As the population of the American colonies grew so did the desire for more land. Land had become the great equalizer. With land ownership, a settler could do more than just make a living for himself and his family. Success was found in having a surplus of crops that could be sold at a profit.

As settlers moved westward beyond the Appalachian mountains, they encountered the French and Native Americans. However, the Native Americans did not want their land developed as it had been in the East. The French, who had made peace with the Native Americans, also did not want the English settling this land. This encounter led to the **French and Indian War** in 1755, pinning the French and Indians against the Colonists and British. In 1763 this conflict was settled with the **Treaty of Paris**, leaving the territory in the hands of the British. This treaty led to the **Proclamation of 1763** which made it illegal for British colonists to settle west of the Appalachian Mountains. This new law angered the colonists since they had fought for the land, but were forbidden use it.

### The Acts

Parliament, fearing that Native Americans would seek revenge after losing the war, ordered British troops to remain in the colonies. However, how to lodge the troops became an issue. Parliament’s answer was the **Quartering Act of 1765**. This act ordered the colonists, who the troops were defending, to supply food and housing for the troops. Not only did the colonists not like this additional expense but also, they did not like the idea of having troops monitoring their movements.

When the Quartering Act did not raise enough money Parliament enacted the **Stamp Act** in 1765. This act made the colonists buy a stamp to put on all legal documents and newspapers, pamphlets, and almanacs they bought. This felt intrusive to many colonists, inspiring secret societies like the **Sons of Liberty** to form, which organized to fight against seemingly unfair British policies. Seen as rebels they attacked custom officials and burned stamps. Colonists also boycotted British goods. This refusal to buy British items not only lessened the amount of taxes collected but, also lessened the profits made by British traders in the colonies. The colonists’ plans worked and Parliament repealed the Act.

However, the need for money in Britain’s treasury was not satisfied. Therefore, in 1767 Parliament passed the **Townshend Acts**. New duties, or taxes, on such common goods as paint, glass, lead, paper, and tea were to raise funds. While costly to the colonists, the most alarming part of the Townshend was that it allowed custom officials to enter anyone’s home without probable cause to look for smuggled goods. The colonists came together in a number of ways to protest these actions by their government. Once again, the citizenry began to boycott those goods that needed stamps. Women, known as the **Daughters of Liberty**, made their own cloth and used American made goods.
The Killing Begins

All of these Acts and reactions to them had led to tensions rising, especially in Boston the place of a large harbor where imported goods from England arrived. As colonists attempted to harm British trade and commerce through boycotts, they also made colonial dockworkers unemployed. No longer were they needed to unload ships.

On March 5, 1770, British troops, known as redcoats for the color of their uniforms, arrived in Boston. Unemployed colonists began to throw insults and snowballs at the troops as they stood near the Boston Custom House. As the crowd grew to view the incident, the troops became fearful for their own safety. Shots soon rang out and five colonists including Crispus Attucks, a black man, lay dead. Samuel Adams would write of the event, known as the Boston Massacre. Adams would use this slaying of American life to rally others to join the cause of the Sons of Liberty.

To lower tensions Parliament would repeal the Townshend Acts. However, in 1773 Parliament would again attempt to raise money by passing the Tea Act. While this tax was only on tea it was significant because tea was the common drink of the British people. Everyone drank it all the time. The colonists’ response to this Act was immediate. In North Carolina, they locked up all the tea on the dock in warehouses. Some places saw colonists burn all the tea they could find. The colonists viewed this Act as just another attempt by Parliament to control them and they understood that as a united front they had a better chance of defying “taxation without representation”.

The Sons of Liberty in Boston believed that the best way to make their feelings known would be to have a direct impact on the tea sitting in Boston Harbor. On the night of December 7, 1773, a group of these men boarded ships in the harbor and dumped hundreds of tea chests into the water. Known as the Boston Tea Party, this event hurt not only the tea merchants but it also infuriated the king! He saw it as a complete disregard of his authority. He punished the citizens of Boston by having Parliament pass the Intolerable Acts. These Acts closed Boston Harbor, increased the governor’s powers, and made it legal for private homes to be used to house British troops.

Uniting of the Colonies

To show solidarity against the British government twelve of the 13 colonies came together in October 1774 to align themselves. This gathering, known as the First Continental Congress emphasized the fact that the colonists understood that as a united group they had a stronger voice. The goal of this meeting was not to seek independence from England but, to have the Intolerable Acts repealed. However, knowing that tensions were high and compromise may not be an option they also called for all colonies to begin training their own troops or militia. The meeting ended with an agreement to meet again in seven months thereby giving the king enough time to respond to their actions.

Informants on both sides were obtaining details of troop movement and preparation for war. Colonists were secretly stashing arms and ammunition. British troops were amassing in large towns along the coast. In Boston, troops heard of a colonial arsenal held in Concord, just outside of the city. Ordered to destroy these supplies the British troops left Boston on April 18, 1775. On their way they went through Lexington where they met about 70 militiamen under the command of Captain John Parker. The British ordered the militiamen to lay down they arms; they refused. No one knows for sure who fired the first shot but when the air cleared eight militiamen laid dead. Ralph Waldo Emerson would later write that this event was “the shot heard ‘round the world”.

The British troops would move on to Concord where they would destroy the supplies they were looking for. However, on the way back to Boston they would come under fire from nearly 4,000 militiamen. Unprepared the British troops would have succumbed if not for an additional 1,000 troops that arrived to aid them.

Lexington and Concord, the first battles of the American Revolution, would set the course for America’s liberty. Patriots, rebels seeking independence and Loyalists, those remaining loyal to the king, debated furiously on how to deal with a new spirit of independence fostered by reactions to Parliamentary taxation. On July 4, 1776, at the Second Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, would call for the official end to British rule in the American colonies.

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