



The Loss of America

1765 American Stamp

Act (tax on legal transactions) passed.

1767 Townshend's Act passed imposing taxes on various goods imported into America.

1770 Act passed to remove taxes on paper, glass and paint, but not on tea.

1773 Boston Tea Party (16 December).

1775 First battles of American War of Independence at Concord and Lexington (19 April). George Washington appointed commander of rebel armies (15 June).

1776 American Declaration of Independence (4 July).

1777 Surrender of British at Saratoga (17 October).

1778 Treaty signed between France and American rebels. France declares war on Britain (17 June).

1779 Spain declares war on Britain (21 June).

1780 Britain declares war on Netherlands (20 December).

1781 Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown (19 October).

1783 Treaty of Versailles signed by Britain, France, Spain and the United States. Britain recognizes United States (3 September).

1784 Treaty signed with the Netherlands.

Britain's victory over France during the Seven Years War (1756–63) meant that British colonists in America no longer feared a French invasion from the north. Many colonists thought that there was little need for the British army to remain in North America – especially as the colonists had to pay towards their upkeep. But the British had different ideas.

Ministers in the British government were determined to protect the valuable trade to and from North America. In order to meet some of the expense of keeping a military force in North America the government decided to impose new taxes on the colonists. As they had no representatives at Westminster there was no one to argue the colonists' cause. During the 1760s and 1770s, the government in Britain imposed a whole series of taxes on the American colonists.



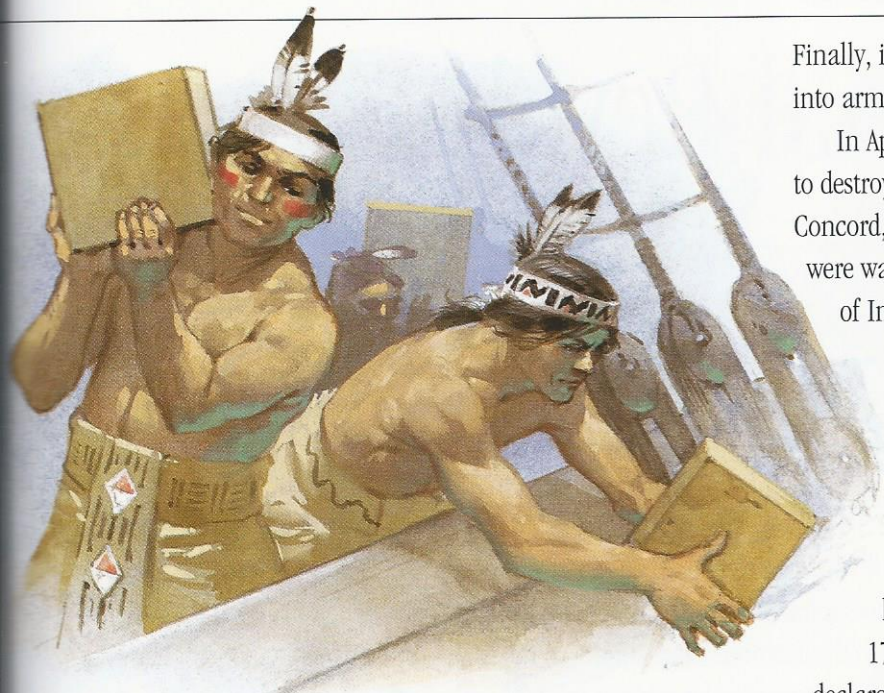
On 18 April 1775, riders on a message to warn Boston of a British attack.



The army of the American colonists was not made up of professional soldiers like the British troops, but of untrained working men such as farmers. They were ill-equipped to fight in the European manner, but had more success with guerrilla tactics such as ambushing and sniping to surprise and outwit the British troops.



Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) was the main author of the Declaration of Independence which set out the reasons for the break of the 13 American colonies with Britain.



On 16 December, 1773, American colonists disguised as Native Americans boarded ships belonging to the British East India Company in Boston harbour. In protest at the tax imposed on tea by the British government they threw more than 300 chests of tea overboard. This event became known as the Boston Tea Party.



British soldiers were often called 'Redcoats' because of the red coats of their uniforms. About 42,000 British soldiers fought in the American War of Independence.

Finally, in 1775, the colonists' resentment boiled over into armed resistance.

In April 1775, British troops were sent from Boston to destroy military supplies held by the colonists at Concord, Massachusetts. However, the colonist rebels were warned and the first battles of the American War of Independence were fought at Concord and nearby

Lexington. The American colonists declared themselves independent from Britain on 4 July, 1776, but the fighting continued until 1783.

Under their general, George Washington, the Americans used their local knowledge to harass the British troops. In 1778, help came for the Americans when France declared war on Britain. The French sent armies and fleets to America, but they also attacked British colonies in India and the West Indies. Similarly, Spain and the Netherlands joined the fighting in 1779 and 1780. Finally, Lord Cornwallis, who commanded the British army in America, was forced to surrender when French and Spanish fleets cut off his supply lines between Britain and the colonies. In 1783, Britain formally recognized the independence of the United States.

TAXES ON GOODS

The British government attempted to force the American colonists to pay taxes on many different commodities including lead, glass, paint, cotton, coffee, tea and paper. The new taxes were met with fierce opposition from the Americans. The eventual outcome was war and the declaration of American independence.

