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An American postcard, circa 1903, commemorates how 18th-century American colonists reacted to the Stamp Act imposed upon them by King George III and Britain's Parliament. Maintained at the Library of Congress, the postcard has this title: "Burning of Stamp Act, Boston." Click on the image for a full-page view.

For about 150 years—until 1764—the colonists tolerated British rule. But when the King and Parliament began to enforce trade laws and imposed taxes on sugar (to help Britain pay for the debt caused by the French and Indian War), Americans grew increasingly upset.

The Sugar Act also prohibited Americans from importing foreign rum and French wines. That made matters worse.

People—like James Otis—raised the issue of taxation without representation. Why should American colonists pay taxes to England when they had no representation in the English Parliament?

But England was just getting started with colonial taxes. By the following year, Parliament (for the first time) imposed a tax (the Stamp Act) which required Americans to pay duties directly to England, not to local legislatures. The law required Americans to buy stamps for ALL printed material (including playing cards, newspapers, dice, and legal documents), thus taxing the most mundane aspects of daily life.

The colonials were outraged. To make matters worse, George III expected "his" colonists to house and feed British soldiers (the Quartering Act of 1765).

People living in the colonies elected representatives to formally discuss these developments. The "Stamp Act Congress" sent a petition to George III and Parliament requesting a repeal of the tax and reminding the King that taxation without representation violated basic civil rights. Meanwhile, daily business and legal transactions nearly stopped when the people refused to buy the stamps.

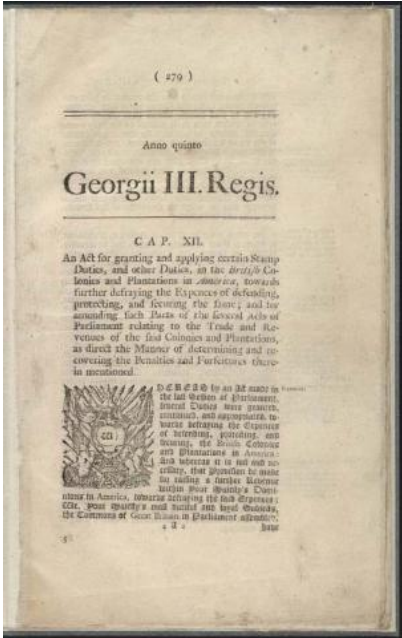
Conceding the point on the Stamp Act, Parliament and the King repealed it in March of 1766, but replaced the law with something much more onerous. The Declaratory Act gave the British government exclusive power to enact any and all laws governing the colonies.

By 1767, the Townshend Revenue Acts levied a new tax—this time on imports like tea, paper, glass, lead and paints. To make sure the duties were paid, the King sent British custom officials to Boston—where they were tarred and feathered.

The stage was set for violence.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/GEORGE-III-GOES-TOO-FAR-Patriot-The>
See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/GEORGE-III-GOES-TOO-FAR-Patriot-The>

Media Stream

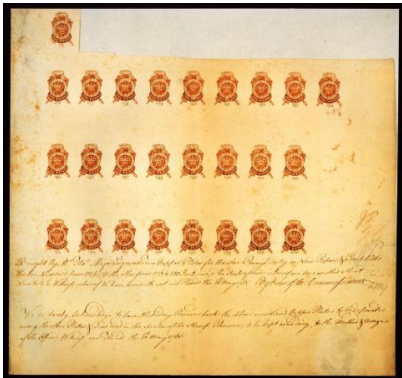


Stamp Act

Library of Congress - *John Bull and Uncle Sam: Four Centuries of British-American Relations* - image vc33.

The exhibition, according to the Library of Congress web site, is a "joint project of the Library of Congress and The British Library ... and brings together for the first time treasures from the two greatest libraries in the English-speaking world." PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Stamp-Act>



The Stamps

Library of Congress - *John Bull and Uncle Sam: Four Centuries of British-American Relations* - image 34uc.

This proof-sheet of stamps, from 1765, is owned by the Board of Inland Revenues Stamping Department Archive, Philatelic Collection, The British Library. PD

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