CONSULTANT EDITORS

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER, Chief Consultant Editor
Professor of History and American Studies, Amherst College

Aboriginal America: WILLIAM DUNCAN STRONG, Formerly Chairman, Department of Anthropology, Columbia University

Economic History: THOMAS C. COCHRAN, Professor of American History, University of Pennsylvania

Expansion and Regionalism: RAY ALLEN BILLINGTON, Research Associate, Henry E. Huntington Library

Exploration: J. BARTLET BRENNER, Formerly Professor of History, Columbia University

Fine Arts and Architecture: TALBOT HAMLIN, Formerly Professor of Architecture, School of Architecture, Columbia University

Foreign Relations: SUMNER WELLES, Formerly Under Secretary of State

Literature and Drama: JAMES D. HART, Professor of American Literature, University of California

Religion: THE REV. DR. ANSON PHELPS STOKES, Formerly Canon of Washington Cathedral


Updating and Revisions: JEFFREY B. MORRIS, Lecturer in Political Science, City University of New York; member of the New York Bar

Editorial Assistants
WILLIAM GREENLEAF, THOMAS ROBSON HAY, HAROLD HYMAN, BENJAMIN LINDER, MARTIN LICHTERMAN, MILDRED B. MATTHEWS, JAMES FERGUS MCREE, EMIL OBERHOLZER, JR., BERENICE ROBINSON, JOHN F. ROCHE, WILLIAM S. SACHS

ENCYCLOPEDIA

OF

AMERICAN HISTORY

Enlarged and Updated

Edited by

RICHARD B. MORRIS

Gouverneur Morris Professor of History,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

1817

HARPER & ROW, PUBLISHERS

New York, Evanston, and London
Meantime, Col. Frederick Haldimand had reinforced Oswego. Outnumbered by British attackers under Amherst the French blew up Ft. Carillon (Ticonderoga, 26 July) and Ft. St. Frederic (Crown Point, 31 July)—both retaken by Amherst—and retreated down the Richelieu. A combined force of 9,000 troops under Wolfe and a fleet under Rear Adm. Charles Saunders sailed up the St. Lawrence (16 June), anchoring off Bic and St. Barnabé, where Rear Adm. Durell landed a detachment of troops on the Île-aux-Coudres (28 May) and advanced to the Île d’Orléans to await the main force (25 June). Wolfe landed troops on Île d’Orléans (27 June); sent Monckton to occupy Pointe Lévis opposite Quebec, and Brig. Gen. George Townshend (1724–1807) to the north shore (9 July). After the failure of attempts by Montcalm to burn the British fleet (27 July) and by the British to storm the enemy position (31 July), Wolfe dispatched a force under Brig. Gen. James Murray (1719–94) to engage troops north of Bic. On their return (25 Aug.), he decided to attack. While the French were led to expect a major attack from the St. Lawrence, Wolfe moved his troops on the night of 12–13 Sept., upstream in small boats, landing before dawn on the north shore, and made a surprise ascent of the Plains of Abraham, a plateau above the city. Unwilling to await reinforcements by a force from the Cap Rouge area, Montcalm engaged the British with 4,500 troops. Superior discipline and arms won the day for the British, who lost only 60 killed and 600 wounded as against 220 killed and 1,200 wounded for the French. But these fatalities included both Wolfe and Montcalm. Quebec soon capitulated (18 Sept.).

1760. SURRENDER OF CANADA. Converging on Montreal, Amherst, striking from Lake Ontario, landed at Lachine (6 Sept.); William Haviland, marching north from Crown Point, captured Chambly (1 Sept.); and Governor Murray, pressing down from Quebec, made a junction with the others massed before Montreal, forcing Pierre François de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, Governor of Canada, to surrender the entire province (8 Sept.). Maj. Robert Rogers (1731–95) took possession of Detroit and other Great Lakes posts (1760–61) in 1761–62. INVOLVEMENT OF SPAIN. Apprehensive that a British victory would upset the balance of colonial power, Spain prepared to throw her weight on the side of France and Austria. Anticipating attack, Great Britain declared war (2 Jan. 1762). Martiniere, principal French base in the lesser Antilles, fell to the British (15 Feb. 1762), followed by St. Lucia and Grenada, and, after a two-month siege, Havana capitulated (12 Aug.). Manila fell (5 Oct.) to a second fleet operating in the Far East. To compensate Spain for her loss, France, anxious to end the war, ceded to her ally, by the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau (3 Nov. 1762), all her territory west of the Mississippi as well as the Isle of Orleans (ratified 13 Nov. 1762).

1763. 10 Feb. TREATY OF PARIS ended the west European and colonial phases of the Seven Years’ War and the Treaty of Hubertusburg (Feb.) concluded its German phase. France ceded to Great Britain all claim to Acadia, Cape Breton, Canada, and the islands of the St. Lawrence, but retained fishing rights on Newfoundland’s banks and was given the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. France further yielded all territory east of the Mississippi (including the port of Mobile) except the city of New Orleans. Pitt, preferring Canada to the French West Indies for reasons of military security as well as trade, returned to France Martinique and Guadeloupe. St. Vincent, Dominica, and Tobago were restored to Britain. France agreed to evacuate her positions in Hanover, restore Minorca to the British, and to the status quo ante in India. Cuba was restored to Spain in exchange for East and West Florida, and the British agreed to demolish fortifications on the Honduran coast, but the rights of her logwooders to operate in that area were specifically recognized by Spain.

THE ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1763–89

7 Oct. PROCLAMATION OF 1763. The French and Indian War had revealed the insecuility of the frontiers against Indian raids. The first step in placating the Indians was the appointment by Gen. Braddock of Sir William Johnson as Indian Commissioner (Apr. 1755) and his reappointment as Commissioner for the North (spring 1756). Since land frauds were believed to lie at the root of Indian unrest, Johnson’s secretary, Peter Wraxall, urged (9 Jan. 1756) that henceforth land cessions require the approval of the Indian commissioners. By the Treaty of Easton (Oct. 1756) with its western Indians Pennsylvania agreed to make no settlements west of the Alleghenies. However, the abandonment of Ft. Duquesne (24 Nov.) and its occupation by the British resulted in an influx of settlers, compelling Coll. Henry Bouquet (1719–65) to forbid settlement west of the mountains (13 Oct. 1756). The Earl of Egremont as Secretary of State for the Southern Dept. required royal approval for land grants in or adjacent to Indian territory (2 Dec.). To “William Petty, Lord Shelburne, head of the Board of Trade in the Halifax Government, the ministry, was assigned the formulation of a policy for the newly acquired territory in North America resulting from the Treaty of Paris. Shelburne recommended (8 June 1763) that the Appalachians constitute the dividing line between the settlers and an Indian reservation save for a projected colonial settlement in the upper Ohio and some provision for Indian settlement east of that line. Out of the newly acquired territory three new provinces were to be created: (1) Quebec; (2) East Florida; (3) West Florida, with boundaries confined within modest limits in no way encroaching upon the Thirteen Colonies. News of an Indian crisis reached the British ministry in August. Before the plan was put into effect Shelburne was replaced (2 Sept.) by the less-experienced Earl of Hillsborough, a close associate of Halifax, who prepared a proclamation which modified Shelburne’s proposal by omitting provision for upper Ohio settlement and ordering colonists already settled in that area “forthwith to remove themselves.” Purchases of land from the Indians east of the line were forbidden. Indian territory west of the line was placed under the control of the military commander in chief in America. English law was established in Quebec, a provision deemed unfair and anti-Catholic by French settlers. The proclamation was rushed through the cabinet and Privy Council and signed by the king (7 Oct.).

7 May–28 Nov. PONTIAC’S REBELLION. Following the surrender of Detroit to the English under Major Robert Rogers (29 Nov. 1760), the Indians demanded that the British authorities lower prices on trade goods and furnish them with ammunition. When these demands were not met at a conference at Detroit (9 Sept. 1761) the Indians grew increasingly restive, stirred up by the Delaware Prophet, a visionary living in the upper Ohio, and by his disciple Pontiac (c.1720–69), chief of the Ottawa. After his plan to take Detroit by a surprise attack was betrayed (May), Pontiac took to open warfare. Within a few weeks every British post west of Niagara was destroyed (Sandusky, 16 May; Ft. St.
Joseph, 25 May; Ft. Miami, 27 May; Ft. Ouatinon, 1 June; Ft. Venango, 16 June; Ft. Le Boueuf, 18 June; Ft. Presque Isle, 20 June), save for Detroit, which, under Maj. Henry Gladwin, resisted a five months' siege, and Ft. Pitt, under Capt. Simeon Ecuyer. In retaliation Amherst proposed to Bouquet that "Small pox" be sent among the disaffected tribes, and the latter replied that he would try to distribute geranium blankets among them, but, because of the danger of exposure to British troops, preferred hunting the Indians "with English dogs" (13 July). As a result of reinforcements which reached Detroit (29 July), Gladwin made a sortie against Pontiac and was repulsed at Bloody Ridge (31 July). Marching to the relief of Ft. Pitt, Bouquet defeated (with heavy British losses) and routed the Indians at Bushy Run, east of present Pittsburgh (2-6 Aug.), and relieved the fort (10 Aug.). In Nov. Pontiac raised his siege of Detroit. A number of tribes had already signed treaties with Col. John Bradlay, at Presque Isle (12 Aug.). Pontiac finally submitted, concluding a peace treaty with Sir William Johnson at Oswego (24 July 1766). Subsequently he remained loyal to the British, but was murdered (1769) in Caboka (Illinois), according to Pontiac's version by a Kaskaaki Indian bribed by an English trader.

