

Volume 20

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**America's Revolution (32) – Stamp
Act Crisis – 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: The Stamp Act of 1765 was marked by an eruption of civil unrest theretofore unheard of in America. In colony after colony,

stamp collectors were burned in effigy and then forced to resign their commissions, sometimes before even receiving them. Shipments of the stamped paper were destroyed. Alleged supporters of the Stamp levy found themselves threatened by mob action and their property put at risk. In August Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson's beautiful brick home in Boston was methodically taken apart by a mob and everything moveable was stolen. They even ripped up the slate roof. From New Hampshire to George opponents of the Act took exquisite pains to demonstrate their revulsion to Parliament's action. Widespread

calls for a boycott of British goods began to gather support and soon a marked decline in cross-oceanic business activity began to pinch merchants and manufacturers in the mother country.

An even more important result was the alteration in political alliances within the colonies. Soon the older governing elites in colony after colony found their leadership position challenged by new, often younger sets of men determined to press the cause of colonial rights. Beginning with the Virginia Resolves, proposed by a young man named Patrick Henry in May, and

then spreading to Massachusetts and beyond, the fire of resistance animated a re-organization of politics.

Finally, slowly but surely, a theory of colonial constitutionalism began to evolve, often reflecting the reasoning of pro-American members of the British establishment, men such as William Pitt and Edmund Burke. American thinkers and leaders began to assert their privileges as Englishmen with the same rights as those who lived in Britain and who were represented in Parliament. It was when this assertion of rights ran into the

stony, seemingly immovable, stiff-necked resistance in London that the first fleeting glimpses of a new, independent America began to enter the colonial conversation. Next time: repeal.

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

Resources

Knollenberg, Bernhard. *Origin of the American Revolution.*

**Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund,
2002.**

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