

FIND OUT

- Why did Britain pass the Tea Act?
- What was the Boston Tea Party?
- How did colonists respond to the Intolerable Acts?
- What was the shot heard 'round the world?

VOCABULARY militia,
minuteman

One night in July 1774, John Adams stopped at a tavern in eastern Massachusetts. After riding more than 30 miles (48 km), he was hot and dusty, and his body ached with fatigue. Adams asked the innkeeper for a cup of tea. He would have to drink coffee, she said. She did not serve tea. In a letter to his wife, Adams later praised the innkeeper's conduct. "Tea," he wrote, "must be . . . [given up]" by all colonists. He promised to break himself of the habit as soon as possible.

Why did colonists like John Adams give up tea? The answer was taxes. When Parliament decided to enforce a tea tax in 1773, a new crisis exploded. This time, colonists began to think the unthinkable. Perhaps the time had come to reject British rule and declare independence.

Uproar Over Tea

Tea became popular after it was brought to the colonies in the early 1700s. By 1770, at least one million Americans brewed tea twice a day. People "would rather go without their dinners than without a dish of tea," a visitor to the colonies noted.

Parliament passes the Tea Act. Most tea was brought to the colonies by the British East India Company. The company sold its tea to colonial tea merchants. The merchants then sold the tea to the colonists.

In the 1770s, however, the British East India Company found itself in deep financial trouble. More than 15 million pounds of its tea sat unsold in British warehouses. Britain had kept a tax on tea as a symbol of its right to tax the colonies. The tax was a small one, but colonists resented it. They refused to buy English tea.

Parliament tried to help the East India Company by passing the **Tea Act** of 1773. The act let the company bypass the tea merchants and sell directly to colonists. Although colonists would still have to pay the tea tax, the tea itself would cost less than ever before.

To the surprise of Parliament, colonists protested the Tea Act. Colonial tea merchants were angry because they had been cut out of the tea trade. If Parliament ruined tea merchants today, they warned, what would prevent it from turning on other businesses tomorrow? Even tea drinkers, who would have benefited from the law, scorned the Tea Act. They believed that it was a British trick to make them accept Parliament's right to tax the colonies.

Boycott the "accursed STUFF"! Once again, colonists responded with a boycott. One colonial newspaper warned:

“Do not suffer yourself to sip the accursed, dutied STUFF. For if you do, the devil will immediately enter into you, and you will instantly become a traitor to your country.”

