup>26</sup> *Boston Gazette*, December 1765.

<sup>27</sup> Repeal of the Stamp Act (1766); Declaratory Act (1766).

<sup>28</sup> Declaratory Act (1766).

<sup>29</sup> *Boston Gazette*, March 1766.

<sup>30</sup> Revenue Act (1767); New York Restraining Act (1767).



oppose them in pamphlets and newspapers. Many port cities refused to import British goods in protest, prompting Parliament to begin repealing parts of the Townshend duties. The Massachusetts Circular Letter (1768) argued that the acts violated the principle of consent.<sup>31</sup> Assemblies in other colonies endorsed the letter.<sup>32</sup> Boston, New York, and Philadelphia merchants adopted non-importation agreements in 1768–69.<sup>33</sup> Two British regiments (the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup>) arrived in Boston in October 1768, heightening tensions.<sup>34</sup> Parliament repealed all duties except the tea duty on 12 April 1770 with the Repeal of Certain Duties Act.<sup>35</sup>

In March 1770, Parliament repealed most of the Townshend Acts taxes under Frederick, Lord North (the Prime Minister, 1770-1782), except for the tea import duty to assert sovereignty consistent with the 1766 Declaratory Act. Colonial resentment grew due to a corrupt board, leading to attacks on ships like the *Gaspee* in 1772. The Tea Act of 1773 reinstated tea taxes, prompting the Boston Tea Party, where the Sons of Liberty famously destroyed taxed tea.

### X. The Boston Massacre (1770)

On 5 March 1770, British soldiers fired into a crowd in Boston, killing five men.<sup>36</sup> Eyewitness accounts were published within days.<sup>37</sup> All of the soldiers were from the 29th Regiment of Foot, standing watch at the Customs House. Captain Thomas Preston and all 8 soldiers were tried; most were acquitted, and two were convicted of manslaughter.<sup>38</sup> After a nine-day-long trial, the decision rested with the jury. They deliberated for 2.5 hours before returning with their verdict. The jury outright acquitted six of the eight soldiers present on the night of 5 March 1770. For the remaining two soldiers, Hugh Montgomery and Matthew Kilroy, the jury found them guilty of manslaughter.<sup>39</sup> Paul Revere's engraving depicted the event as a deliberate attack, shaping public opinion. Interestingly, five of them were still in the 29th when it was one of the regiments defending Québec at the end of 1775.<sup>40</sup> See Appendix on page 14.

### XI. The Gaspee Affair (1772)

On 9 June 1772, HMS *Gaspee*, a Royal Navy revenue schooner that enforced the Navigation Acts around Newport, Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, ran aground near Providence. Local men boarded the vessel, wounded its commander, and burned the ship.<sup>41</sup> A royal commission of inquiry was empowered to send suspects to England for trial, provoking widespread alarm.<sup>42</sup> No arrests were made, but the affair deepened colonial fears that traditional legal protections were being removed.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Massachusetts House of Representatives, Circular Letter, February 1768. The Circular Letter (authored by Samuel Adams and James Otis Jr.) was a petition sent by the Massachusetts House to other colonial legislatures, arguing that the Townshend Acts were unconstitutional because they violated the colonists' right to be taxed only by their own representatives. See Appendix.

<sup>32</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, April 1768.

<sup>33</sup> *Boston Evening-Post*, September 1768.

<sup>34</sup> John Barker, Diary, October 1768.

<sup>35</sup> Repeal of Certain Duties Act (1770).

<sup>36</sup> Todd W. Braisted, "The British Army in Boston," American Battlefield Trust, June 6, 2023, <[battlefields.org/learn/articles/british-army-boston](https://battlefields.org/learn/articles/british-army-boston)>.

<sup>37</sup> *Boston Gazette*, March 1770.

<sup>38</sup> Trials of the Soldiers (Boston, 1770). "Adams' Argument for the Defense: 3–4 December 1770," Founders Online, National Archives. Original source: *The Adams Papers, Legal Papers of John Adams*, vol. 3, Cases 63 and 64: The Boston Massacre Trials, ed. L. Kinvin Wroth and Hillier B. Zobel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 242–270.

<sup>39</sup> Hillier B Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 298.

<sup>40</sup> Don N Hagist, *British Soldiers, American War* (Westholme Publishing, 2012), 319 n44.

<sup>41</sup> William Dudingston, Letter to Admiral Montagu, 10 June 1772.

