



#4 1993

A Chronology Of The Revolutionary War

with emphasis on Bedford County, Pennsylvania's role

1764

Following the cessation of the hostilities known as the French and Indian War, Britain was faced with a large post-war debt, a need to tax her own citizens in the British Isles and the need to continue supporting her army on the American continent. On the 9th of March George Grenville, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed to the Parliament his *American Revenue Act*, commonly referred to as the Sugar Act. This was the first act passed by Parliament specifically intended to raise moneys in the colonies for the crown. Followed, in September, by the Currency Act which prohibited the issue of legal-tender in all of the American colonies. These recent actions outraged the colonists who viewed them as intended to ruin the colonial economy. A town meeting held in Boston on 24 May denounced the Grenville acts as *taxation without representation* and called for united action by all the colonies to protest them. A committee of correspondence was established on 13 June to contact the other colonies and make the suggestion for noncompliance.

1765

On the 22nd of March the Stamp Act was passed by the British Parliament as a direct tax on all types of legal and public documents, requiring that all paper used for public purposes have a stamp affixed to them. Parliament insisted that this act was imposed in order to raise funds for the defense of the colonies. Two days later the Quartering Act was passed, requiring each of the colonies to supply living-quarters for the British troops. Groups began to form throughout the colonies during the summer to protest (and often carry out acts of violence) against the increasing Parliamentary acts. These groups were known as the Sons of Liberty. Between 07 October and 25 October, representatives from nine of the thirteen colonies met at New York City to decide what unified action could be taken against the Stamp Act. The meeting, known as the Stamp Act Congress, had been proposed by the Massachusetts Assembly on 06 June. The Stamp Act Congress chose to place economic sanctions upon Britain and to engage in a program of nonimportation of European goods until the Stamp Act be repealed.

1766

Parliament met in early January and the repeal of the Stamp Act was the focus of attention. The colonial agents, including Benjamin Franklin, were called upon to give testimony to the House of Commons. A bill calling for the repeal of the act was put before the House and passed on 04 March. King George III encouraged the House of Lords to likewise pass the bill and on 17 March it was approved by that parliamentary body. The king signed the bill on the 18th and the Stamp Act was repealed effective 01 May. The American colonies responded by lifting their sanctions. The colonists celebrated a victory with the repeal of the stamp act, but on the same day the Parliament passed the Declaratory Act which stated that Parliament had the absolute authority to make laws binding the Americans "*in all cases whatsoever*". In December of 1765 General Gage had requested that New York provide quarters and supplies for his troops. The New York Assembly protested that that province would be unfairly subjected to hardship if she complied, and in January of 1766

made a formal refusal to comply. Throughout the summer and into the early autumn there occurred numerous incidents of friction between the New York provincials and the British soldiers.

1767

A change in the ministry brought Lord Chatham into office, but an illness kept him from taking effectual control of the government. Instead, Charles Townshend, the newly elected Chancellor of the Exchequer took over. His first action was to propose (and secure the passage of) the Townshend Acts, a series of acts reminiscent of the Stamp Act in that they placed import duties on a wide range of articles needed by the colonies, including paper, glass and tea. The colonies responded again by passing nonimportation legislation. Fourteen essays, published between 05 November, 1767 and January, 1768 under the title of *Letters From A Farmer In Pennsylvania To The Inhabitants Of The British Colonies*, by John Dickinson questioned the constitutionality of the Townshend Acts.

1768

The Massachusetts Assembly approved a Circular Letter composed by Samuel Adams on the 11th of February to be circulated throughout the other colonies. This Circular Letter denounced the Townshend Acts as being "taxation without representation" and called once more for unified action against such acts. Lord Hillsborough, the Secretary of State for the colonies denounced the letter and the actions of the Americans and ordered the provincial governors to prevent their assemblies from endorsing it. His dispatches arrived in the colonies too late; Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Virginia had already agreed to stand by Massachusetts. The actions of the assembly at Boston provoked more antagonism and the Customs commissioners requested an armed force to protect them while they carried out their duties. The frigate, Romney, with 50 guns was dispatched to Boston and gave the Customs officials confidence. They received a report that a wharf official had been imprisoned in a cabin on John Hancock's sloop, the Liberty, while madeira wine was being unloaded without the duty being paid. On 10 June the Liberty was seized by the Customs officials. A crowd of citizens promptly assaulted the officials and their homes and caused them to flee to Castle William in the harbor. Parliament ordered two regiments of infantry to take control of Boston and they landed on the first of October without incident.