5 Nov.-1 Dec. PARSON’S CAUSE. This case was the result of legislation in Virginia regulating salaries of Anglican ministers, which, from 1662, had by law been paid in tobacco, varying with the market value of that commodity. Owing to failure of the tobacco crop as a result of drought, the legislature (Oct. 1755) commuted such pay into currency at the rate of 2d. per lb.; reenacted, 1758. Acting on memorials from the Virginia clergy the Privy Council disallowed the act (10 Aug. 1759). As a result the clergy proceeded to sue for back salary even though the act had not been declared null and void ab initio. Most publicized was the case brought by Rev. James Maury in Hanover Co. Court. The bench held that the 1758 act was "ex post facto," but Maury (swayed by the rhetoric of young Patrick Henry [1736-99], who declared that by disallowing the act the king had broken the compact between the governed and the ruler, thereby forfeiting "all rights to his subjects' obedience") returned a verdict of 1d. for plaintiff. The General Court (10 Apr. 1764) in giving judgment against the clergy was affirmed by the Privy Council (3 Dec. 1766).

13-27 Dec. FRONTIER DISORDER IN PENNSYLVANIA: THE Paxton BOYS. In January a insecurity of the frontier against Indian attacks (1754-63), a mob from Paxton and Donegal attacked the Conestoga Indians in Lancaster Co. The assembly, which had failed to respond to the demand of frontiersmen for better than the "Paxton Boys" be arrested and brought to Philadelphia for trial. Instead, the frontiersmen marched east, but were persuaded by Franklin to forego battle, and issued a formal protest by which they obtained greater representation in the legislature.

1764

5 Apr. REVENUE FROM AMERICA. Faced by a large postwar debt, heavy taxes at home, and the necessity of supporting an army in America, the Bute ministry sought revenue from the colonies. When the debate on the 1764 budget opened in the House of Commons (9 Mar.), the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Grenville, presented an American Revenue Act (generally known as the Sugar Act) to become the 1st law ever passed by Parliament for the specific purpose of raising money in the colonies for the crown. The act (1) extended the Molasses Act of 1733 but reduced the 6d.-per-gallon duty upon foreign molasses to 3d., the old rate on raw sugar was continued, and an increased duty levied on foreign refined sugar; (2) placed new or higher import duties on non-British textiles, coffee, and indigo, and on Madeira and Canary wines imported directly; (3) doubled the duties on foreign goods reshipped in England to the colonies; (4) added iron, hides, whale fins, raw silk, potash, and pearl ash to the enumerated list; (5) banned the import into the colonies of foreign rum and French wines. Grenville estimated that the act, if efficiently administered, would return £45,000 annually.

ENDING SALUTARY NEGLECT. More significant was Grenville's determination to modify the trade laws by reviving the customs service (at that time the American customs returned little more than one fourth £20,000 the cost of collecting them). A companion measure provided for tighter enforcement by (1) establishing a vice-admiralty court at Halifax with jurisdiction over all the American colonies and enabling prosecutors and informers to bring suit there at their option rather than in local colonial courts; (2) annuling the right of an accused to sue for illegal seizure; (3) placing the burden of proof upon the accused and obliging him to post bond for the cost of the trial; and (4) establishing stricter registration and bonding procedures for ships carrying nonenumerated as well as enumerated cargoes. Grenville endeavored the practice under which American customs officials were permitted to live in England and entrust their duties to a deputy in the colonies.

CURRENCY ACT. WIDENED THE SCOPE OF COLONIAL OPPRESSION AS IT AFFECTED THE PLANTATION AS WELL AS THE COMMERCIAL PROVINCES. Aimed principally at Virginia, which had issued £250,000 of legal-tender paper money during the war, the act prohibited after 1 Sept. issues of legal-tender currency in all the American colonies (thereby extending the ban already operative in New England since 1751), as well as any extension of the recall date for outstanding issues. To guard against evasion, the act nullified all acts of colonial assemblies contrary to its terms and provided for a fine of £1,000 and dismissal from office (with illegibility for any government position in the future) of any colonial Governor who asssented to legislative acts in defiance of the law.

COLONIAL OPPOSITION. To Americans already distressed by a marked postwar business decline, the Grenville program, by combining higher imports and strict enforcement with the severe deflationary shock of the Currency Act, seemed calculated to ruin the colonial economy. Massachusetts led the way in protest. A Boston town meeting (24 May) denounced taxation without representation and proposed united action by the 13 colonies. The House of Representatives authorized the writing of a correspondence (13 June) to contact the other provinces. In Aug. Boston merchants agreed to do without English lace and ruffles, an example which the townsmen followed (Sept.) in pledging to wear no leather work clothes not of Massachusetts make. By the end of the year nonimportation had spread to other colonies, notably New York.

1765

QUARTERING ACT. Requested by Gen. Thomas Gage, commander of the British forces in America, and not an integral part of the Grenville program, the quartering Act (1765) gave the rising fire of American resentment. Effective 24 Mar. for a 2-yr. term, the act required the civil authorities in the colonies to supply barracks and supplies for the British troops. A 2d act (1766) provided for quartering and billeting in inns, alehouses, and unoccupied dwellings.

22 Mar. STAMP ACT, the first direct tax ever levied by Parliament upon America, was designed to raise £60,000 annually, which, together with the return from the 1764 imports, would produce an American revenue sufficient to pay one third the £300,000 upkeep of the colonial military establishment. The act (passed the Commons, 27 Feb., the Lords, 8 Mar., to become effective 1 Nov.) placed a tax on upon newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets and broadsides, legal documents of all types, insurance policies, ship's papers, licenses, and even dice and playing cards. The receipts were to be paid into the royal exchequer for the defense of the colonies. With the sensibilities of the colonists in mind Grenville appointed Americans to be the stamp agents. Penalties for infringements could be imposed by courts of vice-
<Type: Left><Paragraph: 1>ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (1765)

admiralty (which had no jury) as well as by colonial common-law courts.

STAMP ACT CRISIS. Factors underlying unanimous opposition to the act were (1) the novelty of direct taxation by Parliament and the fear that this tax was to be the first of many; (2) its all-inclusive character transcended sections (2) of affected groups which carried great weight throughout the colonies (lawyers, printers, tavern owners, and land speculators as well as merchants and shipowners) the act broadened the base of the opposition; (4) the grant of jurisdiction to vice-admiralty courts raised fears of an assault upon the right to trial by jury; and (5) the imposition of the tax at a time of economic stagnation and currency stringency convinced many that Britain was deliberately aiming to weaken the colonies.

NEW POLITICAL THEORIES. In 1764 Otis had raised the issue of no taxation without representation. But the Stamp Act seemed to other American writers to draw distinctions aimed at establishing the measure's illegality. Widely read and quoted was the argument advanced (Considerations) by Daniel Dulany, a Maryland attorney, conceding the right of Parliament to regulate trade, even when such acts produced a revenue, but denying its authority to impose internal taxes for revenue upon the colonists inasmuch as the Americans were not and by their situation could not be represented in Parliament. The same distinction was expressed more militantly in the Virginia Resolutions (29 May) introduced before the House of Burgesses by Patrick Henry (p. 727) with the "Treason" speech in which he warned George III to note the fate of Caesar and Charles I. Asserting that the right of Virginia to govern its internal affairs had always been recognized by the Crown, the Resolutions claimed for the province's General Assembly the sole power to tax Virginians. Upon further deliberation (30–31 May) the House rejected the more radical of these claims, contending itself with stating that Virginians in the past had represented their own internal policy and approving the principle of no taxation without representation.

SONS OF LIBERTY. During the summer of 1765 secret organizations known as the Sons of Liberty (the term had been used by Colonel Barré in a speech against the Stamp Act in the House of Commons) were formed in the provincial towns to organize the opposition to the Stamp Act. Often organized, sometimes personally led (as in New York City) by men of wealth and high position, these groups did not hesitate to resort to violence to force stamp agents to resign their posts and merchants to cancel orders for British goods. A notorious instance occurred in Boston on 26 Aug., when the records of the Vice Admiral court were burned, the home of the comptroller of the currency ransacked, and the elegant home and library of Chief Justice Thomas Hutchinson looted. The Boston stamp agent, Andrew Oliver (Hutchinson's brother-in-law) had been forced by mob violence to resign 15 Aug. Before the effective date of the Stamp Act (1 Nov.) all the stamp agents in the colonies had resigned.

7–25 Oct. STAMP ACT CONGRESS. Upon the motion of James Otis, the Massachusetts Assembly resolved (6 June) to propose an intercolonial meeting to seek relief from the Stamp Act. A circular letter was dispatched to each colonial assembly (8 June) suggesting that a congress meet at New York City in Oct. South Carolina endorsed the proposal promptly (2 Aug.), followed by Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. The assemblies of New Jersey, Delaware, and New York failed to take formal action, but were represented by delegates chosen informally. The other 4 provinces failed to act, and were not represented when the Congress opened.

The prominent character of the Stamp Act Congress was clearly reflected in the "Declaration of Rights and Grievances" (19 Oct.), chiefly the work of John Dickinson (Pa.). In 14 resolutions the delegates claimed all the rights and liberties of the subjects in Great Britain, stated that taxation without consent expressed personally or through representa-

(1766) ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

tives was a violation of these rights, pointed out that the colonists were not and could not be represented in the House of Commons, and concluded that no taxes could be constitutionally imposed on them but by their own legislatures. Specifically condemned was the provision in the Stamp Act giving jurisdiction to admiralty courts embracing these resolutions and demanding repeal of the Stamp Act and the measures of 1764 were prepared for submission to the king, the House of Commons, and the House of Lords. The latter of the 27 delegates disband. On 11 Feb. 1766 the Northampton, Va., County Court declared the Stamp Act unconstitutional.