<sup>42</sup> *Providence Gazette*, July 1772.

<sup>43</sup> *Newport Mercury*, July 1772.

**XII. Committees of Correspondence (1772–1774)**

Boston established a Committee of Correspondence in November 1772.<sup>44</sup> Its first report, drafted by Samuel Adams, of course, asserted the colonists' rights and condemned the recent British government's measures.<sup>45</sup> Committees soon formed across Massachusetts and spread to other colonies, creating a network for coordinated resistance.<sup>46</sup>

**XIII. The Tea Act (1773)**

The Tea Act of 10 May 1773 allowed the East India Company to ship tea directly to the colonies while retaining the Townshend duty. The actual title was 1773: 13 George 3 c.44: "An act to allow a drawback of the duties of customs on the exportation of tea to any of his Majesty's colonies or plantations in America; to increase the deposit on bohea tea to be sold at the India Company's sales; and to empower the commissioners of the treasury to grant licences to the East India Company to export tea duty-free."<sup>47</sup> Colonial newspapers warned that the act was a device to induce acceptance of parliamentary taxation.<sup>48</sup> Town meetings resolved to prevent the landing of East India Company tea.<sup>49</sup>

**XIV. The Boston Tea Party (1773)**

On 16 December 1773, after Governor Hutchinson refused to allow tea ships to depart without unloading, a group of men boarded the vessels and destroyed 342 chests of tea.<sup>50</sup> The action was widely reported and condemned by British officials.<sup>51</sup> It was the biggest "Tea Party," but it was actually the third in as many as seventeen. The term Tea Party was not used at the time. The expression developed during anniversary celebrations in the 1830s.<sup>52</sup> Then there were the coffee seizures by Rebels, often by women, in Boston.

**XV. The Coercive Acts (1774)**

In 1774, Parliament responded with the retaliatory Intolerable Acts (as they are known in the USA), which the British Parliament called the Coercive Acts. These four or five laws (depending on how you count them) were passed to punish Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party. Here are the four that are always counted as part of the Coercive Acts, with their preambles and a brief explanation:

**A Boston Port Act.** "An Act to discontinue in such Manner, and for such Time as are therein mentioned, the landing and discharging, lading or shipping, of Goods, Wares, and Merchandise, at the Town and within the Harbour of Boston, in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, in North America." Effective 1 June 1774 until the destroyed tea was paid for.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Adams, *Report of the Committee of Correspondence*, 20 November 1772.

<sup>45</sup> *Boston Gazette*, December 1772.

<sup>46</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, March 1773.

<sup>47</sup> John Levin, "Statutes of the Eighteenth Century," The Statutes Project, January 25, 2014, <https://statutes.org.uk/site/the-statutes/eighteenth-century/1773-13-george-3-c-44-the-tea-act/>.

<sup>48</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 1773.

<sup>49</sup> Boston Town Meeting Minutes, November 1773.

<sup>50</sup> *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-02-02-0003-0008>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, vol. 2, 1771–1781, ed. L. H. Butterfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 85–87.]

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson*, December 1773.

<sup>52</sup> Robert M. Dunkerly, "The Other Tea Parties," American Battlefield Trust, November 20, 2023, downloaded as a PDF from: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/other-tea-parties>.

<sup>53</sup> Boston Port Act (1774).



**B** Massachusetts Government Act. “An Act for the Better Regulating the Government of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England.” It is a very long Act. Basically, it changed the colony’s charter by restricting town meetings and replacing elected officials with appointees.<sup>54</sup>

**C.** Administration of Justice Act. “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. ” The Act allowed royal officials accused of capital crimes to be tried outside of Massachusetts.<sup>55</sup>

**D.** Quartering Act. An Act for the better providing suitable Quarters for Officers and Soldiers in his Majesty’s Service in North America. The 1774 Act was passed as punishment for the Boston Tea Party. It allowed colonial governors to lodge troops in other buildings if adequate barracks were unavailable, further angering the colonists. Passed on 2 June as punishment for the Boston Tea Party, it allowed colonial governors to lodge troops in other buildings if adequate barracks were unavailable, further angering colonists. The Act was set to expire in March of 1776. Remember, these are *all* the colonies in North America. Although the Act required colonies to house soldiers in barracks, taverns, and public houses, it did not include private homes. Indeed, Item II of the Act reads:

II. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if it shall happen at any time that any officers or soldiers in his Majesty’s service shall remain within any of the said colonies without quarters, for the space of twenty-four hours after such quarters shall have been demanded, it shall and may be lawful for the governor of the province to order and direct such and so many uninhabited houses, out-houses, barns, or other buildings, as he shall think necessary to be taken, (making a reasonable allowance for the same), and make fit for the reception of such officers and soldiers, and to put and quarter such officers and soldiers therein, for such time as he shall think proper.

