



Volume 21

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America's Revolution (96) – Rising Threat of War - 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: By the end of 1775 most of the counties of Virginia had established Association Committees. These set about enforcing the economic coercion tactics designed to punish Britain for the

Intolerable Acts: nonimportation, nonexportation, and non-consumption of British goods. In Virginia, the Association Committees gradually assumed control of the local and Commonwealth government. Their technique of enforcement was public shaming designed to bring reluctant merchants and officials into line.

The experience of David Wardrobe, a Westmoreland County schoolmaster, illustrated how powerful public shaming could go in keeping people in line. Apparently he had written a letter that was considered to be seditious and critical of the American position in its fight with Great Britain. The local association denounced the letter, called on the local clergy to bar him from using church property for his school, and called on parents not to put their children in his care. Wardrobe quickly got the message and wrote an extremely

obsequious letter to be printed in the *Virginia Gazette*. He profoundly apologized and “asked the forgiveness of this country for so ungrateful a return made for the advantages I have received from it, and the bread I have earned in it, and hope, from this contrition for my offence, I shall be at least admitted to subsist amongst the people I greatly esteem.” Repression of dissent allowed the Association to successfully enforce the ban on trade with Britain. Next time: America united.

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

Resources

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