

## Boston Tea Party

The calm ended in 1773 with the passage of a new tax on tea. Tea had been the traditional beverage of the English since the 1600s. In response to the demands of tea merchants, Parliament passed the Tea Act of 1773. This act reduced, but did not eliminate, the earlier tax on tea and gave a monopoly to the British East India Company. Only merchants working for the company could sell tea. While merchants who were not chosen worried that they would go out of

# I. The American Revolution

## Teaching Idea

**Discuss the concept of boycotts with students. Make sure they understand how an economic boycott can empower people with little or no political power into influencing the more powerful elements of society to change policy.**

**Discuss how people's willingness to forgo buying a product or service can cause severe economic pain. American colonists individually had no way to affect British policy. But when they banded together and boycotted British goods, their actions caused British merchants and shippers to lose money. The merchants and shippers were influential in changing British policy.**

business, the larger concern was that in time the British government would attempt to control how other goods were sold by using this same method of granting monopolies.

Colonists were angered by this tax and continued their boycott of British tea. In Boston, the Sons of Liberty, led by Sam Adams, mobilized to protest the Tea Act. They demanded that the East India Company's merchants resign and attacked their warehouses. The Sons of Liberty marched in the streets and held torch-lit meetings. On December 16, 1773, a group of some 50 colonists painted their faces and dressed up as Mohawks. These "Indians" boarded three British ships that had recently arrived with cargoes of tea. They went into the ships' hold and handed up the casks of tea. On deck, they opened the casks and poured thousands of pounds of tea into Boston Harbor. Their night's work cost the East India Company significant losses and resulted in retaliatory laws—called the Intolerable Acts by colonists—which took harsh action against the port of Boston and Massachusetts. <sup>39</sup>

## The Intolerable Acts

The official name of these four laws was the Coercive Acts.

- The Boston Port Act closed the port until the East India Company was paid for its losses.
- The Massachusetts Bay Regulating Act revoked Massachusetts's charter and put the colony directly under the governance of the monarch.
- British troops were sent to Massachusetts to enforce these laws, and under the Quartering Act, the colonists were required to pay for housing for these troops.
- The Administration of Justice Act allowed the governor to have a soldier or an official accused of a crime tried outside Massachusetts if the governor deemed it impossible for the accused to get a fair trial within the colony.

The Quebec Act of 1774 added to colonists' anger, although the intent of the act was to allow the British to better organize their newly acquired French territory and to reach a compromise between the French and English settlers. The Quebec Act extended the boundaries of Quebec south to the Ohio River Valley and west to the Mississippi River, thus thwarting the claims of several colonies to this land. The law also allowed the colonists in Quebec to keep their French laws. These laws did not ensure trial by jury or the right to vote. British colonists feared that if Parliament could govern without these basic rights in Quebec, it could take these rights from them, too. In the minds of the colonists, the Quebec Act and the Intolerable Acts coming in the same year widened the gulf between the colonists and Great Britain.