—Quartering Act, 1774: 14 George 3 c.54

The Quebec Act is sometimes grouped with these acts, but not by me. See XVI.

The Colonial Response to these “Intolerable Acts” came in the form of the Suffolk Resolves, passed on 9 September 1774 in Massachusetts, which were a radical declaration by Suffolk County leaders rejecting the Coercive Acts. Authored by a committee headed by Dr. Joseph Warren, the Resolves urged boycotting British goods, withholding taxes, and forming a local militia. The First Continental Congress endorsed these Resolves on 17 September 1774, marking a major step toward armed rebellion.<sup>56</sup> See the Appendix for the Circular Letter, the Resolves, and the First Congress on page 15.

#### **XVI. The Quebec Act (1774)**

Passed on 22 June 1774, the Quebec Act, 1774: 14 George 3 c.83, extended Quebec’s boundaries to the Ohio River, established French civil law, and granted religious toleration to Roman Catholics. Colonial newspapers denounced the act as a threat to Protestant liberties and western land claims.<sup>57</sup> Remember that despite the strong anti-Catholic sentiment in most of British America (especially in New England) and fuelled by the Quebec Act, the Congress did have several reasons for wanting them as a “fourteenth colony,” specifically to prevent the British from using the St. Lawrence River and Lake Champlain as an invasion route to split the colonies in two.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Massachusetts Government Act (1774).

<sup>55</sup> Administration of Justice Act (1774).

<sup>56</sup> Suffolk Resolves, 9 September 1774.

<sup>57</sup> *Connecticut Courant*, July 1774.

<sup>58</sup> Quebec Act, 1774.

**XVII. The First Continental Congress (1774)**

The Congress convened on 5 September 1774.<sup>59</sup> It endorsed the Suffolk Resolves, issued the Declaration and Resolves, which declared colonial rights, and adopted the Continental Association, establishing non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreements.<sup>60</sup> The Congress adjourned on 26 October, resolving to reconvene if grievances were not addressed.<sup>61</sup> Again on page 15.

**XVIII. The Powder Alarms (1774–1775)**

British seizures of gunpowder in late 1774 began widespread militia mobilization. The Massachusetts Powder Alarm on 1 September 1774 saw thousands of militiamen respond to reports of British aggression.<sup>62</sup> Provincial congresses assumed control of militia organization and the stockpiling of arms. General Gage reported that the province was “in a state of rebellion.”<sup>63</sup>

**XIX. Lexington and Concord (19 April 1775)**

On 14 April 1775, Gage received orders to act against colonial military preparations. On the night of 18 April, British troops marched toward Concord. Riders were sent to alert the countryside, including Paul Revere, William Dawes (sent by Joseph Warren via a different route across the Boston Neck to Lexington), and Dr. Samuel Prescott, who joined Revere and Dawes in Lexington and was the only one to reach Concord to deliver the alarm after they were intercepted by British officers. At Lexington Green, British troops fired on the militia, killing eight.<sup>64</sup> At Concord’s North Bridge, militia forces engaged British troops, American historians often add: forcing them to retreat! According to the Narrative of the Proceedings at Concord, British troops suffered heavy casualties during the return to Boston, as they were fired upon from behind walls and trees. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress declared that British troops had begun a war of aggression.<sup>65</sup>

Often, you will read that the British Army was inept, having botched the events of that day. It is, however, important to remember that the British Army was one of the, if not *the*, best-trained armies in the world. On that morning, when those soldiers left their billets, they were not going to war. They were going on a short march into the country to round up weapons and ammunition. They did not take the extra provisions required to fight a battle. No cavalry to scout. No artillery for support. It was a quiet April morning with a simple job to do.

