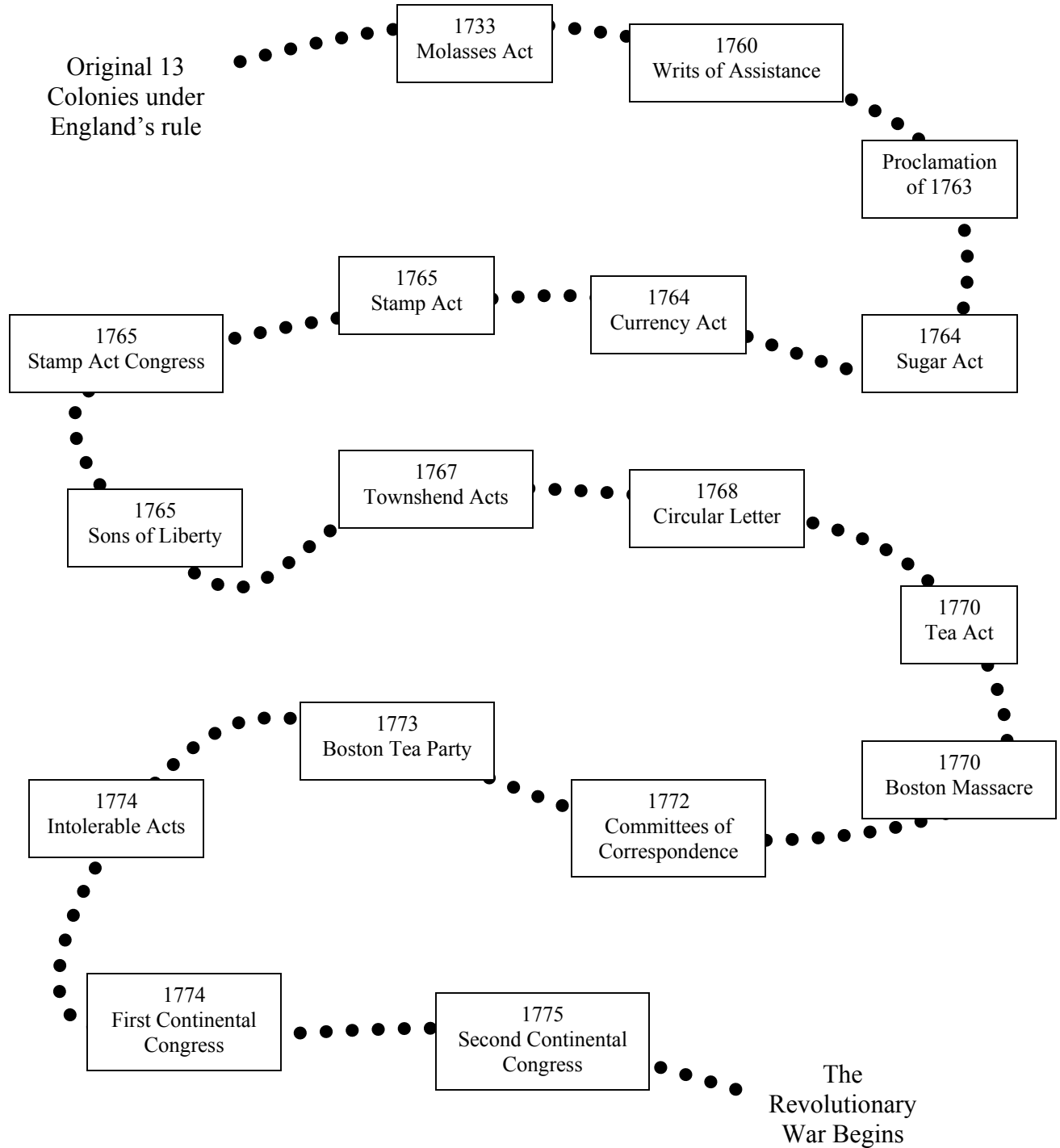


The Road to Independence

The colonists in the New World were being pushed and pushed by the King of England to comply with his laws. These events ended up leading to the Revolutionary War and eventually independence for colonists in the United States of America.



1733 Molasses Act

This was a British law that imposed a tax on molasses, sugar, and rum imported from non-British foreign colonies to the North American colonies. This act was to encourage colonists to purchase these products from the British West Indies. The American colonists protested the act, claiming the British West Indies could not produce enough molasses to meet the colonies' needs. The Molasses Act was one of the least effective of the laws imposed by Britain, since the colonists continued to smuggle molasses, sugar, and rum from non-British colonies.

1760 Writs of Assistance

These were general search warrants issued to courts that enabled the British government to search any house for smuggled goods. This gave the British soldiers the authority to search the colonists' houses at random without any reasonable cause.

Proclamation of 1763

This British proclamation established boundaries and governments for the American colonies that Britain gained from France and Spain after the French and Indian War. In addition, a large area of territory was set-aside for Indians to inhabit. The fact that the British government gave this land over to the Indians angered the settlers in the original 13 colonies, who wanted the land for expansion.

1764 Sugar Act

This law was to end the smuggling trade in sugar and molasses from the French and Dutch West Indies. The Sugar Act provided for strong customs enforcement of the taxes on refined sugar and molasses imported into the colonies from non-British Caribbean sources previously allowed in the Molasses Act. In addition to the tax, the colonists were subject to random searches in their ships, which angered them.

1764 Currency Act

In this proclamation, the King of England made it illegal for the colonists to use any money other than England's. People who violated this rule would have to pay a fine of 1,000 pounds. Violators would also have to forfeit their money and leave the country.