1769

With the presence of British troops in and about Boston, the assemblies of the various colonies again decided to employ nonimportation activities against the items to be taxed according to the Townshend Acts to show Britain their disagreement with those Acts. By the end of 1769 all of the colonies, with the sole exception of New Hampshire, would pass nonimportation legislation. George Washington, on 16 May, introduced a set of resolutions framed by George Mason to the Virginia House of Burgesses. These Virginia Resolves asserted, among other points, that the governor and legislative body of the province should have the sole right of taxing the citizens of the province of Virginia. The bill was passed unanimously. In an attempt to censure the the voice of the assembly, Governor Botetourt dissolved the assembly, but the members simply decided to meet on their own at the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg. This action was the first of many that would follow in which the provincial assemblies divorced themselves from, and essentially annulled, the power of the British appointed governors.

Bedford: Indian tribes in the region had been making raids upon the white settlers on the frontier over the past few years, and the intensity of the raids had increased during the early part of 1769. Certain of the traders working in this part of the Province of Pennsylvania were supplying the Indian marauders with the goods, including powder and lead, which they needed to continue their raiding forays. The settlers were greatly angered over this activity and appealed to the British authority stationed at Fort Bedford to put a stop to it. Finding that the soldiers at Fort Bedford intended to do nothing to safeguard them, the settlers banded together under the name of the Black Boys to carry out their own form of protection: namely to attack and destroy the trader's packtrains. (The name "Black Boys" had been adopted by the citizen~army which had, in 1765, banded together to attack Fort Loudon in order to secure the freedom of a group of citizens who had been arrested for being suspected of attacking and destroying a trader's shipment of goods to the Indians. Captain James Smith had led a group of volunteers to free the captured citizens; they blackened their faces with soot

in order to conceal their identities and thus acquired the name of the Black Boys. Camping outside of the fort, the group captured as many soldiers as they could in the area and then traded them for the imprisoned citizens.) The group of citizen vigilantes succeeded in destroying a large quantity of lead and gunpowder, but wound up being captured and thrust into the imprisonment in the guard house at Fort Bedford by the British garrison there. Smith, hearing of the Fort Bedford incident, gathered together eighteen of his original Black Boys and made preparations to free those held in the fort. The small party made their way to Fort Bedford despite being informed that the commandant of the fort was aware of their plan. He had found the idea amusing that a band of eighteen would even attempt to attack the fort and felt nothing would come of it. Smith and his men arrived outside of the fort during the night and concealed themselves near the gate. As dawn was breaking, Smith and his Black Boys made a dash through it, hidden partly by the early morning mist and took possession of the arms which were routinely stacked at one spot in the fort's yard. While a local blacksmith was brought to free the prisoners from their legirons, the Black Boys kept watch over the British troops.

Despite the fact that the garrison was later freed by Captain Smith and returned to the British commandant, the incident remains as the first on record in which a British fort was attacked and captured by *American Rebels*. This incident points toward one of the most basic of all the reasons why the majority of the settlers of Bedford County became supporters of the Patriot cause. The British forces stationed throughout the American colonies were not sympathetic to the unique problems faced by the Americans, such as the threat of Indian attack. The Americans, especially those settling on the frontier, realized that their defense from the Indians was not one of Britain's immediate concerns. The Indian incursions, encouraged by the British, that stretched into the second half of the 1780s would be this frontier region's primary preoccupation during the Revolutionary War.

1770

Lord Frederick North became head of the British government on 31 January, and soon thereafter, on 05 March, proposed a bill withdrawing all of the Townshend duties with the exception of the one on tea. On the 12th of April the George III signed his consent to the bill, and tea became the sole focus of the Customs agents. The various colonies, pressured by merchants who had also suffered by the sanctions placed on British goods, now began to repeal their nonimportation legislation.

The quarreling that had taken place in New York in 1766 over the Quartering Act had flared up again in 1768; then on 15 December, 1769 the Assembly had voted to appropriate £2,000 for the supplies needed by the British troops. Members of the Sons of Liberty objected to this betrayal of the province's earlier nonparticipatory stance and clashes broke out during the early part of this year. On 17 January British soldiers cut down the city's liberty pole. Two days later the Sons of Liberty attempted to prevent the British soldiers from posting broadsides. A riot broke out on Golden Hill and about forty soldiers using bayonets fought against an equal number of citizens armed with clubs and swords. The Battle of Golden Hill resulted in some serious wounds but no fatalities.