As Don Hagist said in a lecture back in 2025, 700 British soldiers set out from Boston to seize or destroy military stores in Concord. There was no war going on, but much tension. It was a 40-mile round trip, wading through two streams up to their mid-thighs, and most fighting occurred during their return from Concord. Don't Over-assess British Performance. When they set out that day, there was no war going on. Individual companies had not trained together for combat. They achieved their objective of destroying military stores. The "retreat" to Boston was intended all along (it was a planned return, not a retreat). Troops had been awake for about 36 hours when heavy fighting started and had marched over 20 miles. Staying on the road was the fastest way to get to

<sup>59</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 5 September 1774.

<sup>60</sup> Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* Volume 1, (Washington Government Printing Office: The Library of Congress, Division of Manuscripts, 1904). Available as a PDF.

<sup>61</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress*, Vol. 1, 26 October 1774. See the Appendix for more on the Resolves and the First Congress.

<sup>62</sup> *Massachusetts Spy*, September 1774.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Gage, Letter to Lord Dartmouth, 20 September 1774.

<sup>64</sup> John Barker, *Diary*, 19 April 1775.

<sup>65</sup> *Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Resolves*, April 1775.



Boston. Flanking parties were effective for a while, but they were heavily outnumbered and exhausted. Nothing like this happened again to the British Army during the entire war!<sup>66</sup>

**XX. Conclusion**

Between 1763 and 1775, British efforts to reform the way they managed their empire and to emphasize parliamentary authority often conflicted with the colonists' wishes for self-rule and their cherished rights as British citizens. Actions like imposing taxes through Parliament, enforcing customs, maintaining a military presence, and passing strict laws sparked widespread protests. By the time British troops arrived at Lexington and Concord, the relationship between Britain and the colonies had already broken down, leading directly to the beginning of the American War of Independence.

News of the Battles of Lexington and Concord reached London on 28 May 1775. It came as a report from a Son of Liberty to the agent and politician Arthur Lee, creating shock and disbelief and was initially dismissed as "propaganda". The news countered British General Gage's official accounts, fueling intense debate over the violent escalation of the rebellion. General Gage's account was published in the London Gazette on 30 May. Arthur Lee managed to get the Rebel American perspective to newspapers by 5 June.<sup>67</sup> The British were shocked that colonists had engaged in open battle, having expected them to back down without a fight. The news signalled that the "rebellion" was now an armed conflict. *Wait until they read about the Battle of Bunker Hill!*

L O N D O N, *June 1.*  
*Tuesday, May the 30th, 1775.*

Descriptive

As a doubt of the authenticity of the account from Salem, touching an engagement between the King's troops and the Provincials in the Massachusetts Bay, may arise from a paragraph in the London Gazette of this evening, I desire to inform all those who wish to see the original affidavits which confirm that account, that they are deposited at the Mansion-house, with the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, for their inspection.

ARTHUR LEE,  
Agent for the House of Representatives  
of the Massachusetts Bay.

Note the use of the term "Provincials". Everyone in all the colonial provinces was a Provincial until the rebel provinces started calling themselves states and the rebels calling themselves Patriot Americans.

<sup>66</sup> Don Hagist, The British Army in Boston, 1774-1776, Lecture at The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati, Inc., 5 June 2025. Notes transcribed by J.P. Gillies.

<sup>67</sup> *Chester Chronicle*, 5 June 1775, a London Newspaper.



### Appendix of Interest

#### Some other notes on The Treaty of Paris, 1763

The 1763 Treaty of Paris officially ended the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) between France and Great Britain. Under the treaty, France ceded all of New France to Great Britain, except for Louisiana, which had become a Spanish possession the previous year. Of its vast North American empire, France retained only the minuscule Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon islands south of Newfoundland, along with its fishing rights. The treaty's linguistic significance is virtually nil, as language was not an issue at the time, and even less so for French, which was considered the international language of treaties. The Treaty of Paris, officially written in French, gave Canadians the freedom to profess their Catholic religion (Section 4) "*en tant que le permettent les lois de la Grande-Bretagne.*" Implicitly, the treaty acknowledged the possibility of doing so in French.

#### British America at the End of the Seven Years' War following the Treaty

The Treaty changed everything about North America. Out of that came the King's Proclamation, which became a problem for many in British America. Everyone who could read it. So, should we all!





