List of British Acts on Colonial America

1651 Navigation Acts

The Navigation Acts were trade rules that governed commerce between Britain and its colonies. The first of the Navigation Acts existed for almost two centuries and was repealed in 1849. The laws were designed to protect British economic interests in colonial trade and to protect its industry against the rapidly growing Dutch navigation trade.

1733 Molasses Act

The purpose of the Molasses Act was to protect British West Indies exports to the American colonies from the more fertile French and Spanish islands of Martinique and Santo Domingo. It was not designed to raise revenue but it was used as a trade barrier. The duty was set at 6p per gallon of imported foreign molasses, corruption became endemic and illegal trade was widespread. In its first year it collected £330 sterling and during the period of 1738-1741 it collected £76 a year. Not until 1763 was the collection of the duty enforced when the duty was lowered to 2d a gallon and in 1764 it was replaced by the Sugar Act.

1751 Currency Act

decided to enact the Currency Act of 1751 to control currency depreciation against silver and sterling and to ensure its value for payments of debt to British merchants. A subsequent Currency Act enacted in 1764 extended the policy to all British colonies in the Americas increasing more tension between Britain and America.

**1764 Sugar Act**

It amended the existing 1733 Molasses Act. The Act increased the duty of molasses from 2d to 3d of gallon of imported molasses. It enforced the Navigation Acts by prohibiting vessels to directly transport cargo to the colonies. Vessels had to unload its cargo in Britain, pay duties and reload its cargo before sailing to the colonies. The Sugar Act imposed a £7 a ton on wine imported from Madeira, the Azores and Canary Islands. It added hides, skins, potash and other products to the list of commodities that could be legally exported. The act was strictly enforced through the Vice-Admiralty Courts.

**1765 Stamp Act**

The Stamp Act intended to raise revenue by requiring the purchase of stamps to be placed on public documents, there were 55 documents subject to the duty. Violators were to be prosecuted in the vice-admiralty courts. For the first time the British had levied an explicit tax on the colonist for the purpose of raising revenue, previous taxes were seen as trade taxes and tolerated by colonial residents. Opposition to the tax was widespread as it represented an infringement on their rights. Opposition groups such as the Sons of Liberty sprung everywhere. The Act was nullified in March 1766.

**1765 Quartering Act**

The act required colonial assemblies to provide housing, food and drink to British troops stationed in their towns with the purpose of improving living conditions and decreasing the cost to the crown. Soldiers were to be housed in barracks or empty public buildings and not in private residences. It was the duty of local legislatures to fund the expenses. In 1766 the New York assembly refused to raise the money and in 1767 Parliament passed the New York Suspending Act on July 1767 which suspended the assembly until they complied with the new law.

**1766 Declaratory Act**

The Declaratory Act was passed on March 18, 1766, at the same time as the repeal of the 1765 Stamp Act. The act was used as a justification for the repeal of the Stamp Act and as a face saving action. The 1766 Declaratory Act stated that the colonies are subordinate
and dependent on the Imperial Crown and Parliament of Britain and that Parliament had the authority to pass laws.

**1767 Townshend Acts**

The Act imposed import duties on 72 items including paint, tea, glass and paper. The revenue raised from it was to provide for the salaries of colonial officers and its administration. It also authorized the Supreme Court to issue writs of assistance for violators, established the American Customs Board and expanded Admiralty Courts. Protests against the Townshend Acts led to the Boston Massacre.

**1773 Tea Act**

The Tea Act of 1773 granted the East India Company exclusive license to import and distribute tea to the American colonies. Tea was sold in America at 10s per pound, half its previous price and less than the cost of smuggled tea. Despite the economic benefit to end consumers of tea, the law damaged the position of independent shippers, smugglers and local shopkeepers. On December 1773 Bostonians dumped 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor in an event known as the Boston Tea Party.

**1774 Coercive or Intolerable Acts**

As retaliation for the Boston Tea Party, Britain imposed the Coercive Acts in 1774. The Coercive Acts were a package of five laws: Boston Port Act, Massachusetts Government act, Administration of Justice Act, Quartering Act and Quebec Act.
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Timeline

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1733 - Molasses Act
1754-1763 - French and Indian War
1754 - Albany Congress
1763 - Proclamation of 1763
1764 - Sugar Act
1764 - Currency Act
1765 - Stamp Act
1765 - Quartering Act Congress
1766 - Declaratory Act
1767 - Townshend Revenue Act
1770 - Boston Massacre
1773 - Tea Act
1773 - Boston Tea Party
1774 - Intolerable or Coercive Acts
1774 - First Continental Congress
1775-1783 - War of Independence

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Crispus Attucks

Crispus Attucks was the first person killed in the historic event that became known as The Boston Massacre.

John Adams
John Adams was the first political leader who had to deal with democracy as we know it.

**Samuel Adams**

Even among progressive thinking political elite Samuel Adams was considered a radical.