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS. The passage of the Stamp Act gave a new impetus to nonimportation. In New York City leading citizens signed an agreement (28 Oct.) banning the purchase of European goods until the Stamp Act was repealed and the trade regulations of 1764 modified. Following suit were 200 merchants (31 Oct.), some 400 Philadelphia merchants (Nov.), and 250 Boston merchants (9 Dec.). Business throughout the colonies was greatly reduced when the Stamp Act went into effect (1 Nov.), owing to the practically universal refusal to use the stamps. Except in Rhode Island, where Gov. Hopkins refused to execute the act, the courts also closed rather than use the stamps as the law required. Before the end of the year, however, business was renewed, without the stamps in open violation of the act.

BRITISH DEMANDS FOR REPEAL. When the Stamp Act became operative a movement in Britain for its repeal was already well along. Grenville's ministry, which had fallen from power in a crisis over a regency bill (10 July), was succeeded by a government under the Marquis of Rockingham. The decline in British exports to America (from £2,249,710 in 1764 to £1,595,110 in 1765) spoke more eloquently than colonial resolutions. A committee of merchants, organized to work for the Stamp Act's repeal, called upon some 30 towns in Britain to petition Parliament for repeal. The petition of the London merchants (17 Jan. 1766) cited several bankruptcies resulting from shrunken American markets.

1766

18 Mar. REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT. Parliament met on 14 Jan. and immediately debated the Stamp Act. Wilberforce demanded that the army be used to enforce it, while Willoughby Pitt, calling for repeal, commended the Americans for disobeying a tax framed by a body in which they were not represented. The colonial agents were called before the Commons sitting as a committee of the whole (beginning 3 Feb.) to give their views. The most telling testimony was given (13 Feb.) by Benjamin Franklin (p. 710), agent for Pennsylvania. Franklin stressed the heavy expenditures voted by the colonial assemblies during the French and Indian War (Pennsylvania spent £500,000, with a rebate of only £60,000 from the crown), pointed to the continuing expenses borne for prosecution of Indian wars, and declared that the Thirteen Colonies lacked the means to pay the stamp taxes for a single year. He warned that an attempt to carry out the Stamp Act by the use of troops might bring on rebellion, endorsed Dulany's argument that stamps were internal and external duties, and called for outright repeal. A bill for full repeal was brought before the Commons by a vote of 275–167 (22 Feb.), passed the House (4 Mar.), and, as a result of pressure from the king, passed the Lords (17 Mar.). The repeal bill, effective 1 May, received the royal assent 18 Mar. America received the news (word reached New York 26 Apr.) with rejoicing. Nonimportation was immediately abandoned; the New York Assembly voted statutes to honor the king and Pitt (30 June).

18 Mar. DECLARATORY ACT. Generally overlooked in the rejoicing over the Stamp Act's repeal was a statement of Parliament's authority over America enacted into law on the same day as the repeal measure (pronounced in the same terms as the Irish Declaratory Act of 1719), and asserting that Parliament had full authority to make laws binding the American colonists "in all cases whatsoever."
1 Nov. TRADE LAWS MODIFIED. The repeal of the Stamp Act was followed by another retreat on the government's part. The 3d. duty on foreign molasses imported by the colonists was now withdrawn (effective 1 Nov.) in favor of a uniform 1d.-per-gallon duty on all molasses, British as well as foreign, coming into the continental colonies. Export duties on British West Indian sugar were removed, thereby reducing its price on the American mainland. The act contained one notably unfavorable provision: all colonial products shipped to northern Europe henceforth had to clear through ports in Great Britain en route.

NEW YORK AND THE QUARTERING ACT CRISIS. Through Gov. Sir Henry Moore (1713–69) General Gage requested (13 Dec. 1765) that the N.Y. Assembly make provision for quartering and supplying his troops in accord with the Quartering Act. The Assembly, contending that this act weighed heaviest upon their province (New York was Gage's headquarters), refused full compliance (Jan. 1766). Tension mounted through the spring and summer. The destruction of a liberty pole by British soldiers (10 Aug.) led to a clash on the following day between citizens and British soldiers in which Isaac Sears (c.1730–86), a leader of the Sons of Liberty, was wounded. On 15 Dec. the Assembly refused any appropriations for Gage's forces and was proferred (19 Dec.). Not until 6 June 1767 did the Assembly vote £3,000. Ignorant of this step, Parliament suspended the Assembly's legislative powers (effective 1 Oct. 1767), but due to the grant of 6 June the suspension was not carried out by the Governor. On 7 May 1768 the Board of Trade sustained his decision by declaring invalid acts of the Assembly after 1 Oct. 1767.

1767

29 June. TOWNSEND ACTS. When the Chatham ministry came into office (Aug. 1766) Charles Townshend became Chancellor (Lord Chekequer). By the beginning of 1767, due to Lord Chatham's illness, Townshend was the actual leader of the government. In Jan., he attacked the distinction Americans (and Chatham himself) made between external and internal taxation and revealed that he was preparing a new revenue measure for America. A reduction in the British land tax, carried in defiance of the Stamp Act (27 Feb.), made it imperative to carry out this pledge, for that revision involved a cut of £500,000 in home revenue.

The Townshend Acts conformed to the American position of 1765–66: the taxes were all external; import duties on glass, lead, paints, paper, and tea. The estimated annual return of £40,000 could be used (according to the bill's preamble) not only for the defense of the colonies but also for "defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and the support of civil government" in America. To provide for efficient collection of the new duties this bill and a companion measure (1) clearly affirmed the power of superior or supreme court justices to issue writs of assistance; (2) established new vice-admiralty courts; and (3) an American Board of Commissioners of the Customs at Boston, directly responsible to the British Treasury Board. Act also received the royal assent on 29 June and became effective 20 Nov. 28 Oct. REVIVAL OF NONIMPORTATION. Once more the colonists turned to nonimportation to force Parliament to retreat again. A Boston town meeting (28 Oct.) drew up a list of British products, chiefly luxury goods, which were not to be purchased after 31 Dec. In Providence a stringent nonimportation agreement was signed (2 Dec.) to become effective 1 Jan. 1768; Newport followed suit (4 Dec.); and a mass meeting in New York City (29 Dec.) appointed a committee to draw up a plan to promote domestic industry and employment.

5 Nov. FARMER'S LETTERS. The most significant statement of the constitutional basis for the opposition to the Townshend Acts was written by John Dickinson. First appearing in the Pennsylvania Chronicle (5 Nov. 1767–Jan. 1768), his 14 essays, entitled Letters From a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies, were widely reprinted in pamphlet form both in Britain and America during 1766–67. Dickinson condemned Parliament's authority to tax the colonies even if revenue was incidentally produced, but denied its right to tax in order to raise a revenue in America, declared the Townshend duties unconstitutional, and ascribed the suspension of the New York Assembly as a blow to the liberties of all the colonies.

1768

11 Feb. MASSACHUSETTS CIRCULAR LETTER, drawn up by Samuel Adams (p. 667) and approved by the Mass. House of Representatives, informed the assemblies of the other 12 colonies of the steps taken by the Mass. General Court, denounced the Acts as violating the principle of no taxation without representation, reasserted the impossibility of representing America adequately in the British Parliament, and asked any move by the crown to make colonial governors and judges independent of the people, and concluded by soliciting proposals for united action. Gov. Francis Bernard (1712–79) condemned the Circular Letter. On 2 Mar. the Mass. General Court dissolved the General Court. This view was shared by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Hillsborough, who, in a dispatch to the colonial governors (21 Apr.), denounced the letter and ordered that their respective assemblies be prevented, by dissolution if necessary, from endorsing it. This order came too late. By May the assemblies of New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Connecticut had commended the stand of Massachusetts, and Virginia had drafted its own Circular Letter advising support of Massachusetts. On 22 Apr. Hillsborough ordered Gov. Bernard to dissolve the new General Court should the House of Representatives refuse to rescind the Circular Letter. Bernard ordered the House to expunge the resolution embodying the letter from its journal (21 June), but after a protracted debate the Representatives voted 92–17 (30 June) to defy this command. The Court was then dissolved (1 July). The 17 "Rescinders" came under heavy attack by the Sons of Liberty; 7 lost their seats in the election of May 1769.

June. SEIZURE OF THE "LIBERTY." Meanwhile, the obstructionist tactics of the people of Boston had led the Customs Commissioners there to request an armed force to protect them in carrying out their duties (Feb.) repeated in a memorial to the ministry 28 Mar. From Halifax for the Sagadahoc, 50 guns, was dispatched to Boston. Its arrival (17 May) made the customs officials overconfident. When they were informed (9 June) that a wharf official had been locked in a cabin of John Hancock's ship Liberty while the cargo was landed without payment of duty, they ordered the seizure of Hancock's vessel (10 June). The Liberty was towed from her wharf and anchored close to the Romney. A crowd assaulted the customs officials on the dock and demonstrated before their homes. The next day (11 June) the customs officials fled to Castle William on an island in the harbor and again (15 June) appealed for troops.

1 Oct. BRITISH TROOPS IN BOSTON. On 12 Sept. the Boston town meeting, on the alleged ground of an imminent war with France, called upon the people to arm and requested the Governor to call the General Court into session. When he refused, 96 Massachusetts towns sent delegates to an informal Provincial Convention (23–28 Sept.), which broke up the very day British troopships arrived in the harbor. Despite the armed reservation made by the Sons of Liberty, 2 regiments of infantry with artillery landed without opposition (1 Oct.) and stationed in the town.