## The Proclamation of 1763

### BY THE KING. A PROCLAMATION GEORGE R.

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 10th Day of February last; and being desirous that all Our loving Subjects, as well of 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 our Royal Proclamation, hereby to publish and declare to all our loving Subjects, that we have, with the Advice of our Said Privy Council, granted our Letters Patent, under our Great Seal of Great Britain, to erect, within the Countries and Islands ceded and confirmed to Us by the said Treaty, Four distinct and separate Governments, styled and called by the names of Quebec, East Florida, West Florida and Grenada, and limited and bounded as follows, viz.

**First**--The Government of Quebec bounded on the Labrador Coast by the River St. John, and from thence by a Line drawn from the Head of that River through the Lake St. John, to the South end of the Lake Nipissim; from whence the said Line, crossing the River St. Lawrence, and the Lake Champlain, in 45. Degrees of North Latitude, passes along the High Lands which divide the Rivers that empty themselves into the said River St. Lawrence from those which fall into the Sea; and also along the North Coast of the Baye des Chaleurs, and the Coast of the Gulph of St. Lawrence to Cape Rosieres, and from thence crossing the Mouth of the River St. Lawrence by the West End of the Island of Anticosti, terminates at the aforesaid River of St. John.

**Secondly**--The Government of East Florida. bounded to the Westward by the Gulph of Mexico and the Apalachicola River; to the Northward by a Line drawn from that part of the said River where the Chatahouchee and Flint Rivers meet, to the source of St. Mary's River. and by the course of the said River to the Atlantic Ocean; and to the Eastward and Southward by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulph of Florida, including all Islands within Six Leagues of the Sea Coast.

**Thirdly**--The Government of West Florida. bounded to the Southward by the Gulph of Mexico. including all Islands within Six Leagues of the Coast. from the River Apalachicola to Lake Pontchartrain; to the Westward by the said Lake, the Lake Maurepas, and the River Mississippi; to the Northward by a Line drawn due East from that part of the River Mississippi which lies in 31 Degrees North Latitude. to the River Apalachicola or Chatahouchee; and to the Eastward by the said River.

**Fourthly**--The Government of Grenada, comprehending the Island of that name, together with the Grenadines, and the Islands of Dominico, St. Vincent's and Tobago. And to the end that the open and free Fishery of our Subjects may be extended to and carried on upon the Coast of Labrador, and the adjacent Islands. We have thought fit. with the advice of our said Privy Council to put all that Coast, from the River St. John's to Hudson's Streights, together with the Islands of Anticosti and Madelaine, and all other smaller Islands Iying upon the said Coast, under the care and Inspection of our Governor of Newfoundland.

We have also, with the advice of our Privy Council. thought fit to annex the Islands of St. John's and Cape Breton, or Isle Royale, with the lesser Islands adjacent thereto, to our Government of Nova Scotia.

We have also, with the advice of our Privy Council aforesaid, annexed to our Province of Georgia all the Lands Iying between the Rivers Alatomaha and St. Mary's.

And whereas it will greatly contribute to the speedy settling of our said new Governments, that our loving Subjects should be informed of our Paternal care, for the security of the Liberties and Properties of those who are and shall become Inhabitants thereof, We have thought fit to publish and declare, by this Our Proclamation, that We have, in the Letters



Patent under our Great Seal of Great Britain, by which the said Governments are constituted. given express Power and Direction to our Governors of our Said Colonies respectively, that so soon as the state and circumstances of the said Colonies will admit thereof, they shall, with the Advice and Consent of the Members of our Council, summon and call General Assemblies within the said Governments respectively, in such Manner and Form as is used and directed in those Colonies and Provinces in America which are under our immediate Government: And We have also given Power to the said Governors, with the consent of our Said Councils, and the Representatives of

We have also thought fit, with the advice of our Privy Council as aforesaid, to give unto the Governors and Councils of our said Three new Colonies, upon the Continent full Power and Authority to settle and agree with the Inhabitants of our said new Colonies or with any other Persons who shall resort thereto, for such Lands. Tenements and Hereditaments, as are now or hereafter shall be in our Power to dispose of; and them to grant to any such Person or Persons upon such Terms, and under such moderate Quit-Rents, Services and Acknowledgments, as have been appointed and settled in our other Colonies, and under such other Conditions as shall appear to us to be necessary and expedient for the Advantage of the Grantees, and the Improvement and settlement of our said Colonies.