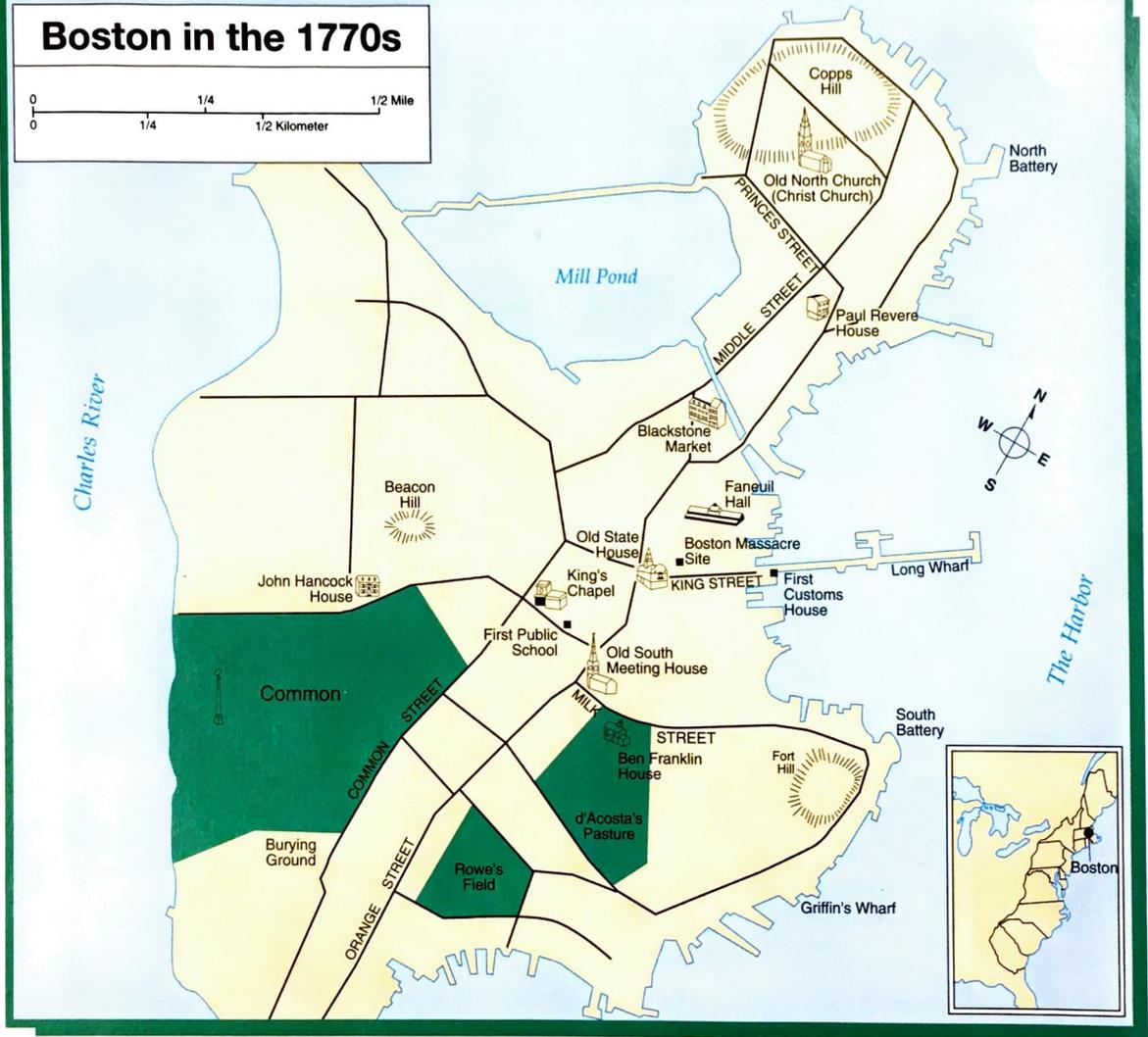
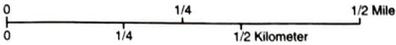
Daughters of Liberty and other women led the boycott. They served coffee or made "liberty tea" from raspberry leaves. Sons of Liberty enforced the boycott by keeping the British East India Company from unloading cargoes of tea.

MAP STUDY

Much early protest against the British occurred in the city of Boston. This map shows Boston in the 1770s.

1. (a) At which building did colonists gather before the Boston Tea Party? (b) On which street was it located?
2. In what part of Boston did the Boston Tea Party take place?
3. **Drawing Conclusions** Why would taxes on trade be especially unpopular in cities like Boston?

Boston in the 1770s



The Boston Tea Party



In late November 1773, three ships carrying tea arrived in Boston harbor. Governor Thomas Hutch-

inson ordered the captain to pay the required taxes, unload, and sell the tea as usual. If the taxes were not paid within 20 days, he would seize the cargo and have it sold. The deadline was Thursday, December 16.

A demand that the tea ships leave. All that day, Boston seethed with excitement. Townspeople roamed the streets, wondering what the Sons of Liberty would do. Farmers and workers from nearby towns joined the crowds. “Committee Men & Mob Men were buzzing about in Swarms, like Bees,” reported a nephew of Governor Hutchinson.

By 10 A.M., thousands of people had made their way along Milk Street to the Old South Meetinghouse. Sam Adams was there, directing affairs. The wealthy merchant John Hancock was also present. At the meeting, colonists voted that the tea ships should leave Boston that afternoon—without unloading. Runners were sent to the customs house to voice the colonists’ demand.

By afternoon, word came back. Customs officers would not act without the governor.

Messengers then set off to see Governor Hutchinson.

Nervously, Sam Adams waited. So did the 5,000 people who had gathered in and around the meetinghouse. Finally, the messengers returned. The governor would not let the ships sail. The crowd’s angry roar echoed far down the streets of Boston.

“Boston harbor a teapot tonight!” Adams waved for silence. “This meeting can do nothing further to save the country,” he announced. Suddenly, as if on cue, a group of men burst into the meetinghouse. Dressed like Mohawk Indians, they waved hatchets in the air. The crowd stirred. What was this? From the gallery above, voices cried, “Boston harbor a teapot tonight! The Mohawks are come!”

George Hewes was one of the “Mohawks” poised for action. He later reported:

The Boston Tea Party British officials were outraged by the Boston Tea Party, shown here. One called it “the most wanton and unprovoked insult offered to the civil power that is recorded in history.” John Adams, however, believed that many colonists wished that “as many dead Carcasses were floating in the Harbour, as there are Chests of Tea.”

