

About the Boston Tea Party

The Tea Act was cited as *13 Geo. III Cap. 44*. It is somewhat unique in the group of Acts which led to the American Revolutionary War, in that it was enacted for the primary purpose of helping the East India Company from falling into bankruptcy.

The East India Company was created by royal charter, granted by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600, as the *Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies*. As such, it was the oldest such company in existence, and counted many aristocrats and wealthy merchants as its shareholders. It was a very powerful entity, rivaling the British government in that it possessed its own army and functioned outside of British rules and regulations in some cases. By the start of the 1700s, the East India Company had formed a lobby within the British Parliament, thereby being able to influence the sponsorship and passage of Acts beneficial to the Company. The East India Company initially competed against the Dutch East India Company (which had been established in 1602) for control of the spice trade. Importation of pepper to Great Britain and its colonies was the Company's initial item of trade.

In early 1773, the East India Company's stock prices (on the London Exchange) had dropped from 280 to 160 pounds. At the time, the Company had a surplus of nearly 17 million lbs of tea in its warehouses in England. In order for the Company to be saved from bankruptcy, it had to get rid of that surplus tea quickly.

Duties on tea had been included in the earlier Townshend Act. When that Act was repealed, the duties on tea were not removed. In effect, a new Act was not really necessary, but what the new Act did was reduce the import tax from 9 pence to 3 pence per lb. This allowed the East India Company to undercut the prices on tea being charged by the Dutch merchants. The Act also gave the East India Company the right to sell its tea directly to the merchants in the American Colonies, without going through any middlemen. Not only could the British East India Company sell its tea at prices lower than at the Dutch prices, but it was able to sell the tea at

prices lower than those being charged by colonial smugglers, while still making a profit.

The straw that broke the camel's back was that the East India Company was authorized to sell half a million lbs of tea to selected merchants in the major port cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston. This smacked of monopoly, and that is precisely to what most of the American merchants objected.

On the 16th of October, Philadelphians met and produced a condemnation of the Act along with a call for the merchants who had been identified by the East India Company as its selected consignees to resign. On the 5th and 6th of November, Bostonians held their own meeting and used the Philadelphia resolves to write their own. New York held its own discussions on the matter on 10 November, resulting in the publication of a broadside warning ships carrying tea to not enter the harbor. Then, on the 29th, the Sons of Liberty demanded a boycott of any tea landed, and a call for the consignees in that city to resign. The people of Charleston waited until the first ship carrying tea arrived in their harbor on 02 December before they demanded the consignees' resignations. As a result of the meetings, the consignee merchants of Philadelphia, New York and Charleston bowed to the pressure and did, in fact, resign; those in Boston refused to. (Perhaps the reason for the Boston response was that two of the consignees were sons of Governor Hutchinson, while a third was his nephew.)

At Boston Harbor, on the 27th of November, the *Dartmouth* arrived. The result was the Boston Tea Party, in which, on the evening of the 16th of December, approximately 8,000 people gathered at Boston's Old South Church. From that crowd emerged a group of men disguised as Mohawk Indians; they headed to Griffin's Wharf, where the *Dartmouth* and two other recently arrived ships, the *Eleanor* and the *Beaver*, were moored in the harbor. Boarding the ships, the group broke open and dumped into the harbor's waters all 342 chests of tea. Within two hours, the protestors finished their task and then peacefully went back to their homes.

[Brochure created by Larry D. Smith, 2023]

1773

December 16

The Boston Tea Party



Bedford County's Participant

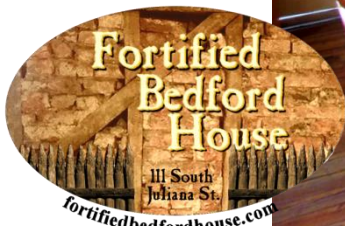
Thomas White was born on March 19, 1739 at County Kilkenny, Ireland. He married Elizabeth Jones on 1 July 1769 at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Elizabeth was born on 24 June 1755. Thomas would die on 13 September 1820 at Robertsdale, Bedford County, Pennsylvania. Elizabeth would follow him in death on 2 February 1844.

In 1773, Thomas White and his wife were residing in Boston, Massachusetts. On the afternoon of 16 December he joined other Bostonians at the Old South Meeting-house. Thomas no doubt listened to Josiah Quincy as he stirred up the crowd and urged them to head to Griffin's Wharf where the *Dartmouth* was moored. Whether Thomas took on the disguise of a Mohawk Indian

is not known, but he was recorded as having participated in the destruction of the tea that the *Dartmouth* brought to America in an attempt to keep the East India Company from having to declare bankruptcy.

A few years later, war broke out between the Colonies and Great Britain and Thomas White moved his family south to Cumberland County in the Colony of Pennsylvania. Thomas was recorded on the roster of Captain John McLeer's Company of the 3rd Battalion of the Cumberland County Militia in 1777.

Following his service in the War, Thomas made a living as a tailor. When he died, Thomas was buried in the Evans Cemetery at Coaldale in Broad Top Township, Bedford County.



You are invited
to the
Bedford
Tea
Party

2023 December 16

Starting at 7:00pm
In the Sacred Space

You and a guest are welcome.

Répondez s'il vous plaît