



Volume 20

Number 021

**America's Revolution (51) – Mr. Seldon's
Penny – II**

Lead: In the 1700s the United States broke from England. No colony in history had done that before. This series examines America's Revolution.

Intro: *A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts*

Content: In the Revolutionary Era, Americans were followers of John Locke. They believed with Locke that their property represented more than just material possessions, rather property symbolized and

secured their lives, liberties, estates, and freedom. In all the colonies, property also bestowed on the owners the rights of a political man. In order to vote one had to possess real property, land. And leaders were those who owned lots of land or were engaged in profitable commercial enterprise. They received this idea from the ancient establishment of Parliament as representative and protector of those who owned property.

Therefore it was with great fear that they confronted the attempts of the British Parliament in the 1760s to “confiscate” their property in the form of the stamp tax. This is odd because such an idea ran counter to the long-held belief that Parliament, King, Lords and Commons together, was utterly supreme and had the power to do just about anything. Americans began to stumble forward into the concept that Parliament had the power

to take certain actions, but not the right to do them. This gradually emerged into a constitutional argument that there was a fundamental law, ultimately received from God, that superseded and limited the power of human institutions such as Parliament; that there was a basic constitutional order in the universe protecting the citizen that stood above and laid a restraining hand on Parliament, giving boundaries beyond which even such a powerful institution could not go. One of those boundaries included the right to be taxed only by one's representatives. The road to revolution lay in the misty distance, but Americans had definitely begun to set their feet upon it.

At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.

Resources

- Brooke, John. *King George III*. New York, NY: Constable Publishing, 1972.
- Burke, Edmund. *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1958-1978.
- Cobbett, William. *Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*. (36 volumes). London, UK: R. Bagshaw, 1806-1820.
- Colbourn, H. Trevor. *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1965.
- Higgenbotham, Don. *The War of American Independence*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1971.
- Knollenberg, Bernhard. *Origin of the American Revolution*. New York, NY: Liberty Press, 1960.
- Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. Peter Laslett, ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1960.
- Middlekauff, Robert. *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Morgan, Edmund S. and Helen Morgan. *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1953.
- Peres, Richard. *King George III and the Politicians*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Walpole, Horace. *Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Third* (4 volumes), II. London, UK: 1845.
- Watson, J. Steven. *The Reign of George III, 1760-1815*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1960.