PROGRESS OF NONIMPORTATION. Boston merchants adopted (Mar.) a more stringent nonimportation agreement contingent upon similar action by New York and Philadelphia. In New York such an agreement was signed in Apr. (effective 1 Oct.), but meetings in Philadelphia (Mar.-June) failed to yield a similar compact. Thereupon the Boston merchants demanded their charter had (1 Aug.) barring the importation of the items bearing the Townshend duties.
from 1 Jan. 1769 until the duties were repealed, and of all but a brief list of British goods (mostly supplies for the fisheries) from 1 Jan. 1769 to 1 Jan. 1770. The merchants of New York countermanded all orders sent to Britain after 15 Aug. and agreed (28 Aug.) to import no British goods from 1 Nov. until the Townshend Acts were repealed. N.Y. traders pledged not to deal with any merchant who refused to join in this accord (5 Sept.).

1769

COURSE OF NONIMPORTATION. By the end of 1769 New Hampshire alone remained aloof from nonimportation. The Philadelphia merchants finally took concrete action (6 Feb.) and on 10 Mar. banned most British goods from 1 Apr.; Baltimore merchants followed suit 30 Mar.

16–18 May, VIRGINIA RESOLVES AND ASSOCIATION. On 16 May George Washington introduced in the Virginia House of Burgesses a set of resolutions framed by George Mason (1725–92). Adopted unanimously, they asserted that the sole right of taxing Virginia lay in the Governor and provincial legislature; censured by inference the British ministry for its denunciation of the Massachusetts and Virginia Circular Letters; condemned the Parliamentary proposal that American contents be brought to England for trial under an act of Henry VIII. An address to the King was drawn up by Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee (1732–94) just before Gov. Botetourt (1718–70) dissolved the Assembly (17 May). The Burgesses met informally the next day in Williamsburg’s Raleigh Tavern and adopted the Virginia Association, a nonimportation agreement banning the importation of British goods (except paper) upon which a duty was charged, of slaves (after 1 Nov.), and of a long list of European luxury goods. June–Nov., THE SPREAD OF THE ASSOCIATION. A Maryland provincial meeting (22 June) drew up an association based on the Virginia model, augmented by a provision for boycotting those refusing to sign or keep the compact. South Carolina (7 Sept.) followed suit. The agreement was copied by the citizens of Savannah, Georgia (19 Sept.). An informal meeting of the North Carolina Assembly endorsed the Virginia Association (7 Nov.). In Delaware and Con- necticut, pledges were drawn up in the port towns (June–Aug.). Providence merchants acted 24 Oct. In Newport a very weak agreement was signed (30 Oct.). Threats of boycott by New York and Philadelphia mer- chants forced a tightening of its terms later in the year. The N.J. Assembly endorsed (18 Oct.) the sanctions against British imports entered into by the merchants Frederick N.J., Pa., and N.Y.

EFFECTS OF NONIMPORTATION. Colonial imports from Britain fell from £2,157,218 in 1768 to £1,356,122 in 1769; in New York and Philadelphia from £490,673 to £75,930 and from £441,829 to £204,978, respectively. Though these American trade losses were largely offset by a rising market in Europe for British goods, the ministry, now led by the Duke of Grafton, was disturbed. As early as 13 May the Board of Trade informed the governors that any modifications of the Townshend duties were under consideration.

1770

12 Apr. TOWNSEND DUTIES LIMITED TO TEA ALONE. The movement for repeal of the Townshend measures gained new impetus when Lord Frederick North became head of the government (31 Jan.). North believed that complete repeal might be interpreted as a sign of weakness; his stand for partial repeal was sustained in the Cabinet by a 5–4 vote. In Commons (3 May) he proposed a bill for the withdrawal of all the Townshend duties except that on tea and pledged that his ministry would lay no new taxes upon the colonists. The alteration in the Townshend duties received the King’s consent 12 Apr. At the same time the repeal of the Quartering Act was allowed to expire without renewal.

1771

COLLAPSE OF NONIMPORTATION. Although most of the colonial nonim- portation groups took strong action, made repeal of all the Townshend duties a condition for dropping their sanctions against British goods, the withdrawal of all but the tea tax led to the abandonment of the program, despite Boston’s attempt to hold the neccessary nonimportation in Al- bany, Providence, and Newport moved to abandon nonimportation (May); a house-to-house poll in New York City (7–9 July), which revealed that its inhabitants favored resuming imports of all but tea and oil. In Baltimore officially bearing a duty, led to an abandonment of the various associations, to which Philadelphia (12 Sept.), Boston (12 Oct.), South Carolina (13 Dec.), and finally Virginia (July 1771) bowed.

19 Jan. BATTLE OF GOLDEN HILL. The contest in New York over the Quartersing Act had been renewed late in 1768 when the Assembly once again refused to vote supplies (31 Dec.). This position was taken by a new Assembly (elected Jan. 1769) until 15 Dec. 1769, when an appropriation of £2,000 was voted. Alexander McDougall (1732–86), a leader of the Sons of Liberty in New York, issued a broadside criticizing the Assembly for permitting “the betrayed Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York” (16 Dec.). Clashes between citizens and soldiers broke out early in 1770. After one ineffectual attempt (13 Jan.) British soldiers succeeded in cutting down the town’s liberty pole (17 January). A countermove by Sons of Liberty to prevent the posting of broadside by soldiers (19 Jan.) led to a riot on Golden Hill in which some 30 or 40 soldiers used bayonets against citizens armed with cutlasses and clubs. Several on both sides were wounded seriously, but there were no fatalities. McDougall was arrested (18 Feb.) and charged with authorizing the broadside. He refused to post bond and remained in prison until 29 Apr., when he entered a plea of not guilty and was released on bail. The case never came to trial owing to the death of the state’s witness. However, McDougall was called before the Assembly (13 Dec.) and imprisoned for contempt until 27 Apr. 1771.

5 Mar. BOSTON MASSACRE. Minor clashes between citizens and soldiers were common occurrences in Boston following the arrival of the troops (1 Oct. 1768). In Oct. 1769 a serious encounter was only ended when the troops fired a volley into the air. Early in 1770 collisions between town laborers and soldiers seeking the meager pay they were owed in off-duty hours became frequent. A fist fight between a worker and soldier at Grey’s ropewalk on the afternoon of 5 Mar. quickly became a small riot. That evening belligerent bands of both civilians and soldiers roamed the streets of Boston. The pent-up tension exploded about 9 p.m. when a beleaguered sentry in King St. near the State House called the main guard, led by Captain Preston, to his aid. When the swelling crowd pressed upon this detachment, the soldiers, upon the command of a person never identified, fired into the mob, killing 3 outright and wounding 2 mortally. A general uprising was averted only when Lt. Governor John Adams and the 4th Standing Corps (which was under command of Sam Adams and withheld the troops from the town to islands in the harbor. Preston and 6 of his men were arrested for murder by the civil authorities (6 Mar.). Two outstanding patriot lawyers, John Adams (p. 660) and Josiah Quincy (1744–75), agreed to undertake the defense. At the trial (24–30 Oct.) Preston and 4 soldiers were acquitted, while 2 of the guard, found guilty of manslaughter, pleaded their clergy (were branded on the hand) and were released.

1771

LULL IN AGITATION. Despite exploitation of the “Boston Massacre” by Sam Adams as well as Paul Revere’s engraving of the incident, tension relaxed between colonies and mother country. Compacts against the importation and use of dutied tea remained the sole sig- nificant vestiges of conflict.

16 May, BATTLE OF ALAMANCE. In interior North Carolina a group known as the Regulators, active as an organized body since 1768 (under the leadership of Herman Husband [1724– 95]), had taken the law into their own
hands, protesting lack of representation for the Piedmont areas in the Assembly and charging extortion and oppression by the eastern part of the province. Increasing disorders led to the passage of the Johnston Bill (the "Bloody Act"), which made rioters guilty of treason (15 Jan. 1771). Early in May Gov. William Tryon ordered the drilling of 1,200 militiamen into the heart of the Regulator country. On 16 May he met and crushed some 2,000 Regulators (many of whom had no firearms) at Alamance Creek near Hillsboro. One insurgent, James Few, was executed on the battlefield (17 May); 12 others were found guilty of treason (17 June) and 6 executed. The other 6 as well as some 6,500 Piedmont settlers were obliged to take an oath of allegiance to the government. The incident revealed deep-seated sectional differences.

1772

9 June. BURNING OF THE "GASPEE." On the afternoon of 9 June the customs schooner Gaspee ran aground on Narquitt Point, 7 mi. below Providence, while pursuing an American vessel. After nightfall 8 boatloads of men from Providence led by merchant John Brown (1736–1803) attacked the schooner. Lt. Duddington, in command, was wounded. After the officer and crew were set ashore, the attackers set the Gaspee afire. A royal proclamation (26 Aug.) offered a £500 reward for the discovery of the culprits. On 2 Sept. Gov. Wanton (R.I.), the vice-admiralty judge at Boston, and the chief justices of Mass., N.Y., and N.J. were named as Commissioners of Inquiry. Those identified by the Commissioners were to be sent to England for trial. Two sessions were held at Newport (Jan. and May 1773) but, in the face of open hostility by Rhode Islanders, neither turned up any tangible evidence. The Commission finally adjourned June 1773.

15 June. CRIPPLING THE POWER OF THE PURSE. The British government took the case of the Gaspee in England alarmed even the moderates. More threatening to local self-rule was the announcement by Gov. Hutchinson of Mass. (13 June) that henceforth he would receive his salary from the crown, followed in September by a similar announcement relative to the Mass. judges. Thus executive and judiciary were at a stroke rendered practically independent of the General Court’s power of the purse.

2 Nov. NEW COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE. Sam Adams issued a call (5 Oct.) to the towns to form associations to discuss this new threat. Over 100 committees of correspondence (led by John Hancock) within the patriot circle, he succeeded (28 Oct.) in having a call issued for a Boston town meeting, at which (2 Nov.) he secured the appointment of a 21-man standing committee of correspondence to communicate Boston’s position to the other towns in the province and “to the World” with the request that the other towns reciprocate. James Otis was made chairman of the Boston committee, that henceforth its radical statements were reported from the committee to the town meeting, endorsed, and sent on to the other towns: Sam Adams’ “State of the Rights of the Colonists,” a “List of Infringements and Violations” by Joseph Warren (1741–75), and a “Letter of Correspondence” by Dr. Benjamin Church (1734–76), later proved to be a British informer. The appointment of town committees of correspondence continued into 1773.

