

1. The Sugar Act

Titled: *The American Revenue Act of 1764*

On April 5, 1764, Parliament passed a modified version of the Sugar and Molasses Act (1733), which was about to expire. Under the Molasses Act colonial merchants had been required to pay a tax of six pence per gallon on the importation of foreign molasses. But because of corruption, they mostly evaded the taxes and undercut the intention of the tax — that the English product would be cheaper than that from the French West Indies. This hurt the British West Indies market in molasses and sugar and the market for rum, which the colonies had been producing in quantity with the cheaper French molasses. The First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer Lord Grenville was trying to bring the colonies in line with regard to payment of taxes. He had beefed up the Navy presence and instructed them to become more active in customs enforcement. Parliament decided it would be wise to make a few adjustments to the trade regulations. The Sugar Act reduced the rate of tax on molasses from six pence to three pence per gallon, while Grenville took measures that the duty be strictly enforced. The act also listed more foreign goods to be taxed including sugar, certain wines, coffee, pimiento, cambric and printed calico, and further, regulated the export of lumber and iron. The enforced tax on molasses caused the almost immediate decline in the rum industry in the colonies. The combined effect of the new duties was to sharply reduce the trade with Madeira, the Azores, the Canary Islands, and the French West Indies (Guadelupe, Martinique and Santo Domingo (now Haiti)), all important destination ports for lumber, flour, cheese, and assorted farm products. The situation disrupted the colonial economy by reducing the markets to which the colonies could sell, and the amount of currency available to them for the purchase of British manufactured goods. This act, and the Currency Act, set the stage for the revolt at the imposition of the Stamp Act.

2. The Currency Act¹⁷⁶⁴

The colonies suffered a constant shortage of currency with which to conduct trade. There were no gold or silver mines and currency could only be obtained through trade as regulated by Great Britain. Many of the colonies felt no alternative to printing their own paper money in the form of Bills of Credit. But because there were no common regulations and in fact no standard value on which to base the notes, confusion ensued. The notes were issued by land banks, or loan offices, which based the value of mortgaged land. Some notes paid interest, others did not, some could be used only for purchase and not to repay debt. Some were issued only for public debts and could not be used in private transactions. There was no standard value common to all of the colonies. British merchant-creditors were very uncomfortable with this system, not only because of the obvious complexity, but because of the rapid depreciation of the notes due to regular fluctuations in the colonial economy. On September 1, 1764, Parliament passed the Currency Act, effectively assuming control of the colonial currency system. The act prohibited the issue of any new bills and the reissue of existing currency. Parliament favored a "hard currency" system based on the pound sterling, but was not inclined to regulate the colonial bills. Rather, they simply abolished them. The colonies protested vehemently against this. They suffered a trade deficit with Great Britain to begin with and argued that the shortage of hard capital would further exacerbate the situation. Another provision of the Currency Act established what amounted to a "superior" Vice-admiralty court, at the call of Navel [sic] commanders who wished to assure that persons suspected of smuggling or other violations of the customs laws would receive a hearing favorable to the British, and not the colonial, interests.

3.The Stamp Act

On February 6th, 1765 George Grenville rose in Parliament to offer the fifty-five resolutions of his Stamp Bill. A motion was offered to first read petitions from the Virginia colony and others was denied. The bill was passed on February 17, approved by the Lords on March 8th, and two weeks later ordered in effect by the King. The Stamp Act was Parliament's first serious attempt to assert governmental authority over the colonies. Great Britain was faced with a massive national debt following the Seven Years War. That debt had grown from £72,289,673 in 1755 to £129,586,789 in 1764*. English citizens in Britain were taxed at a rate that created a serious threat of revolt.