And Whereas, We are desirous, upon all occasions, to testify our Royal Sense and Approbation of the Conduct and bravery of the Officers and Soldiers of our Armies, and to reward the same, We do hereby command and empower our Governors of our said Three new Colonies, and all other our Governors of our several Provinces on the Continent of North America, to grant without Fee or Reward, to such reduced Officers as have served in North America during the late War, and to such Private Soldiers as have been or shall be disbanded in America, and are actually residing there, and shall personally apply for the same, the following Quantities of Lands, subject, at the Expiration of Ten Years, to the same Quit-Rents as other Lands are subject to in the Province within which they are granted, as also subject to the same Conditions of Cultivation and Improvement; viz.

To every Person having the Rank of a Field Officer--5,000 Acres. To every Captain--3,000 Acres. To every Subaltern or Staff Officer,--2,000 Acres. To every Non-Commission Officer,--200 Acres . To every Private Man--50 Acres.

We do likewise authorize and require the Governors and Commanders in Chief of all our said Colonies upon the Continent of North America to grant the like Quantities of Land, and upon the same conditions, to such reduced Officers of our Navy of like Rank as served on board our Ships of War in North America at the times of the Reduction of Louisbourg and Quebec in the late War, and who shall personally apply to our respective Governors for such Grants.

And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to our Interest, and the Security of our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved to them. or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds.--We do therefore, with the Advice of our Privy Council, declare it to be our Royal Will and Pleasure. that no Governor or Commander in Chief in any of our Colonies of Quebec, East Florida. or West Florida, do presume, upon any Pretence whatever, to grant Warrants of Survey, or pass any Patents for Lands beyond the Bounds of their respective Governments. as described in their Commissions: as also that no Governor or Commander in Chief in any of our other Colonies or Plantations in America do presume for the present, and until our further Pleasure be known, to grant Warrants of Survey, or pass Patents for any Lands beyond the Heads or Sources of any of the Rivers which fall into the Atlantick Ocean from the West and North-West, or upon any Lands whatever, which, not having been ceded to, or purchased by Us as aforesaid, are reserved to the said Indians, or any of them.

And We do further declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure, for the present as aforesaid, to reserve under our Sovereignty, Protection, and Dominion, for the use of the said Indians, all the Lands and Territories not included within the Limits of Our said Three new Governments, or within the Limits of the Territory granted to the Hudson's Bay Company, as also all the Lands and Territories lying to the Westward of the Sources of the Rivers which fall into the Sea from the West and North West as aforesaid.



And We do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of our Displeasure, all our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved. without our especial leave and Licence for that Purpose first obtained.

And. We do further strictly enjoin and require all Persons whatever who have either wilfully or inadvertently seated themselves upon any Lands within the Countries above described. or upon any other Lands which, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are still reserved to the said Indians as aforesaid, forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements.

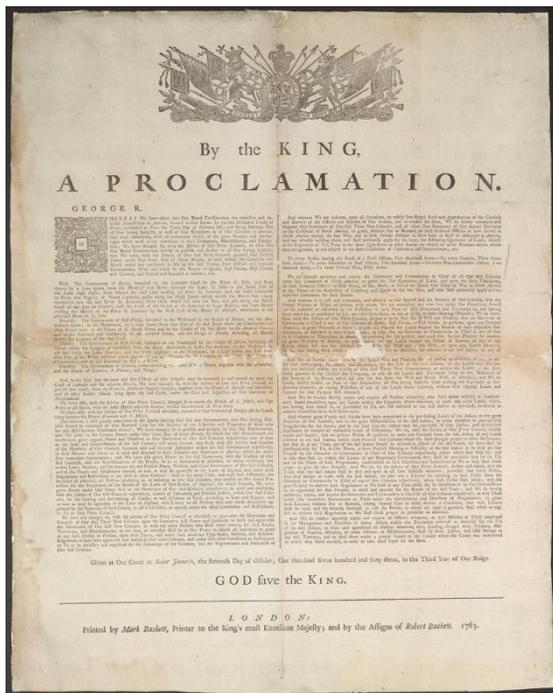
And whereas great Frauds and Abuses have been committed in purchasing Lands of the Indians, to the great Prejudice of our Interests. and to the great Dissatisfaction of the said Indians: In order, therefore, to prevent such Irregularities for the future, and to the end that the Indians may be convinced of our Justice and determined Resolution to remove all reasonable Cause of Discontent, We do. with the Advice of our Privy Council strictly enjoin and require. that no private Person do presume to make any purchase from the said Indians of any Lands reserved to the said Indians, within those parts of our Colonies where, We have thought proper to allow Settlement: but that. if at any Time any of the Said Indians should be inclined to dispose of the said Lands, the same shall be Purchased only for Us, in our Name, at some public Meeting or Assembly of the said Indians, to be held for that Purpose by the Governor or Commander in Chief of our Colony respectively within which they shall lie: and in case they shall refuse or neglect to observe such Regulations as We shall think proper to prescribe as aforesaid.