1773

EXPANSION OF COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE. Radicals elsewhere hastened to adopt the Massachusetts system. The Virginia House of Burgesses (12 Mar.) appointed an 11-man standing committee for intercolonial correspondence, including Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Henry Lee. By 8 July R.I., Conn., N.H., and S.C., in addition, had formed provincial committees, and by Feb. 1774 all but N.C. and Pa. had taken action. By 10 May, TEA ACT. By early 1773 the East India Co. was on the verge of bankruptcy, its stock down from 280 to 160

on the London exchange. With a vast surplus of 17 million lbs. of tea on hand in London, the company sought relief from a government prejudiced to save it because of its valuable hold on India. A bill passed by the Commons (27 Apr.) provided for full remission (after 10 Mar.) of the British duties on teas exported to the colonies. The import tax of 3d. per lb. in America was retained, however. More important was the provision giving the Company (obliged up to this time to sell its tea at public auction in England) the right to sell tea directly to the American consignees in the colonies. With the drawbacks on the British duties enabling it to cut the price of its tea the Company was now in a position, even with the handicap of the 3d. duty in America, to undersell there both the law-abiding colonial merchant who had bought tea through middlemen at higher prices and the colonial smuggler who bought his tea in Holland. The Company, authorized (Sept.) to send half a million lb. of tea to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, consigned the tea to a picked group of merchants.

TERRORIZING THE TEA CONSIGNEE. The American opposition to the Tea Act centered upon the duty (now 6 yrs. old) but upon the threat of monopoly. A mass meeting in Philadelphia (16 Oct.) condemned the Act and appointed a committee to demand resignation of the Philadelphia consignees. The latter bowed to this demand. A Boston town meeting (5–6 Nov.) endorsed the Philadelphia resolve but was unable to secure the resignation of the Boston consignees, among whom were 2 sons and a nephew of Gov. Hutchinson. In New York City, a broadside (10 Nov.) warned harbor pilots against guiding any tea ship up the harbor. A meeting of the Sons of Liberty (29 Nov.) branded tea importers enemies of America and pledged a boycott. The New York consignees resigned their commissions (1 Dec.).

16 Dec. BOSTON TEA PARTY. The Dartmouth, 1st of 3 tea ships, arrived in Boston harbor 27 Nov. Two great mass meetings (29–30 Nov.) resolved that the tea must be sent back to England without payment of any duty. This Hutchinson refused to permit. He gave orders to the harbor authorities to allow the tea ships to pass outward only upon presentation of a permit certifying that the tea duties had been paid, a position he reiterated on 16 Dec. On the next day, in keeping with a 20-day waiting period under customs regulations, the tea aboard the Dartmouth became liable to seizure for nonpayment of customs duties. On the evening of the 16th some 8,000 people assembled in and near Boston’s Old South Church heard Capt. Rotch of the Dartmouth inform Sam Adams, chairman of the movement, of the governor’s final refusal. Thereupon, at a signal from Adams, a disciplined group of men disguised as Mohawk Indians rushed to Griffin’s Wharf, boarded the tea ships, and, working through the night, dumped all the tea (342 chests) into the harbor. No other property aboard was damaged.

22 Dec. TEA LANDED AT CHARLESTON. Charleston’s tea ship, the London, arrived 2 Dec. A mass meeting held the next day demanded and secured the resignations of the tea consignees. After the lapse of the 20-day period the customs officials, without opposition, landed the tea for nonpayment of the duties upon it. The tea was stored in government warehouses and remained there until the revolutionary government auctioned it off to raise funds (July 1776).

DEC. HUTCHINSON LETTERS SCANDAL. Late in 1772 Benjamin Franklin, as London agent for the Massachusetts House of Representatives, sent Speaker Thomas Hutchinson 12 letters, and of 6 letters written (1767–69) by Thomas Hutchinson (then Chief Justice) and 4 by Andrew Oliver (province secretary) to Thomas Whately, a member of the Grenville and North ministries. The letters were given to Franklin to show him that false advice from America went far toward explaining the obnoxious acts of the British government. Franklin sent the letters to Cushing, warning him that they were not to be copied or published but merely shown to the original to individuals in the province. But in June 1773 Samuel Adams read the letters before a secret session of the House of Representatives and later
had the letters copied and printed. The House petitioned the king for the re- moval of Hutchinson and Oliver from office. When this petition reached Lon- don the affair of the letters became a scandal. Whately was now dead, but his brother William accused a John Temple of having stolen and released the letters. The pair fought a duel (11 Dec.), and what that was inconclusive plans were made for a 2nd encounter. Learning of this, Franklin announced (25 Dec.) that he alone was responsible for sending the letters to Boston.

1774

30 Jan. FRANKLIN DISCIPLINED. On 11 Jan. a committee of the Privy Council began hearings on the Massa- chusetts petition. Franklin was granted a postponement. The questioning was resumed on 29 Jan., by which date the news of the Boston Tea Party had reached France. Franklin replied in a virulent attack by Solicitor General Alexander Weederburn, who denounced Franklin as a man without honor and a thief. The committee's report condemned the Privy Council that the petition was based on false charges was approved (7 Feb.). On 30 January, Frank- lin was informed that he had been dismissed from his office of Deputy Postmaster General. Massachusetts the House voted in Feb., 92-8, to impeach Oliver for accepting a salary from the crown, but before the case was tried Hutchinson prorogued (30 Mar.), and then dissolved the General Court. Mar.-Dec. FURTHER TEA DISOR- DERS. March saw further Boston disor- orders. When a reckless private signee elected to land a cargo of tea secretly in New York, Sons of Liberty disguised themselves as Indians and dumped the tea into the harbor (22 Apr.). A tea cargo brought into Annapolis the Peggy Stewart (14 Oct.) was destroyed by fire along with the ship (19 Oct.). Flames consumed a ship- ment of tea (22 Dec.) temporarily stored at S.

31 Mar., 20 May. COERCIVE ACTS. Parliament met (7 Mar.) in an angry mood. Chatham and Edmund Burke failed to dissuade it from endorsing the king's personal wish to force Massachusetts and the Tea Party in par- ticular and for her long insubordination with the of the charters. Effective 1 Aug., members of the Council, heretofore elected by the House of Representatives, were to be appointed by the king and hold office at royal pleasure. Effective 1 July, the attorney general, inferior judges, sheriffs, and justices of the peace be- came appointable and removable by the Governor. The Governor was also em- powered to nominate the Chief Justice and superior judges for appointment by the king. Juries were to be summoned by the sheriff rather than elected by the people of the towns. Finally, in a move designed to deprive the radicals of their most effective weapon, the town meeting, the act provided that meetings in addition to the annual election session could not be held without the prior written consent of the Governor and, if approved, must be confined to the agenda which he approved.

20 May. QUEBEC ACT, though not a part of the coercive program, was re- garded by the colonists as one of the "Intolerable" measures. The act provided a permanent civil government for Canada, a rule of martial law, and the prohibition of the loading or unloading of ships in any port of Boston Harbor. Ex- ceptions were made for military stores and for shipments of food and fuel which obtained clearance from the customs officials. Exemptions were given to Salem rather than Boston. The king was authorized to reopen the port to trade when the East India Co. and the customs had been compensated for the losses incurred by the Tea Party. Two months later more comprehensive measures were enacted. The Administra- tion of Justice Act (20 May) was des- signed to encourage crown officials in Massachusetts by protecting them from major suits before the provincial courts. Upon the sworn statement of the Governor that the act upon which an in- dictment for a capital offense was based had been committed in putting down a riot or in collecting revenue, and that a fair trial could not be had in Massa- chusetts, the trial could be transferred to Britain (the Provincial Council's assent to the move was stipulated). Massachusetts Government Act (20 May) worked even more drastic changes, virtually annulling the Massa- chusetts charters. Effective 1 Aug., mem- bers of the Council, heretofore elected by the House of Representatives, were to be appointed by the king and hold office at royal pleasure. Effective 1 July, the attorney general, inferior judges, sheriffs, and justices of the peace became appointable and removable by the Governor. The Governor was also empowered to nominate the Chief Justice and superior judges for appointment by the king. The rules were to be summoned by the sheriff rather than elected by the people of the towns. Finally, in a move designed to deprive the radicals of their most effective weapon, the town meeting, the act provided that meetings in addition to the annual election session could not be held without the prior written consent of the Governor and, if approved, must be confined to the agenda which he approved.

20 May. QUEBEC ACT, though not a part of the coercive program, was re- garded by the colonists as one of the "Intolerable" measures. The act provided a permanent civil government for Canada, a rule of martial law, and the prohibition of the loading or unloading of ships in any port of Boston Harbor. Ex- ceptions were made for military stores and for shipments of food and fuel which obtained clearance from the customs officials. Exemptions were given to Salem rather than Boston. The king was authorized to reopen the port to trade when the East India Co. and the customs had been compensated for the losses incurred by the Tea Party.