4.The Quartering Act of 1765

March 24, 1765

AN ACT to amend and render more effectual, in his Majesty's dominions in America, *an act passed in this present session of parliament, intituled, An act for punishing mutiny and desertion, and for the better payment of the army and their quarters.*

WHEREAS ... [by the Mutiny Act of 1765] ... several regulations are made and enacted for the better government of the army, and their observing strict discipline, and for providing quarters for the army, and carriages on marches and other necessary occasions, and inflicting penalties on offenders against the same act, and for many other good purposes therein mentioned; but the same may not be sufficient for the forces that may be employed in his Majesty's dominions in America: *and whereas, during the continuance of the said act, there may be occasion for marching and quartering of regiments and companies of his Majesty's forces in several parts of his Majesty's dominions in America: and whereas the publick houses and barracks, in his Majesty's dominions in America, may not be sufficient to supply quarters for such forces: and whereas it is expedient and necessary that carriages and other conveniences, upon the march of troops in his Majesty's dominions in America, should be supplied for that purpose: be it enacted* ...,

That for and during the continuance of this act, and no longer, it shall and may be lawful to and for the constables, tithingmen, magistrates, and other civil officers of villages, towns, townships, cities, districts, and other places, within his Majesty's dominions in *America*, and in their default or absence, for any one justice of the peace inhabiting in or near any such village, township, city, district or place, and for no others; and such constables ... and other civil officers as aforesaid, are hereby required to billet and quarter the officers and soldiers, in his Majesty's service, in the barracks provided by the colonies; and if there shall not be sufficient room in the said barracks for the officers and soldiers, then and in such case only, to quarter and billet the residue of such officers and soldiers for whom there shall not be room in such barracks, in inns, livery stables, ale houses, victuallinghouses, and the houses of sellers of wine by retail to be drank in their own houses or places thereunto belonging, and all houses of persons selling of rum, brandy, strong water, cyder or metheglin, by retail, to be drank in houses; and in case there shall not be sufficient room for the officers and soldiers in such barracks, inns, victualling and other publick ale houses, that in such and no other case, and upon no other account, it shall and may be lawful for the governor and council of each respective province in his Majesty's dominions in *America*, to authorize and appoint, and they are hereby directed and empowered to authorize and appoint, such proper person or persons as they shall think fit, to take, hire and make fit, and, in default of the said governor and council appointing and authorizing such person or persons, or in default of such person or persons so appointed neglecting or refusing to do their duty, in that case it shall and may be lawful for any two or more of his Majesty's justices of the peace in or near the said villages, towns, townships, cities, districts, and other places, and they are hereby required to take, hire and make fit for the reception of his Majesty's forces, such and so many uninhabited houses, outhouses, barns, or other buildings, as shall be necessary, to quarter therein

the residue of such officers and soldiers for whom there should not be room in such barracks and publick houses as aforesaid....

II

And it is hereby declared and enacted, That there shall be no more billets at any time ordered, than there are effective soldiers present to be quartered therein: and in order that this service may be effectually provided for, the commander in chief in *America*, or other officer under whose orders any regiment or company shall march, shall, from time to time, give ... as early notice as conveniently may be, in writing, signed by such commander or officer of their march, specifying their numbers and time of marching as near as may be, to the respective governors of each province through which they are to march....

III

[Military officers taking upon themselves to quarter soldiers contrary to this act, or using any menace to a civil officer to deter them from their duty, to be cashiered. Persons aggrieved by being quartered on may complain to the justices, and be relieved.]

V

Provided nevertheless, and it is hereby enacted, That the officers and soldiers so quartered and billeted as aforesaid (except such as shall be quartered in the barracks, and hired uninhabited houses, or other buildings as aforesaid) shall be received and furnished with diet, and small beer, cyder, or rum mixed with water, by the owners of the inns, livery stables, alehouses, victuallinghouses, and other houses in which they are allowed to be quartered and billeted by this act; paying and allowing for the same the several rates herein after mentioned to be payable, out of the subsistence money, for diet and small beer, cyder, or rum mixed with water.

