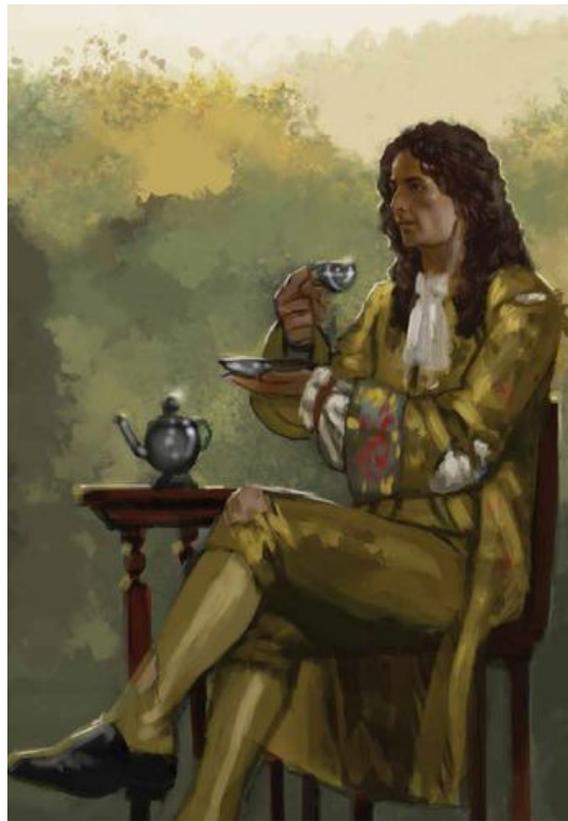


# A Tea Party in Boston

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

Have you ever heard the expression, "He was too clever for his own good"? It means that sometimes a person thinks he has a smart solution to a problem. Instead, his solution makes things worse.

Few sayings better describe what the British government did next. Parliament had left the tax on tea just to show the colonists that it had the right to tax them. Meanwhile the colonists had maintained the boycott on tea just to show Parliament that it didn't.



*Tea was a popular drink in the colonies.*

Parliament decided its plan had not worked. British tea merchants had lost their colonial customers. The colonists were buying tea smuggled in by Dutch merchants. As a result, the government hadn't collected more than a few pennies in taxes. So in 1773, Parliament came up with another plan. It passed the Tea Act.

Parliament's new plan was clever but tricky. Parliament lowered the price of the tea itself. But it

also kept the tax on the tea. When the new price of the tea was added to the tax, the total cost was less than what the colonists paid for tea from the Dutch.

Parliament thought the colonists would now buy British tea again. When they did, they would be paying the tea tax! Soon two thousand chests of tea were loaded aboard British ships bound for the American colonies. Once there, the tea would be sold by certain colonial merchants.

Unfortunately, Parliament was "too clever for its own good." The Tea Act of 1773 showed how poorly Parliament understood the colonists. The colonists did not care about the price of tea. They cared about "taxation without representation." They were not going to pay that tea tax, no matter what British tea cost.

## News Travels Fast

As British tea ships headed for the colonies, Committees of Correspondence went to work. The news spread through the colonies. The Sons of Liberty prevented the tea ships from being unloaded in several ports. In Philadelphia, for example, the Sons of Liberty sent a letter to the captain of a ship waiting in the harbor to unload its chests of tea. "I wouldn't try to land that tea if I were you," said the letter. "Your ship may just happen to be set on fire ..." The captain got the idea and decided not to dock.

Colonists in other colonial port cities responded the same way. Some captains had their ships wait in the harbor. Others turned their ships around and headed home. That is not what happened in Boston.

## Time for Tea



*No one was fooled by the costumes worn by the colonists when they tossed the tea into Boston Harbor.*

Early in December 1773, three tea ships entered Boston Harbor. Citizens gathered at a town meeting. They demanded that the governor of the colony order the ships to leave. The governor did not like Sam Adams or the Sons of Liberty. He refused.

Colonists took matters into their own hands. On the night of December 16, 1773, a group of colonists dressed as Native Americans as a symbol of independence. Then they rowed out to the ships in the harbor. They boarded the ships and dumped every chest of tea into the water. Exactly 342 chests went into the harbor. All of this was done in a quiet, businesslike way. When they were through, the "Native Americans" swept the deck and put everything back in its proper place. This event became known as the Boston Tea Party.

## The Intolerable Acts

When Parliament and the king heard about the Boston Tea Party, they were outraged. Parliament passed laws to punish the people of Boston and the whole Massachusetts colony. One law closed the Port of Boston until the colonists paid for the wasted tea. For a city that depended on trading and fishing, this was a harsh punishment. Parliament hoped that Boston's merchants and fishermen would turn in the guilty persons. Maybe they would even pay for the tea themselves. They did neither.

A second law took away most of the Massachusetts colony's self-government. The British also appointed an army general to be the governor of Massachusetts. The new governor came with thousands of British soldiers. The Quartering Act forced the colonists to house and feed the soldiers.

These laws became known as the Intolerable Acts because the colonists would not tolerate or accept them.

## **Making Enemies**

The British government failed to understand the effects of its actions. The new laws caused it to lose friends and make enemies. Even colonists who were loyal to Britain, who opposed the Sons of Liberty, who wanted to buy British tea and pay the tea tax felt the new laws were too harsh. Once again, the Committees of Correspondence spread the news. The colonies decided to stand with the people of Boston to resist the Intolerable Acts.