Two months later more comprehensive measures were enacted. The Administra- tion of Justice Act (20 May) was designed to encourage crown officials in Massachusetts by protecting them from major suits before the provincial courts. Upon the sworn statement of the Governor that the act upon which an indictment for a capital offense was based had been committed in putting down a riot or in collecting revenue, and that a fair trial could not be had in Massa- chusetts, the trial could be transferred to Britain (the Provincial Council's assent to the move was stipulated). Massachusetts Government Act (20 May) worked even more drastic changes, virtually annulling the Massa- chusetts charters. Effective 1 Aug., mem- bers of the Council, heretofore elected by the House of Representatives, were to be appointed by the king and hold office at royal pleasure. Effective 1 July, the attorney general, inferior judges, sheriffs, and justices of the peace became appointable and removable by the Governor. The Governor was also empowered to nominate the Chief Justice and superior judges for appointment by the king. Juries were to be summoned by the sheriff rather than elected by the people of the towns. Finally, in a move designed to deprive the radicals of their most effective weapon, the town meeting, the act provided that meetings in addition to the annual election session could not be held without the prior written consent of the Governor and, if approved, must be confined to the agenda which he approved.
would constitute an "inferior and distinct branch of the British legislature." Measures dealing with America might originate either with this body or the British Parliament, the consent of the other being requisite for a measure to become law. By a vote of 6–5 this plan was defeated, and subsequently (22 Oct.) was expunged from the minutes of Congress.

14 Oct. DECLARATION AND RESOLVES adopted by the Congress denounced the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act as unjust, cruel, and unconstitutional, and criticized the revenue measures imposed since 1765, the extension of vice-admiralty jurisdiction, the dissolution of colonial assemblies, and the keeping of a standing army in the colonial towns in peacetime. Ten resolutions set forth the rights of the colonists, among them to "life, liberty and property," and, of the provincial legislatures, to the exclusive power of lawmaking "in all cases of taxation and internal polity," subject only to the royal veto. Thirteen Parliamentary acts since 1763 were declared to violate American rights and economic sanctions pledged until redress was secured.

18 Oct. CONTINENTAL ASSOCIATION, closely modeled upon a Virginia Association framed 1–6 Aug., constituted a pledge by the delegates that their provinces would (1) cease all importation from Britain effective 1 Dec.; (2) totally discontinue the consumption of British products; (3) institute no consumption of British products and various foreign luxury products (1 Mar. 1775); (4) embargo all exports to Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies effective 1 Sept. 1775. Notable were the clauses establishing extralegal machinery for enforcement. A committee was to be elected in each county, town, and city to execute the Association. Violators were to be punished by publicity and boycott. On the higher level, any province which failed to keep the Association was to be boycotted. By Apr. 1775 the Association was in operation in 12 colonies; even Georgia adopted a modified version (29 Jan. 1775).

26 Oct. ADJOURNMENT OF CONGRESS. After preparing an address to the king and to the British and American peoples, Congress adjourned, but (22 Oct.) resolved that the "Liberty of America" would not be "extinguished or obscured by any measure" (10 May 1775 if by that date American grievances had not been redressed.

DOMINION THEORY. The delegates at Philadelphia had been influenced by the constitutional viewpoints of James Wilson (Pa., 1742–98). By young Thomas Jefferson, Wilson's Considerations on the Nature and Extent of the Legislative Authority of the British Parliament (17 Aug.) rejected Parliament's authority over the colonies in favor of allegiance to the king alone. Jefferson expressed a similar view in his Summary View of the Rights of British America (July), an appeal to George III to heed "liberal and expanded thought." After Congress adjourned John Adams expressed the "dominion theory" in his Novanglus letters (Dec. 1774–Apr. 1775) written to answer the Tory viewpoint of "Massachusettsian" (Daniel Leonard, p. 596). The colonies, Adams contended, were not part of the British realm and hence not subject to Parliament. A province is a realm, "New York is a realm . . ." over which the king is sovereign.

WAR PREPARATIONS IN NEW ENGLAND. On 1 Sept. British troops from Boston marched out to Charlestown and Cambridge and seized cannon and powder belonging to the province. Thousands of militiamen flocked to Cambridge but hostilities did not break out. Gen. Gage set about fortifying Bos ton Neck (Sept.). On 7 Oct. the Massachusetts House, meeting in Salem in defiance of Gage, constituted itself a Provincial Congress, and named John Hancock to head a Committee of Safety empowered to call out the militia. Special groups within the militia (Minute Men) were to be ready for instant call. On 14 Dec., Lexington, N.H., a band led by John Sullivan (1740–95) broke into Ft. William and Mary in Portsmouth, overpowered the small garrison without inflicting suffering casualties, and carried away arms and gunpowder.

27 Feb. LORD NORTH'S CONCESSION PLAN. The petitions and Declaration of Congress were laid before Parliament on 19 Jan. The next day Chatham moved an address from the Lords to the king requesting immediate removal of the troops in Boston but was defeated by a 3–1 margin. Later (1 Feb.) he introduced a plan of reconciliation which embraced (1) a recognition of the Continental Congress, (2) a pledge by Parliament that no revenue measures would be levied upon America without the consent of the provincial assemblies, (3) American recognition of the "supreme legislative authority and superintending power" of Parliament, and (4) a plan by which the Continental Congress would vote a revenue for the crown. This measure was also rejected by the Lords. A declaration by both Houses (9 Feb.) termed Massachusetts to be in rebellion. On 20 Feb. Lord North presented the original plan for reconciliation which had George III's grudging consent. By its terms Parliament, with royal approval, would "forbear to lay any but regulatory taxes upon any of the colonies which, through its own assembly, and itself to provide for the common defense and for the support of the civil government and judiciary within its own province. The Commons endorsed the plan 27 Feb.

30 Mar. NEW ENGLAND RESTRAINING ACT. On the same day (27 Feb.) a bill was introduced forbidding the New England colonies to trade with any nation but Britain and the British West Indies after 1 July and barring New Englanders from the North Atlantic fisheries after 20 July. Despite a brilliant speech by Burke (22 Mar.) the bill was passed and received the royal assent (30 Mar.). Soon afterward (13 Apr.) the provisions of the act were made to apply to N.J., Pa., Md., Va., and S.C., news Paul Revere of a plan to garrison British troops at Portsmouth, N.H., a band led by John Sullivan (1740–95) broke into Ft. William and Mary in Portsmouth, overpowered the small garrison without inflicting suffering casualties, and carried away arms and gunpowder.

CRISIS IN NEW ENGLAND. A 2nd Mass. Provincial Congress met at Cambridge (1 Feb.), and under the leadership of Hancock and Warren framed measures to prepare the colony for war.

On 26 Feb. British troops landed at Salem to seize military supplies, but were turned back without violence. On 23 Mar. Patrick Henry predicted in his famous "Liberty or Death" speech at the Va. House of Burgesses that news of the outbreak of hostilities in New England could be expected momentarily. He proved to be a good prophet. On 14 Apr. General Gage received a letter of 27 Jan. from Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies, ordering him to use force if necessary to execute the Coercive and other acts, to strike at once, even if that meant bringing on hostilities, rather than permit the rebellious faction time to perfect their organization.

19 Apr. LEXINGTON AND CONCORD. Aware that Concord (21 mi. from Boston by road) was a major supply depot for the militia organized by the Provincial Congress, Gage decided to strike quickly. On 14 Apr. he relieved the Light Infantry and Grenadiers from guard duty and had boats brought ashore from the transports (15 Apr.). On 18 Apr. Lt. Col. Francis Smith received a secret order to gather a force of some 700 men to Concord and destroy the supplies there the next morning. About 10 p.m. the troops marched to the edge of the Common and began embarking in boats for the short row across the Charles River to Cambridge. The Boston Committee of Safety, learning of their destination, sent Paul Revere and William Dawes (1745–99) to alert the countryside. Revere reached Lexington (5 mi. from Concord) at midnight and warned Sam Adams and John Hancock, who were staying there. About 1 a.m. (19 Apr.) Revere, joined by Dawes and Dr. Samuel Prescott, left Lexington for Concord. On the way a British mounted patrol surprised them. Prescott escaped and got through to Concord; Dawes eluded the British but had to turn back; Revere was captured and brought back to Lexington before being released.

Smith's forces reached Lexington at dawn and found 70 armed Minute Men under Capt. John Parker (1729–75) drawn up on the Common. Upon the repeated commands of Major John Pitcairn, commanding the British advance
units, the Americans had begun to file off (though without dropping their weapons as ordered) when a report from an unidentified firearm brought, without a command by Pitcairn, a series of volleys from the British platoons. Only a few shots were returned from the American ranks where 8 lay dead and 10 were wounded. Only one British soldier was wounded. Smith reformed his men and marched on to Concord, where he destroyed some gun carriages, entrenching tools, flour, and a liberty pole. Late in the afternoon the steadily swelling American forces attacked a British platoon at Concord's North Bridge, inflicting 14 casualties. Smith left Concord for the return march to Boston shortly after noon and soon found the countryside swarming with militiamen who assailed his column from all sides. Only the arrival of reinforcements when he reached Lexington saved him from a complete disaster. The relentless attacks continued until the expeditious force reached Charlestown and the protection of the guns of the men-of-war in the harbor. Total British casualties for the day: 73 killed, 174 wounded, 26 missing. Almost 4,000 American militiamen saw action during the day; of these 95 were dead, wounded, or missing. The provincial forces closed in on Boston and began a siege which was to last until Mar. 1776. On 25 Apr. the Provincial Congress authorized the raising of 15,600 men, made Artemas Ward (1727–1800) commander in chief, and appealed to the other colonies for aid. By 20 May R.I., Conn., and N.H. had voted to send 9,950 men to Cambridge, Ward's headquarters.

10 May. CAPTURE OF FORT TICONDEROGA. Late in April the Massachusetts Committee of Safety authorized Benedict Arnold (1741–1801) to raise 400 men in western Massachusetts and attack Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain, a strategic post rich in artillery and other military supplies. On 6 May Arnold learned that Ethan Allen (1738–89) was raising a force at Castleton, Vt., for an attack on Ticonderoga. Arnold hurried to Castleton and claimed command but without success. Nevertheless he accompanied Allen and was with the force of 83 men with which the latter crossed the lake (9 May). Early on the 10th the Americans surprised the British garrison of 42 men, which yielded, according to Allen, upon his demand “in the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress.” One wounded British soldier was the only casualty. On 12 May the Provincial point north of Ticonderoga was also seized and St. John’s, across the Canadian border, was occupied by Arnold on 16 May.

