America’s Revolution (81) – Tea Partying – I

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 late spring 1773 Parliament once again asserted its determination to control colonial affairs by passing the Tea Act, continuing the three-cents-per-pound duty on tea, but carving out a monopoly on
legal tea sales in North America for the financially troubled East India Company. This provoked immediate reactions in New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Tea shipments were either turned around and sent back to England or confiscated.

Boston was relatively slow on the uptake after the Tea Act because of political conflict in the Commonwealth, but by mid-October critics of Parliament were attacking the tea tax as a threat to government and the sellers of the tea as hostile to colonial interests. Those with commissions to sell struck back pointing out the inconsistency of paying duties on molasses, sugar, wine and tea for years with little complaint and then getting up in arms over the Tea Act.

The Sons of Liberty saw the resistance of the consignors and decided to threaten physical violence. In early November, they
organized a mob which attacked the warehouse of Richard Clarke doing considerable damage and then ten days later went after his house. The situation descended into gridlock with both sides awaiting the arrival of the tea. The impasse came to crisis pitch on November 28th when Dartmouth loaded with a varied cargo, but with numerous casks of the hated East India tea. After landing Custom rules required the payment of the duty within 20 days – thus setting the clock ticking toward explosion. The deadline was December 16th. Next time: Tea Time.

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Resources


