

1765 - A very busy year here and there

..an article by Canon Rev. Richard W. Davies

It seems that there is always a recurring question about taxes. From 1760 into the 1770's many biting questions were raised by American colonists and by the legislature in Great Britain. These taxing experiences should be a part of our understanding of how this country was founded.

What we call the French & Indian War, 1754 - 1766, was focused on the entire Ohio Valley down to the Mississippi river. It was the scene of competition between French and British fur traders and the obvious intense interest of native Indians. The French were pushed away from the Ohio Valley, but Indian attacks continued, the major onslaught coming in 1763. Chief Pontiac hit the major British forts, including Ft. Pitt. Captain Henry Bouquet, commander at Ft. Pitt, repelled Pontiac's warfare. In 1765 Bouquet strengthened Ft. Pitt by building a British lookout garrison beside the Chartiers Creek, the root of today's Old St. Lukes.

The English Parliament had spent great sums of money trying to control the frontier, and the end was not in sight. Parliament approved a new colonial policy, which included ways of collecting revenue for the mounting costs and debts and to show the American colonists their obligations as British subjects under King George III.

Lord Halifax and George Grenville got Parliament to set a Proclamation Line along Laurel Ridge of the Allegheny Mountains, to prevent white settlers from claiming land to the west. However, the new policy recognized land-grant rewards from King George to officers who had served in the war. Major

Next, Grenville put forth the Currency Act of 1764, to restrict Virginia and other colonies from using their own paper currency. Each separate colony felt Britain had the right to impose laws, but not to legislate without an American voice and vote in the House of Commons. Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson went to England to state this conviction.



The breaking point for Americans was the Stamp Act of 1765. The French and Indian War had united the colonies, and now the colonies found taxes measures another good reason to be unified. The increasing opposition to Britain was led by Patrick Henry, who could accept British taxes, but only by American consent. Colonists were loyal to the King of England and Parliament, but they were jealous of liberty. Citizens in Boston were led by a small group of artisans and merchants who called themselves the Loyal Nine. They formed as a mob to attack the local stamp master, wealthy Andrew Oliver. They demanded his resignation, and they burned down his office. In Pennsylvania, the angry colonists threatened Benjamin Franklin and John Hughes, our stamp master.



A call went out to form the Stamp Act Congress. It met in October 1765 in New York City, and representatives from ten colonies responded. The Loyal Nine became known as the Sons of Liberty. Three Memorials were sent by the Congress, one to King George, one to the House of Lords, and one to the House of Commons. Giving great

William Lea was one veteran so rewarded. He chose the site of the British garrison where Old St. Lukes is built today. His land patent was registered in Philadelphia in 1770.

To lower the cost of housing British troops, a Quartering Act was passed, allowing British troops to be housed in colonial buildings and homes. Then came the American Duties Act of 1763. The earlier 1733 Molasses Act tried to hurt French West Indies producers of molasses used in producing rum, a favorite British drink. The Act actually produced smuggling of molasses and corrupt custom collectors. To prosecute all who violated the new Act, a Vice-Admiralty Court for All America was created. Forty-four Royal Navy vessels were deployed to catch the smugglers on the Atlantic Ocean.

praise of the King, they said that Americans had paid for liberty with blood, but they would not pay for freedom with taxation by Britain. William Pitt, perhaps urged on by British merchants who were hurting from loss of colonial trade, called for the repeal of the Stamp Act. On March 17, 1766, the Act was repealed. In 1767, new duties were placed on imported tea, glass, paper and dyestuffs. These were major steps to define American sovereignty. The result would be the 1776 Revolution, and in 1794, the Whiskey Rebellion in the Chartiers Valley and the excise tax on distilled spirits.

References: Fred Anderson, "Crucible of War."

"Stamp Act Congress, Declarations and Petitions, October 1765" by Old South Association, Boston, MA.

"Sons of Liberty" Flag Photo courtesy of Richard R. Gideon Flags

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