Economics Why were colonial tea merchants angered by the Tea Act?



“I [had] dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet after having painted my face and hands with coal dust in the shop of a blacksmith. . . . When I first appeared in the street after being thus disguised, I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and. . . marched in order to the place of our destination.”

That place was Griffin’s Wharf, where the tea ships lay at anchor. About 50 or 60 people disguised as Indians were there. Some were carpenters and barbers. Others were doctors and merchants. In the cold, crisp night, under a nearly full moon, the men worked quickly. They boarded the ships, split open the tea chests, and dumped the tea into the harbor. On shore, the crowd watched silently. The only sounds were the chink of hatchets and the splash of tea landing in the water.

By 10 P.M., the job was done. The **Boston Tea Party**, as it was later called, had ended. However, the effects would be felt for a long time to come. ■

Britain Strikes Back

Did Sam Adams organize the Boston Tea Party? Although he never said so publicly, he very likely knew that it was planned. Whoever led the tea party, however, made sure that the protest was orderly. Only tea was destroyed. No other cargo was touched. The Boston Tea Party was meant to show Britain that the colonists would act firmly.

Colonists had mixed reactions to the event. Some cheered the action. Others worried that it would encourage lawlessness in the colonies. Even those who condemned the Boston Tea Party were shocked at Britain’s response to it.

Punishment for Massachusetts. The British were outraged by what they saw as

Boston’s lawless behavior. In 1774, Parliament, encouraged by King George III, acted to punish Massachusetts. First, Parliament shut down the port of Boston. No ship could enter or leave the harbor—not even a small boat. The harbor would remain closed until the colonists paid for the tea.

Second, Parliament forbade colonists to hold town meetings more than once a year without the governor’s permission. In the past, colonists had called town meetings whenever they wished.

Third, Parliament provided for customs officers and other officials charged with major crimes to be tried in Britain instead of in Massachusetts. Colonists protested. They said that a dishonest official could break the law in the colonies and avoid punishment “by being tried, where no evidence can pursue him.”

Fourth, Parliament passed a new Quartering Act. No longer would redcoats camp in tents on Boston Common. Instead, British commanders could force citizens to house troops in their homes. The colonists called these laws the **Intolerable Acts** because they were so harsh.

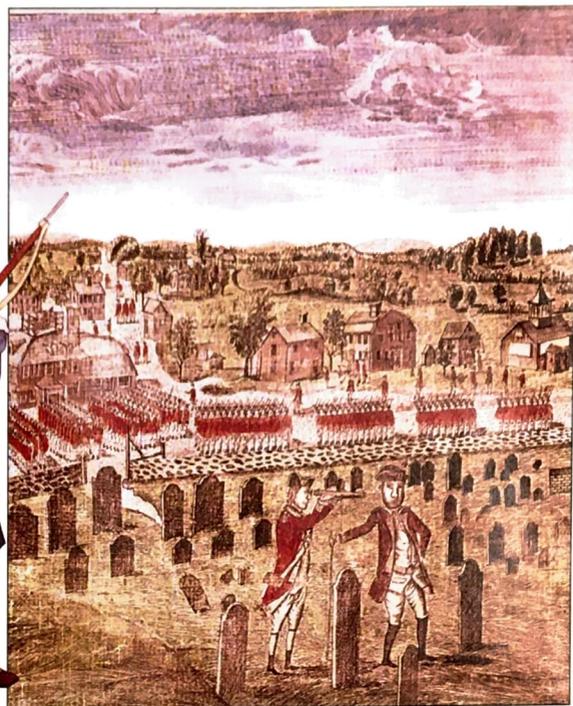
Colonists support Boston. The committees of correspondence spread news of the Intolerable Acts. People from other colonies responded quickly to help the people of Boston, who faced hunger while their port was closed.



British Grenadier *The Intolerable Acts forced Bostonians to open their homes to British soldiers, such as the one shown here.* **Citizenship** *What were the other provisions of the Intolerable Acts?*

Carts rolled into the city with rice from South Carolina, corn from Virginia, and flour from Pennsylvania.

In the Virginia assembly, a young lawyer named Thomas Jefferson suggested that a day be set aside to mark the shame of the Intolerable Acts. The royal governor of Virginia rejected the idea and dismissed the assembly. But the colonists went ahead anyway. On June 1, 1774, church bells tolled slowly. Merchants closed their shops. Many colonists prayed and fasted all day.