1765 Stamp Act

This act, passed by the British Parliament, was another attempt to tax the American colonies. It required all legal documents, licenses, commercial contracts, newspapers, pamphlets, and playing cards to carry a tax stamp, showing that a tax had been paid. It was intended to help the British pay for the costs of keeping up the military defenses in the New World. It was passed in Britain without debate and without representation from the colonists.

1765 Stamp Act Congress

Colonial businessmen met in the Stamp Act Congress to consider organized ways to protest against the Stamp tax. They agreed to stop importing British goods until the act was repealed. They also refused to use the stamps on business papers and the colonial courts did not enforce their use on legal documents. The Stamp Act was eventually repealed by the British Parliament one year later after Benjamin Franklin from Pennsylvania stated the opinion of the colonists.

1765 Sons of Liberty

This was a secret society organized in the American colonies to oppose the Stamp Act. After the act was repealed in 1766, the society formed Committees of Correspondence to encourage the colonists to continue to resist the British taxes. They also encouraged the colonists to refuse to import British goods and took part in convening the First Continental Congress. Its leaders included Samuel Adams and Paul Revere.

1767 Townshend Acts

This act was passed by the British Parliament and took away the powers of the New York Assembly. The New York Assembly did not follow a law that was enacted two years earlier that required the colonies to provide an adequate place for British troops to live. The second part of the act was called the Revenue Act, which imposed taxes on glass, lead, paints, paper, and tea imported to the colonies.

1768 Circular Letter

Samuel Adams wrote a "Circular Letter" in which he opposed taxation without representation. He said that it was unfair for the English government to tax the colonists without their input in British Parliament. This letter was written to other colonial legislatures and was sent to assemblies throughout the colonies.

1770 Tea Act

The Tea Act was an effort by the British government to sell more English tea in America. Up until this time, most of the tea imported to the colonies came from Dutch smugglers. The Tea Act was an effort to help the British East India Company sell 17,000,000 pounds of tea stored in England and stop the colonists from smuggling tea from non-British sources. This additional taxation led to the Boston Massacre and eventually to the Boston Tea Party in 1773.

1770 Boston Massacre

The Boston Massacre occurred on March 5, 1770, five years before the beginning of the American Revolution. British troops were in the city of Boston to discourage colonists from demonstrating against the Townshend Acts. The citizens were harassing the troops when missiles thrown by some of the colonists struck a squad of British soldiers. The soldiers fired into the crowd and killed five men. The eight soldiers were tried for murder. Two soldiers were declared guilty of manslaughter, but claimed that they were religious priests and served no prison time. The others, including the officer in charge, were found not guilty. This enraged the colonists and led them closer to revolution.

1772 Committees of Correspondence

These groups appointed by the legislatures in the colonies provided leadership and aided in cooperation among the colonies. Samuel Adams organized the first group in Boston and within three months, eighty other had been formed in Massachusetts. These committees played a big role in getting colonies to cooperate and communicate during their fight for independence. Many of these Committee members went on to serve on the First Continental Congress in 1774.

1773 Boston Tea Party

This is the popular name for a protest by Boston citizens against the British tax on tea imported to the colonies. The citizens would not permit three British ships to unload their 342 chests of tea. The royal governor of Massachusetts however, would not let the ships return to England until the tax had been paid. On the evening of December 16, a group of citizens disguised themselves as Native Americans, boarded the ships and emptied the tea into the Boston Harbor. When the government of Boston refused to pay for the tea, the British closed the port.

1774 Intolerable Acts

This popular name was given to a series of laws passed by the British Parliament to punish the colony of Massachusetts after the Boston Tea Party and Boston Massacre. The Intolerable Acts included four measures that served as an example to other rebellious colonies. The Boston Port Act closed the port of Boston to trade. The Massachusetts Government Act required the colonists to provide accommodations for British soldiers. The Impartial Administration of Justice Act removed British officials from the jurisdiction of Massachusetts courts. Finally, the Quebec Act expanded the territory of Quebec and did not allow for a representative colony.

1774 First Continental Congress

The First Continental Congress met in Carpenters' Hall, Philadelphia on September 5, 1774 to consider what actions the colonies would take in response to the Intolerable Acts. Twelve colonies were represented by 50 delegates; Canada and Georgia were not represented. This Congress issued a petition to George III, called the Declaration of Rights and Grievances. The Congress also called for all colonies to boycott all trade with Britain until their grievances were addressed.

1775 Second Continental Congress

The First Continental Congress set up a second Congressional meeting in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775 if the king failed to respond favorably to their petition. When the Second Continental Congress met, the battles of Lexington and Concord had recently taken place in Massachusetts, and colonial soldiers were resisting the British soldiers in Boston. These delegates included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams. The crisis in the colonies caused this Congress to form committees and assume governmental duties that had previously been exercised by the king. This Congress called Washington to organize a continental army. It also established regulations for trade, issued paper money, and sent representatives overseas to try to get financial and military assistance from other countries. Later in the year, the British issued a proclamation "for suppressing rebellion and sedition" in the colonies. After voting in May to instruct the colonies to form their own governments, the Congress began debating the issue of independence. On July 4, the Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War officially began.

Want more information?

The Road to Revolution

<http://www.norfolk.k12.ma.us/students/kaufman/revolution/R2R.html>

The Birth of a Nation <http://tjunior.thinkquest.org/3803/>

And a New Nation is <http://www.alexandriacentral.org/cove/revolution.html>.

Causes of the American Revolution

<http://www.multied.com/revolt/causes.html>.