Meanwhile, in Boston, where British troops had been quartered since 1768, open quarreling had broken out at various times, but nothing serious consequence came of these clashes. On Monday, 05 March, a fist fight broke out between a town laborer and a soldier in the afternoon and developed into a small riot. By evening, bands of civilians and soldiers itching for a fight were roaming the streets. Five youths, passing through a narrow alley, came upon three soldiers striking their broadswords against a (brick or stone) wall for the sport of watching the sparks fly. One of the youths called out to the others to avoid the soldiers, and all of a sudden one of the soldiers quickly turned around and struck him on the arm with his sword. The youths returned blows and a squabble ensued. The soldiers escaped into their barracks and recruited between twelve and twenty others to follow them back to teach the boys a lesson. With their cutlasses and muskets in hand the band of soldiers swept through the streets striking and bullying any civilians they met. Some of the townsfolk returned blows and pelted the soldiers with snowballs and shots were fired into the crowds of civilians. Three civilians were killed outright and two were mortally wounded. A general uprising was averted by Lt. Governor Hutchinson; he ordered the British troops to withdraw from the town to some islands in the harbor. Captain Preston and six of his men were arrested for murder, but

the captain and four of his men were acquitted and the other two, though found guilty of manslaughter, were released after simply being branded on the hand. The Boston Massacre would provide impetus for the Patriotic fervor that was growing throughout the countryside.

1771

A group of residents of the piedmont region of North Carolina who became known as the Regulators, protested the lack of representation in that province's Assembly. Disorders increased throughout the colony until May when governor William Tryon led a force of 1,200 militiamen to battle the Regulators. On 16 May they met with a Regulator force of about 2,000. The battle that took place along the Alamance River near Hillsboro resulted in the defeat of the Regulators. More importantly, it revealed the deep rift between the backwoods settlers and the British controlled provincial government.

Bedford: On the 9th of March, 1771, the county of Bedford was erected out of the western portion of Cumberland County.

This chronological history of the Revolutionary War will be continued in a future newsletter.

DUES NOTICE

You should have already received a notice for the 1994 dues. In accordance with the State By-Laws, the deadline for the annual dues to be forwarded by the Chapters to the State Treasurer is the 31st of January of the year following. That means that the Chapter Treasurer should receive them prior to that date.

In general, the sixty-plus members of the Blair County Chapter are prompt in responding to the notice. There are a few, though, who are always late in getting their dues paid. This causes some problems for both, the Chapter and the State Treasurers. Please keep this in mind when you receive your dues notice and make an effort to respond within the time allowed by the By-Laws. Your consideration will be greatly appreciated.

reminder that you can contribute to this newsletter

As editor and chief contributor to this newsletter, I have endeavored to provide articles that are informative and entertaining. I have no problem continuing as I have been doing so far, but if you, as members of the Blair County Chapter, have anything you would like to have printed in the newsletter, please submit it. If you have not submitted anything because you are unsure of your writing ability, and want me to edit and correct grammar and punctuation, that will be no problem. Also, if you have an idea about a subject that you would like to see in a future newsletter, please suggest it and I will research and present it. As I had noted in the first newsletter I produced, if you have a story about one of your Patriot ancestors who was associated with our region (of what was Bedford County) in the Revolution, it would be a welcome addition to the newsletter.

Reply to: Larry D. Smith
RD #1, Box 704-A
East Freedom, PA 16637

☆☆☆ 1993 ANNUAL MEETING ☆☆☆

The 1993 Annual Meeting of the Blair County Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution will be held on the 4th of December, 1993 at the Ramada Hotel in Altoona. The meeting will start at 12:00 noon. Installation of officers for 1994 will follow the dinner. The dinner will consist of beef tips and noodles, fresh fruit cup, glazed carrots, tossed salad and ice cream for dessert.

As with previous years, your wives, or other guests, are invited to attend this year's Annual Meeting. The cost, per person, will be \$12, payable to Larry D. Smith, Treasurer.

As always, you may pay in advance via mail, or at the door ~ but please respond with the number who will attend by December 1 so that we can advise the Ramada on how many to prepare for.