The First Continental Congress

In response to the Intolerable Acts, colonial leaders called a meeting in Philadelphia. In September 1774, delegates from 12 colonies gathered in what became known as the **First Continental Congress**. Only Georgia did not send delegates.

After much debate, the delegates passed a resolution backing Massachusetts in its struggle against the Intolerable Acts. They agreed to boycott all British goods and to stop exporting goods to Britain until the harsh laws were repealed. The delegates also urged each colony to set up and train its own **militia** (muh LIHSH uh). A militia is an army of citizens who serve as soldiers during an emergency.

Before leaving Philadelphia, the delegates agreed to meet again the following May. Little did they know that by May 1775 an incident in Massachusetts would have changed the fate of the colonies forever.

The Shot Heard 'Round the World

In Massachusetts, newspapers called on citizens to prevent what they called “the Massacre of American Liberty.” Volunteers

Redcoats at Concord Minuteman Amos Doolittle made this engraving of two British commanders scouting the area around Concord. Brilliantly clad British troops are marching toward their battle with colonial minutemen. An engraving of a minuteman is shown at left. **Citizenship** Do you think that the fighting at Lexington and Concord could have been avoided? Explain.

known as **minutemen** trained regularly. Minutemen got their name because they kept their muskets at hand, prepared to fight at a minute's notice. Meanwhile, Britain built up its forces. More troops arrived in Boston, bringing the total number in that city to 4,000.

Early in 1775, General Thomas Gage, the British commander, learned that minutemen had a large store of arms in Concord, a village about 18 miles (29 km) from Boston. General Gage planned a surprise march to Concord to seize the arms.

On April 18, about 700 British troops quietly left Boston under cover of darkness. The Sons of Liberty were watching. As soon as the British set out, they hung two lamps

from the Old North Church in Boston as a signal that the redcoats were on the move.

Sounding the alarm. Colonists who were waiting across the Charles River saw the signal. Messengers mounted their horses and galloped through the night toward Concord. One midnight rider was Paul Revere. “The British are coming! The British are coming!” shouted Revere as he passed through each sleepy village along the way.

At daybreak on April 19, the redcoats reached Lexington, a town near Concord. There, waiting for them on the village green, were 70 minutemen commanded by Captain John Parker. The British ordered the minutemen to go home. Outnumbered, the colonists began to leave. A shot suddenly rang out through the chill morning air. No one knows who fired it. In the brief struggle that followed, eight colonists were killed and one British soldier was wounded.

The British pushed on to Concord. Finding no arms in the village, they turned back to Boston. On a bridge outside Concord, they met 300 minutemen. Again, fighting broke out. This time, the British were forced to retreat. As they withdrew, colonial sharpshooters took deadly aim at them from the woods and fields. By the time they reached Boston, the redcoats had lost 73 men. Another 200 were wounded or missing.

A turning point. News of the battles at Lexington and Concord spread swiftly. To many colonists, the fighting ended all hope of reaching an agreement with Britain. Only

war would decide the future of the 13 colonies.

More than 60 years after the battles, a well-known New England poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, wrote a poem about them. It begins:

“By the rude bridge that arched
the flood,
Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers
stood,
And fired the shot heard round
the world.”

The “embattled farmers” faced long years of war. At the war’s end, though, the 13 colonies would stand firm as a new, independent nation.

SECTION 4 REVIEW

- 1. Locate:** (a) Boston, (b) Concord, (c) Lexington.
- 2. Identify:** (a) Tea Act, (b) Boston Tea Party, (c) Intolerable Acts, (d) First Continental Congress, (e) Paul Revere.
- 3. Define:** (a) militia, (b) minuteman.
- 4.** (a) Why did Britain pass the Tea Act? (b) Why did the act anger colonists?
- 5.** How did the Intolerable Acts help unite the colonies?
- 6.** Describe the events that led to fighting at Lexington.
- 7. CRITICAL THINKING Analyzing Information**
Do you think that the organizers of the Boston Tea Party would have ended their protests against Britain if Parliament had repealed the tax on tea? Explain.

ACTIVITY Writing to Learn

Imagine that you are a writer for the Massachusetts committee of correspondence. Write a letter informing colonists about the Intolerable Acts.



Our Common Heritage

One colonist who heeded Paul Revere’s call to action was a minuteman named Peter Salem. A former slave, Salem marched with his company to face the British at Concord. Armed with a flintlock musket, he kept firing until the redcoats retreated.