VI

Provided always, That in case any innholder, or other person, on whom any non commission officers or private men shall be quartered by virtue of this act, ... (except on a march, or employed in recruiting, and likewise except the recruits by them raised, for the space of seven days at most, for such non commission officers and soldiers who are recruiting, and recruits by them raised) shall be desirous to furnish such noncommission officers or soldiers with candles, vinegar, and salt, and with small beer or cyder, not exceeding five pints, or half a pint of rum mixed with a quart of water, for each man *per diem, gratis*, and allow to such noncommission officers or soldiers the use of fire, and the necessary utensils for dressing and eating their meat, and shall give notice of such his desire to the commanding officer, and shall furnish and allow the same accordingly; then ... the non commission officers and soldiers so quartered shall provide their own victuals; and the officer to whom it belongs to receive, or that actually does receive, the pay and subsistence of such non commission officers and soldiers, shall pay the several sums herein after mentioned to be payable, out of the subsistence money, for diet and small beer, to the non commission officers and soldiers aforesaid....

VII

And whereas there are several barracks in several places in his Majesty's said dominions in *America*, or some of them, provided by the colonies, for the lodging and covering of soldiers in lieu of quarters, for the ease and conveniency as well of the inhabitants of and in such colonies, as of the soldiers; it is hereby further enacted, That all

such officers and soldiers, so put and placed in such barracks, or in hired uninhabited houses, outhouses, barns, or other buildings, shall, from time to time, be furnished and supplied there by the persons to be authorized or appointed for that purpose by the governor and council of each respective province, or upon neglect or refusal of such governor and council in any province, then by two or more justices of the peace residing in or near such place, with fire, candles, vinegar, and salt, bedding, utensils for dressing their victuals, and small beer or cyder, not exceeding five pints, or half a pint of rum mixed with a quart of water, to each man, without paying any thing for the same....

XXX

And be it further enacted ... That this act ... shall continue and be in force in all his Majesty's dominions in *America* from [March 24, 1765] until [March 24, 1767].

5. The Declaratory Act

March 18, 1766

AN ACT for the better securing the dependency of his Majesty's dominions in *America* upon the crown and parliament of Great Britain.

WHEREAS several of the houses of representatives in his Majesty's colonies and plantations in *America*, have of late, against law, claimed to themselves, or to the general assemblies of the same, the sole and exclusive right of imposing duties and taxes upon his Majesty's subjects in the said colonies and plantations; and have, in pursuance of such claim, passed certain votes, resolutions, and orders, derogatory to the legislative authority of parliament, and inconsistent with the dependency of the said colonies and plantations upon the crown of Great Britain: ... be it declared ...

That the said colonies and plantations in *America* have been, are, and of right ought to be. subordinate unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and parliament of *Great Britain*; and that the King's majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons of *Great Britain*, in parliament assembled, had, hash, 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.

II. And be it further declared ..., That all resolutions, votes, orders, and proceedings, in any of the said colonies or plantations, whereby the power and authority of the parliament of *Great Britain*, to make laws and statutes as aforesaid, is denied, or drawn into question, are, and are hereby declared to be, utterly null and void to all intents and purposes whatsoever.

6. The Townshend Revenue Act

Taxes on glass, paint, oil, lead, paper, and tea were applied with the design of raising £40,000 a year for the administration of the colonies. The result was the resurrection of colonial hostilities created by the Stamp Act. Reaction assumed revolutionary proportions in Boston, in the summer of 1768, when customs officials impounded a sloop owned by John Hancock, for violations of the trade regulations. Crowds mobbed the customs office, forcing the officials to retire to a British Warship in the Harbor. Troops from England and Nova Scotia marched in to occupy Boston on October 1, 1768. Bostonians offered no resistance. Rather they changed their tactics. They established *non-importation* agreements that quickly spread throughout the colonies. British trade soon dried up and the powerful merchants of Britain once again interceded on behalf of the colonies.