10 May. 2ND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS. New figures at the 2nd Continental Congress, convened in the State House (Independence Hall), Philadelphia, included Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, James Wilson, and, later in the session, Thomas Jefferson. Missing were conservatives like Galloway (Pa.) and Isaac Low (N.Y.). Peyton Randolph and Charles Thomson were again chosen president and secretary, but on 24 May Randolph withdrew from the Congress and John Hancock was elected to succeed him. On 15 May Congress resolved to put the colonies in a state of defense and on 28 May adopted an address to the people of Canada asking them as “fellow-sufferers” to join with rather than against the 12 colonies (Georgia was not yet represented at the Congress officially).

31 May. MECKLENBURG COUNTY RESOLUTIONS. Adopted by a convention in Mecklenburg County, N.C., and sent to the North Carolina delegation at Philadelphia (but never presented to Congress), declared all laws and commissions deriving their authority from the king or Parliament to be annulled and the royal government of the provinces “wholly suspended” for the present. Henceforth all legislative and executive power within each colony would devolve upon the Provincial Congress. Within Mecklenburg County anyone accepting a royal commission was branded an enemy and ordered to be apprehended.

15 June. WASHINGTON NAMED CHIEF OF THE CONTINENTAL FORCES. On 10 June John Adams proposed that the Congress accept the forces besieging Boston as a Continental Army and appoint a general, hinting strongly that this appointment should go to George Washington. On 14 June Congress resolved to raise 6 companies of riflemen in Pa., Md., and Va., to march to New England and named a 5-man committee to draft rules for the administration of the Continental Army. On 15 June Thomas Johnson (Md.) nominated Washington to be commander in chief; seconded by John Adams and carried by an unanimous vote. The next day Washington formally accepted the command and offered to serve without a salary. The general organizational plan for the army was adopted; Artemas Ward, Charles Lee (1731–82), Philip Schuyler (1733–804), and Israel Putnam (1718–90) were appointed major generals (17 June). To support the army Congress voted (22 June) to issue $2 million in bills of credit with the “12 Confederated Colonies” pledged to share the burden of redemption in proportion to population.

17 June. BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL. During May both the British in Boston and the American forces surrounding the city built up their strength. Three major generals (Sir William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, and John Burgoyne) arrived 25 May to assist Gage. By the middle of June the American strength was about 10,000 men. On 12 June Gage issued a proclamation which (1) imposed martial law; (2) declared the
5 July. OLIVE BRANCH PETITION, adopted by Congress and written by John Dickinson, accused the attachment of the American people to George III, expressed the desire of harmony, and begged the king to prevent further hostile actions against the colonies until a reconciliation was worked out. On 6 July Congress adopted another important resolution, written jointly by Jefferson and Dickinson, a "Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms," which rejected independence but asserted that Americans were ready to die rather than be enslaved. A significant phrase touched upon the possibility of receiving foreign aid against Britain. On 15 July Congress voted to waive the provisions of the Continental Association where war supplies were concerned and on 31 July rejected Lord North's plan for reconciliation. Before adjourning (2 Aug.) Congress assumed 2 additional functions of an independent government: the appointment of commissioners to negotiate treaties with the Indian tribes (19 July), and the establishment of a Post Office Department with Benjamin Franklin as Post Master General (26 July).

28 Aug.–31 Dec. MONTGOMERY'S EXPEDITION AGAINST QUEBEC. On 27 June, having received word that Sir Guy Carleton, British commander in Canada, was recruiting a Canadian force for an invasion of New York, Congress authorized Gen. Philip Schuyler to seize any points in Canada vital to the security of the colonies. Schuyler assembled an expeditionary force at Ticonderoga, and began his advance from there (28 Aug.) with about 1,000 men. Crossing into Canada, he laid siege to St. John's (6 Sept.), garrisoned by about 600 British and Canadian troops. Ill health forced Schuyler to leave the army (13 Dec.), and the command was assumed by Brig. Gen. Richard Montgomery (1738–75), to whom the garrison of St. John's capitulated (2 Nov.). Carleton withdrew the remnants of his small force toward Quebec, thereby uncovering Montreal, which the Americans occupied 13 Nov. Carleton was almost captured when his flotilla of 11 small ships surrendered (19 Nov.), but managed to escape to Quebec. 12 Sept.–31 Dec. ARNOLD'S EXPEDITION AGAINST QUEBEC. Benedict Arnold, a mere 300 volunteers at Cambridge with Washington's permission and set out for Maine (12 Sept.). From Gardiner he moved inland to Fort Western (Augusta), from which base the main trek began (24 Sept.) through country that White men had seen. The difficult terrain and shortness of provisions led one of the expedition's 4 divisions to turn back (25 Oct.). With 650 men Arnold reached the St. Lawrence (Nov.) and crossed the river on the 13th. On 3 Dec. he was joined by Montgomery with 300 men from Montreal. At 5 A.M., 31 Dec., a combined assault was launched against Quebec but ended in disaster. Montgomery was killed, Arnold wounded, almost 100 men killed or wounded, over 300 taken prisoner. With the remnants of his force Arnold maintained a weak cordon around the city throughout the winter.

12 Sept. CONGRESS RECONVENES. The presence of a delegation from George Washington, the 1st time Washington representative of all 13 colonies. On 9 Nov. news arrived that George III had refused to receive the Olive Branch Petition, and had (23 Aug.) proclaimed the American colonists to be in rebellion. (On 7 Nov. the House of Commons received the Petition but a motion that it constitute a basis for reconciliation was defeated 85–33.) Congress answered the royal proclamation on 6 Dec., declaiming any intention to question the sovereignty of the king, but disavowing allegiance to Parliament. The breach was further widened on 23 Dec. when a royal proclamation was issued closing the colonies to all commerce effective 1 Mar. 1776.

13 Oct. CONGRESS AUTHORIZES A NAVY. On 2 Sept. Congress authorized 30 Oct.). Congress resolved to raise 2 battalions of marines (10 Nov.) and on 23 Nov. formally declared British vessels open to capture in retaliation for British raids on American coastal towns. "Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies" were adopted 28 Nov. and a Marine Committee appointed (14 Dec.) to carry them out. On 22 Dec. Congress commissioned officers for the 4 Continental ships, naming Esek Hopkins (R.I., 1718–1802) commodore. Congress authorized privateering (19 Mar. 1776) and issued letters of marque and reprisal (23 Mar.)

2 Nov. CONGRESS LOOKS ABROAD. Congress appointed a 5-man Committee of Correspondence with wide discretion ary powers to get in contact with "our friends" abroad. An appropriation of $5,000 for the use of agents was voted 11 Dec. On the 12th the Committee wrote to Arthur Lee (1740–92), agent for Massachusetts in London, requesting him to ascertain the attitude of the European powers toward America. Later that month a French agent, Archard de Bouvilloir, appeared before Congress and gave informal assurances that France would welcome an American alliance and might offer material aid to the colonies. 11 Dec. HOSTILITIES IN THE SOUTH. On 7 Nov. Gov. Dunmore (Va.) placed his colony under martial law, established a base at Norfolk, and began recruiting a Loyalist army. By a promise of freedom to those slaves who deserted their masters (17 Nov.) he raised a Negro regiment, but forfeited the support of almost the entire planter class. On 11 Dec. Dunmore was decisively defeated by a mixed force of 900 Virginians and North Carolinians at Great Bridge. He evacuated Norfolk, but on 1 Jan. 1776 landed there again and destroyed much of the town by fire. In Feb. the Americans reoccupied and completed the destruction of the town, rendering it practically useless as a base of operations.

1776

MILITARY BALANCE SHEET. The patriots were favored by (1) campaign-
ing on their own ground, (2) widespread acquaintance with firearms, (3) a great leader in George Washington, (4) the superiority of British forces in both range and accuracy of the American rifle over the British muskets, and (5) a significant number of officers and men with military experience gained against the French or British armies; (1) lack of training and discipline; (2) short-term enlistments; (3) shortage of ammunition, food, clothing, and medical supplies; (4) the hostility or active opposition of perhaps one third of the colonial populace; and (5) the lack of an efficient naval arm.

British commanders in America possessed the advantages of (1) a well-equipped, trained, and disciplined force; (2) support of the British navy in landing and transporting troops and guarding communication and supply lines at sea; (3) a rich war chest which permitted the hiring of foreign troops to supplement their own forces; and (4) the cooperation of French, Spanish, and Dutch. Weighing against these advantages were (1) the distance of the theater of war from Britain; (2) its vast extent and varied nature; (3) a reluctance to adapt tactics to American conditions; (4) a disinclination to mobilize the Loyalists as an effective force; and (5) a tendency on the part of military and political leaders to underestimate the opponent.

9 Jan. “COMMON SENSE.” The first clarion call for independence was voiced by Thomas Paine (p. 763) in Common Sense, a pamphlet which appeared in Philadelphia. Paine attacked George III (the “Royal Brute”) as chiefly responsible for the obnoxious measures against the colonies and deified the monarchical form of government. His simple yet electric presentation converted thousands to the cause of independence.