And we do hereby authorize, enjoin, and require the Governors and Commanders in Chief of all our Colonies respectively, as well those under Our immediate Government as those under the Government and Direction of Proprietaries, to grant such Licences without Fee or Reward, taking especial Care to insert therein a Condition, that such Licence shall be void, and the Security forfeited in case the Person to whom the same is granted shall refuse or neglect to observe such Regulations as We shall think proper to prescribe as aforesaid.

And we do further expressly conjoin and require all Officers whatever, as well Military as those Employed in the Management and Direction of Indian Affairs, within the Territories reserved as aforesaid for the use of the said Indians, to seize and apprehend all Persons whatever. who standing charged with Treason. Misprisions of Treason. Murders, or other Felonies or Misdemeanors. shall fly from Justice and take Refuge in the said Territory. and to send them under a proper guard to the Colony where the Crime was committed of which they, stand accused. in order to take their Trial for the same.

Given at our Court at St. James's the 7th Day of October 1763. in the Third Year of our Reign.  
GOD SAVE THE KING

London: Printed by Mark Baskett, Printer to the King's most Excellent Majesty; and by the Assigns of Robert Baskett. 1763.

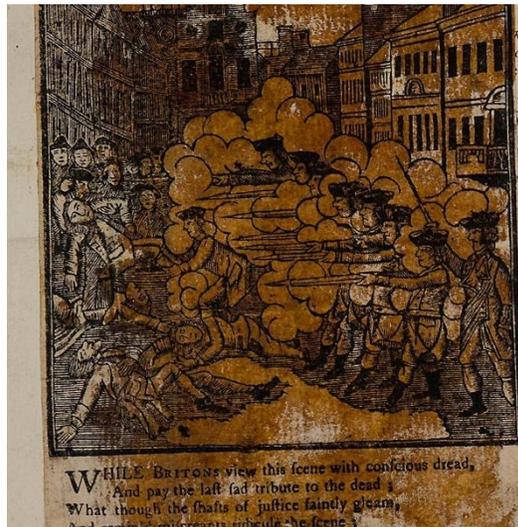




### The Boston Massacre

*The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 12 March 1770

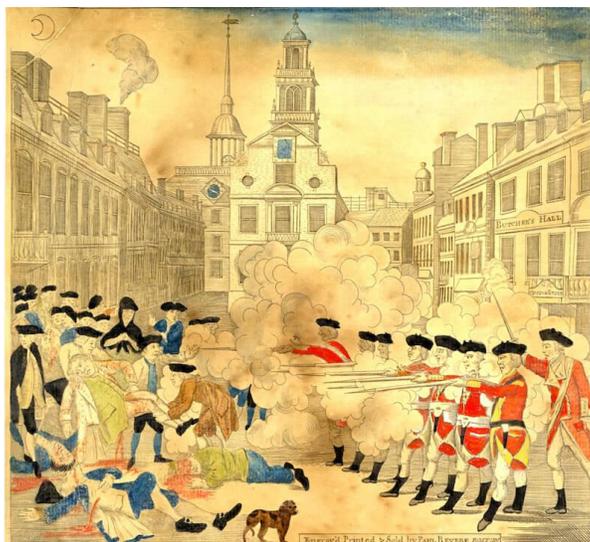
The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr, The Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal, 12 March 1770, Volume 3: Newspapers, 1 January 1770 to 30 December 1771: Page 59 with attachment.



Captain Thomas Preston and his men were charged. Captain Preston was tried separately. The main issue was whether he had given the order to fire; he was found not guilty in a trial held in Boston. Josiah Quincy and future US President John

Adams were his attorneys. After his trial, Preston retired from the army and reportedly settled in Ireland. Adams later recalled seeing him in London in the 1780s, when Adams was serving there as U.S. Minister to Britain. Adams & Quincy also defended the soldiers. After a nine-day-long trial, the decision rested with the jury. They deliberated for two and a half hours before returning with their verdict. The jury outright acquitted six of the eight

soldiers present on the night of 5 March 1770. For the remaining two soldiers, Hugh Montgomery and Matthew Kilroy, the jury found them guilty of manslaughter. By invoking the Benefit of Clergy, an antiquated piece of English law that reduced sentences for first-time offenders and could only be used by literate citizens, the defence successfully commuted their sentences from capital punishment to having their right thumbs branded.