7. Boston Non-Importation Agreement

August 1, 1768

The merchants and traders in the town of Boston having taken into consideration the deplorable situation of the trade, and the many difficulties it at present labours under on account of the scarcity of money, which is daily increasing for want of the other remittances to discharge our debts in Great Britain, and the large sums collected by the officers of the customs for duties on goods imported; the heavy taxes levied to discharge the debts contracted by the government in the late war; the embarrassments and restrictions laid on trade by several late acts of parliament; together with the bad success of our cod fishery, by which our principal sources of remittance are like to be greatly diminished, and we thereby rendered unable to pay the debts we owe the merchants in Great Britain, and to continue the importation of goods from thence; We, the subscribers, in order to relieve the trade under those discouragements, to promote industry, frugality, and economy, and to discourage luxury, and every kind of extravagance, do promise and engage to and with each other as follows:

First, That we will not send for or import from Great Britain, either upon our own account, or upon commission, this fall, any other goods than what are already ordered for the fall supply.

Secondly, That we will not send for or import any kind of goods or merchandize from Great Britain, either on our own account, or on commissions, or any otherwise, from the 1st of January 1769, to the 1st of January 1770, except salt, coals, fish hooks and lines, hemp, and duck bar lead and shot, woolcards and card wire.

Thirdly, That we will not purchase of any factor, or others, any kind of goods imported from Great Britain, from January 1769, to January 1770.

Fourthly, That we will not import, on our own account, or on commissions or purchase of any who shall import from any other colony in America, from January 1769, to January 1770, any tea, glass, paper, or other goods commonly imported from Great Britain.

Fifthly, That we will not, from and after the 1st of January 1769, import into this province any tea, paper, glass, or painters colours, until the act imposing duties on those articles shall be repealed.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands, this first day of August, 1768.

8. The Tea Act

The Tea Act, passed by Parliament on May 10, 1773, would launch the final spark to the revolutionary movement in Boston. The act was not intended to raise revenue in the American colonies, and in fact imposed no new taxes. It

was designed to prop up the East India Company which was floundering financially and burdened with eighteen million pounds of unsold tea. This tea was to be shipped directly to the colonies, and sold at a bargain price. The Townshend Duties were still in place, however, and the radical leaders in America found reason to believe that this act was a maneuver to buy popular support for the taxes already in force. The direct sale of tea, via British agents, would also have undercut the business of local merchants.

Colonists in Philadelphia and New York turned the tea ships back to Britain. In Charleston the cargo was left to rot on the docks. In Boston the Royal Governor was stubborn & held the ships in port, where the colonists would not allow them to unload. Cargoes of tea filled the harbor, and the British ship's crews were stalled in Boston looking for work and often finding trouble. This situation led to the Boston Tea Party.

9.The Intolerable Acts

The Intolerable Acts

- **The Intolerable Acts**
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The government spent immense sums of money on troops and equipment in an attempt to subjugate Massachusetts. British merchants had lost huge sums of money on looted, spoiled, and destroyed goods shipped to the colonies. The revenue generated by the Townshend duties, in 1770, amounted to less than £21,000. On March 5, 1770, Parliament repealed the duties, except for the one on tea. That same day, the Boston massacre set a course that would lead the Royal Governor to evacuate the occupying army from Boston, and would soon bring the revolution to armed rebellion throughout the colonies. See also the Tea Act.

1774

After the French and Indian War the British Government decided to reap greater benefits from the colonies. The colonies were pressed with greater taxes without any representation in Britain. This eventually led to the Boston Tea Party. In retaliation the British passed several punitive acts aimed at bringing the colonies back into submission of the King.

Boston Port Act

March 31, 1774

AN ACT to discontinue, in such manner, and for or 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's Bay, in North America.

Administration of Justice Act

May 20, 1774

AN ACT for or 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 Massachuset's Bay, in New England.

... that an indifferent trial cannot be had within the said province, in that case, it shall and may be lawful for the governor ..., to direct, with the advice and consent of the council, that the inquisition, indictment, or appeal, shall be tried in some other of his Majesty's colonies, or in *Great Britain*; and for that purpose, to order the person against whom such inquisition or indictment shall be found, ..