Feb.–June. HOSTILITIES IN THE SOUTH. Gen. Henry Clinton arrived off Cape Fear, N.C. (Mar.), with a British expeditionary force. Clinton had originally planned to land in North Carolina, and join forces with a Loyalist army, but scrapped these plans when he learned that the Loyalists had been crushed at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge near Wilmington (27 Feb.). After being joined by troops from Britain under Gen. Cornwallis (2 Apr.) Clinton decided to attack Charleston, S.C., where defense preparations were well under way when the British appeared on 1 June. On 4 June Gen. Charles Lee arrived from New York to take command of the defense. On 28 June, Gen. Cornwallis, flanked by forces under Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, moved against the British. The British warships under Sir Peter Parker moved against the main point of the American defenses, a palmetto log fort (later named Ft. Moultrie for its defender) on Sullivan’s Island. Parker’s fire was returned by the defenders with great effect, forcing him to abandon the attack at nightfall, with all his ships damaged and over 200 casualties. In the fort 10 were dead, 21 wounded. Clinton’s troops likewise failed to achieve their objectives on the 28th and had to be withdrawn. The British failure at Charleston ended active operations by them in that theater for over 2 years.

17 Mar. BRITISH EVACUATE BOSTON. On 24 Jan. Gen. Henry Knox (1730–1806), a native of Maine, arrived in Boston with 49 cannon and 16 mortars, having labored for weeks to bring them overland from Fort Ticonderoga. On 16 Feb. a Council of War drew up plans for the seizure of Dorchester Heights, from which point Boston and most of its harbor would be within range of Knox’s artillery. Under these plans the equipment necessary for the occupation was carried out by 2,000 men under Gen. John Thomas (1724–76) during the night of 4–5 Mar. Gen. Howe, who had succeeded Gage as British commander (10 Oct. 1775), gathered his troops on the unfinished works on the 5th but heavy rains that day and the next forestalled the attack. On 7 Mar. Howe decided to evacuate Boston. By the 17th all his troops, along with some 1,000 Loyalists, were embarked on the troopships in the harbor. On 26 Mar. the fleet left for Halifax.

Mar.–May. FRANCE DECIDES TO AID AMERICA. On 1 Mar. the French Foreign Minister, Count Vergennes, wrote to the Foreign Minister of Spain, Grimaldi, and offered to join secret measures to provide help for Britain’s rebellious colonists. Spain showed herself receptive. Thereupon Louis XVI ordered (2 May) that 1 million livres’ worth of munitions be supplied the Americans through a fictitious company, Roderigue Hortalez et Cie., actually administered by secret agent Pierre de Beaumarchais. Charles III of Spain made a similar arrangement shortly afterward. From these sources the American armies were to receive over 80% of their gunpowder, to mention but a small portion of the military supplies, throughout 1776–77. Meanwhile Congress, ignorant of these developments, voted (3 Mar.) to send Silas Deane (1737–89) to Europe to purchase war matériel. This action made inevitable the resolution of 6 June, an important forerunner of the Declaration of Independence, opening the ports of the colonies to the trade of all nations but Britain. Deane arrived in Paris 7 July.

Apr.–July. RETREAT FROM CANADA. On 1 Apr. Gen. David Wooster (1711–77) arrived at Quebec with reinforcements for the Northern Army and to take over command from Arnold, but gave way to General John Thomas on 1 May. Thomas had already decided to abandon the venture, but Gen. Arnold reinforcements reached Carleton (6 May) and enabled the latter to turn an orderly American retreat into a rout. Thomas retreated to Chambly and died there of smallpox (2 June). Gen. Sullivan, who succeeded him, attempted a counterattack against Three Rivers (7 June) but was defeated. He then retreated to St. John’s, was joined there by Arnold and the Montreal garrison, and continued his retreat to Ticonderoga early in July. With command of Lake Champlain, the key to all strategy, both Arnold and Carleton set to work to collect and build ships for a fleet.

Apr.–July. MOVEMENT TOWARD INDEPENDENCE. By the spring of 1776 sentiment for a break with Britain was clearly in the ascendant. On 12 Apr. the North Carolina Convention empowered its delegates in Congress to vote for a declaration of independence. Virginia followed suit (15 May). With this action Richard Henry Lee offered a resolution (7 June) that the United Colonies “are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.” While...
27 Aug. BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND. After evacuating Boston, Howe planned to use strategic New York City as his base of operations. Anticipating Howe's movement, Washington shifted his army from Boston (21 Mar.–13 Apr.). On 2 July Howe landed unopposed on Staten Island with about 10,000 men. His brother, Admiral Lord Richard Howe, arrived with a strong fleet and 150 transports 12 July. Other reinforcements reached Staten Island throughout July and early August until Gen. Howe had a command of 32,000 men, about 9,000 of whom were German mercenaries. Between 22–25 Aug. he landed about 20,000 troops on Long Island. On the evening of the 26th he led a wide-flanking movement around the left of the forces under Gen. Putnam before Brooklyn. On the morning of the 27th Howe fell upon the rear of Sullivan's position, routed his Hessians, took the general prisoner, Gen. William Alexander (1726–83, who claimed the title "Lord Stirling") fought a gallant delaying action to protect the escape route of the American forces, but finally surrendered to the Hessian general, De Heister. Howe cautiously halted the pursuit at the breastworks on Brooklyn Heights after inflicting 1,500 casualties upon an American force of about 5,000 at a cost of less than 400 of his own men. On the 28th Howe began constructing siegeworks. Having decided against making a stand in Brooklyn, Washington during the night of 29–30 Aug. skillfully withdrew Putnam's entire force to Manhattan Island unknown to the British.  

11 Sept. STATEN ISLAND PEACE CONFERENCE. On 3 May Gen. and Adm. Howe had been appointed Peace Commissioners by the King with powers to pardon and protect those Americans who returned to their true allegiance, but without authority to negotiate with any colony until all extralegal congresses and conventions had been dissolved. After the Battle of Long Island the Howe's sent their prisoner, Gen. Sullivan, to Congress with a proposal that an informal peace conference be held. On 6 Sept. Congress appointed Franklin, John Adams, and Edmund Rutledge to confer with Lord Howe. The meeting took place on Staten Island and, although cordial, was fruitless. Howe's demand for a revocation of the Declaration of Independence as a necessary preliminary to negotiations for peace left no ground for further conversations. 

15 Sept. BRITISH OCCUPY NEW YORK CITY. On 12 Sept. Washington decided to evacuate New York City rather than risk being trapped on lower Manhattan Island. The movement of his troops to hilly northern Manhattan was still under way when the British landed at Kips' Bay on the eastern side of the island (15 Sept.) and almost cut off a large section of the American army. Washington retreated to Harlem Heights, repulsed the British there (16 Sept.), and prepared new fortifications. Howe decided against an assault upon the American works and the next 3 weeks saw a half hr activity, marred by the great fire which claimed 300 buildings in New York City (21 Sept.) and by the execution of Nathan Hale (1775–76) as an American spy (22 Sept.).

19 Sept. CONGRESS APPOINTS A DIPLOMATIC COMMISSION. On 12 June Congress appointed a committee to prepare plans for treaties of commerce and amity with foreign nations. The report of this committee (17 Sept.) was, after some alteration, adopted. On 28 Sept. 3 commissioners were appointed to negotiate treaties with European nations: Silas Deane (already in Europe), Franklin, and Jefferson. Jefferson declined the appointment and Arthur Lee (also in Europe) was named in his place. Franklin joined Deane and Lee in Paris on 21 Dec. Two days later Congress authorized the commissioners to borrow up to £2 million. 

11 Oct. BATTLE OF VALCOUR BAY. The fleets which Arnold and Carleton had been gathering on Lake Champlain finally came to grips on 11 Oct. Arnold had placed his 83-gun fleet in the channel between Valcour Island and the western shore of Lake Champlain. Carleton's 87-gun fleet, manned by experienced sailors in contrast to Arnold's merchant crews, attacked at daybreak and a 7-hr. battle crippled most of the American flotilla. That night Arnold's remaining ships slipped by the British. Another engagement at Split Rock (13 Oct.) resulted in the complete destruction of the American flotilla as a fighting force. Carleton occupied Crown Point but then decided winter was too near at hand for a siege of Ticonderoga. He abandoned Crown Point (3 Nov.) and drew his forces back into Canada.
3 Jan. COUP AT PRINCETON. Howe reacted to the news of the Trenton disaster with his usual celerity. On 1 Jan., he sent Gen. James Grant from New Brunswick toward Trenton and from New York dispatched a large force under Cornwallis to join Grant at Princeton. On 2 Jan., the British made contact with Washington’s army of 5,000 men east of Trenton, but Cornwallis elected to wait until the next day for the attack which would “bag the fox.” Leaving behind only enough men to give the illusion of an occupied camp, Washington stole away. Cornwallis was caught that night and by dawn (3 Jan.) was close to Princeton. Near the town Patriot units under Gen. Hugh Mercer (c.1725-77) clashed with a British column under Col. Mawhood marching to join Cornwallis. Mercer was killed and the American vanguard routed. Then Washington appeared with the main body and drove the British back with heavy losses toward New Brunswick. Cornwallis, hearing the sounds of battle to his rear, also fell back to protect the supply depot there. Washington drew his tired troops off to the northeast and soon established winter quarters in the hills around Morristown (6 Jan.). His victories had cleared all but a few American soldiers of the enemy and had an incalculable effect in restoring the shattered-Patriot morale.

12 Mar. CONGRESS RECONVENE IN PHILADELPHIA. Congress returned to Philadelphia (4 Mar.), where it considered measures to obtain foreign aid. While in London, Congress had resolved (30 Dec. 1776) to send commissions to Austria, Prussia, Spain, and Turkey. The commission to Spain was to be authorized to offer British-held Pensacola in Florida in return for a declaration of war by Spain against Britain. Similarly, the commissioners already in France were authorized to offer American-held forts in Labrador for a declaration against Britain. Washington crossed into Pennsylvania with his prisoners and then once again crossed to the Jersey side and reoccupied Trenton (30-31 Dec.).