←The propaganda painting based on the above is Paul Revere's "The Boston Massacre."

→This is a detail from a painting by Don Troiani. It is probably © Don, but it was on his Facebook page. It is thought that *this is more like it!*





## Circular Letter of the Boston Committee of Correspondence; May 13, 1774

We have just received the copy of an Act of the British Parliament passed in the present session whereby the town of Boston is treated in a manner the most ignominious, cruel, and unjust. The Parliament have taken upon them, from the representations of our governor and other persons inimical to and deeply prejudiced against the inhabitants, to try, condemn, and by an Act to punish them, unheard; which would have been in violation of natural justice even if they had an acknowledged jurisdiction. They have ordered our port to be entirely shut up, leaving us barely so much of the means of subsistence as to keep us from perishing with cold and hunger; and it is said that [a] fleet of British ships of war is to block up our harbour until we shall make restitution to the East India Company for the loss of their tea, which was destroyed therein the winter past, obedience is paid to the laws and authority of Great Britain, and the revenue is duly collected. This Act fills the inhabitants with indignation. The more thinking part of those who have hitherto been in favour of the measures of the British government look upon it as not to have been expected even from a barbarous state. This attack, though made immediately upon us, is doubtless designed for every other colony who will not surrender their sacred rights and liberties into the hands of an infamous ministry. Now therefore is the time when all should be united in opposition to this violation of the liberties of all. Their grand object is to divide the colonies. We are well informed that another bill is to be brought into Parliament to distinguish this from the other colonies by repealing some of the Acts which have been complained of and ease the American trade; but be assured, you will be called upon to surrender your rights if ever they should succeed in their attempts to suppress the spirit of liberty here. The single question then is, whether you consider Boston as now suffering in the common cause, and sensibly feel and resent the injury and affront offered to here If you do (and we cannot believe otherwise), may we not from your approbation of our former conduct in defense of American liberty, rely on your suspending your trade with Great Britain at least, which it is acknowledged, will be a great but necessary sacrifice to the cause of liberty and will effectually defeat the design of this act of revenge. If this should be done, you will please to consider it will be, though a voluntary suffering, greatly short of what we are called to endure under the immediate hand of tyranny.

We desire your answer by the bearer; and after assuring you that, not in the least intimidated by this inhumane treatment, we are still determined to maintain to the utmost of our abilities the rights of America, we are, gentlemen, Your friends and fellow countrymen.

Source: The Writings of Samuel Adams, Collected and ed. by Harry Alonzo Cushing ... New York [etc.] G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-08, via <[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/circ\\_let\\_boston\\_1774.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/circ_let_boston_1774.asp)>

## The Suffolk Resolves and the First Continental Congress, 1774

The Suffolk Resolves, passed on 9 September 1774, in Massachusetts, were a radical declaration by Suffolk County leaders rejecting the Coercive Acts. Authored by Dr. Joseph Warren, it urged boycotting British goods, withholding taxes, and forming a local militia. The resolves were passed by delegates from Suffolk County (including Boston) at meetings in Dedham and Milton, Massachusetts. Carried by Paul Revere to Philadelphia, they were approved by the First Continental Congress on 17 September 1774, signalling a united, yet militant colonial defiance that pushed the colonies closer to confrontation. The resolves essentially encouraged Massachusetts to operate independently of British authority until the Coercive Acts were repealed. Some of the 19 resolutions called for:

- Treating the Coercive Acts as unconstitutional and void.
- A boycott of British goods and a halt to exports.
- Refusing to pay taxes to the Royal government.
- Appointed officials under the new acts are to resign.
- The formation of a separate colonial government and militia.

Source: Ford, Worthington Chauncey, ed. *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789 Volume 1*. Washington Government Printing Office: The Library of Congress, Division of Manuscripts, 1904, 39 42. I have this in a PDF in 163 pages, if you wish to read it.



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**God fave the King  
And confound his Enemies**