Massachusetts Government Act

May 20, 1774

AN ACT for the better regulating the government of the province of the Massachuset's Bay, *in* New England.

Be it therefore enacted ..., that from and after August 1, 1774, so much of the charter ... [of 1691] ... which relates to the time and manner of electing the assistants or counsellors for the said province, be revoked, ... and that the offices of all counsellors and assistants, elected and appointed in pursuance thereof, shall from thenceforth cease and determine: And that, from and after the said August 1, 17 74, the council, or court of assistants of the said province for the time being, shall be composed of such of the inhabitants or proprietors of lands within the same as shall be thereunto nominated and appointed by his Majesty . . .

Quartering Act of 1774

Established June 2, 1774, the Quartering Act of 1774 was similar in substance to the Quartering Act of 1765.

...hereby respectively authorized, empowered, and directed, on the requisition of the officer who, for the time being, has the command of His Majesty's forces in *North America*, to cause any officers or soldiers in His Majesty's service to be quartered and billeted in such manner as is now directed by law where no barracks are provided by the colonies

...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, outhouses, 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.

Quebec Act

June 22, 1774

AN ACT for making effectual Provision for the Government of the Province of Quebec, in North America.

It is hereby declared, That His Majesty's Subjects professing the Religion of the Church of Rome, of, and in the said Province of *Quebec*, may have, hold, and enjoy, the free Exercise of the Religion of the Church of Rome, subject to the King's Supremacy, declared and established by an Act made in the First Year of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, over all the Dominions and Countries which then did, or thereafter should, belong to the Imperial Crown of this Realm; and that the Clergy of the said Church may hold, receive, and enjoy their accustomed Dues and Rights, with respect to such Persons only as shall profess the said Religion.

Provided nevertheless, That it shall be lawful for His Majesty, His Heirs or Successors, to make such Provisions out of the rest of the said accustomed Dues and Rights, for the Encouragement of the Protestant Religion, and for the Maintenance and Support of a Protestant Clergy within the said Province, as he or they shall, from Time to Time, think necessary or expedient...

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That all His Majesty's Canadian Subjects within the Province of *Quebec*, the Religious Orders and Communities only excepted, may also hold and enjoy their Property and Possessions, together with all Customs and Usages, relative thereto, and all other their Civil Rights, in as large, ample and beneficial Manner, as if the said Proclamation, Commissions, Ordinances, and other Acts and Instruments, had not been made, and as may consist with their Allegiance to His Majesty, and Subjection to the Crown and Parliament of *Great Britain*; and that in all Matters of Controversy relative to Property and Civil Rights, Resort shall be had to the Laws of *Canada*, as the Rule for the Decision of the same; and all Causes that shall hereafter be instituted in any of the Courts of Justice, to be appointed within and for the said Province by His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, shall, with respect to such Property and Rights, be determined agreeably to the said Laws and Customs of *Canada*, ...

Articles of Association, 1774

The Association was a universal prohibition of trade with Great Britain. Though it made a handful of exceptions, it prohibited import, consumption, and export of goods with England. Unlike most of the individual associations, it established citizen committees to enforce the act throughout the colonies.

IN CONGRESS IN PHILADELPHIA

October 20, 1774

We, his majesty's most loyal subjects, the delegates of the several colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the three lower counties of Newcastle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, deputed to represent them in a continental Congress, held in the city of Philadelphia, on the 5th day of September, 1774

Galloway's Plan for the Union of Great Britain and the Colonies

1774

Offered by Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania; this was the first order of business for the First Continental Congress. New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey were especially concerned that the Colonies should reconcile with Great Britain. This was their plan for compromise. The plan was considered very attractive to most of the members, as it proposed a popularly elected *Grand Council* which would represent the interests of the colonies as a whole, and would be a continental equivalent to the English Parliament. After a sincere debate, it was rejected by a six to five vote on October 22, 1774. It may have been the arrival of the Suffolk County (Boston) resolutions that killed it.

