

Public events 1766-1775

1766

April 1766: General warrants declared illegal by House of Commons resolution.

Summer 1766: Capt. James Smith of Pennsylvania & four companions pass through Cumberland Gap and hunt along the Cumberland & Tennessee rivers.

1767

February 1767: Parliament passes an opposition motion reducing the land tax from four to three shillings in the pound.

March 1767: Pitt, now Lord Chatham, finally goes mad and effectively disappears, but remains Prime Minister for a further two years.

13 May 1767: Introduction in Parliament of Chancellor Townsend's Revenue Act (signed by the King on 2 July) introduces new duties on glass, lead, painters' colours, paper and tea imported into America; creates hardline collection methods; and earmarks the proceeds to pay the salaries of colonial governors and other officials (thereby taking away from colonial assemblies one of their few props of power) (Brogan p147).

28 October 1767: The Boston town-meeting launches a non-consumption agreement: subscribers pledge to boycott a wide range of imported English goods; buy colonial produce instead; be frugal in mourning (to save the yards of imported black cloth normally used) and discourage tea-drinking.

1768

Winter 67-68: (i) Exceptionally harsh weather, Thames freezes over. (ii) Price of bread rockets in the New Year. (iii) Coal-heavers demand a rise and go on strike. (iv) Masters reduce the rate for silk-weaving by 4d a yard. (v) Hugely popular publication of John Dickinson's *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* in which he advocates a non-importation movement. (vi) Daniel Boone crosses the Blue Ridge Mountains but fails to find the bluegrass country.

20 January 1768: Massachusetts House of Representatives petitions the King to repeal the Townsend Acts.

6 February 1768: Wilkes crosses from Ostend to Dover.

11 February 1768: Massachusetts House of Representatives sends a circular letter, written by Samuel Adams, to all the other colonial assemblies, affirming American rights, denouncing the Townsend Acts and reporting the Massachusetts protest.

?? ?? 1768: American Secretary Wills Hill, Lord Hillsborough, sends out his own circular to the royal Governors telling them to dissolve any assembly that threatens to endorse the Massachusetts proposals. As a result one assembly after another is dissolved, beginning with New Jersey in April and finishing with New York in January 1769.

1 March 1768: Boston merchants agree to extend the boycott to everything but a few fishing essentials provided New York and Philadelphia do the same.

4 March 1768: Wilkes sends a message to the King craving pardon. No reply.

11 March 1768: Wilkes's election address appears. "Two important questions of public liberty, respecting General Warrants and the Seizure of Papers.

16-23 (?) March 1768: City of London election: Wilkes comes last.

28 March 1768: Middlesex election opens. Wilkes wins handsomely.

29 March 1768: Wilkesite mob smashes windows in the West End (see Rudé p43ff). Disorder continues until 12 or 13 May.

?? April 1768: Beckford's agents try to break the strike. Public house in New Gravel Lane besieged by armed coal-heavers who are repulsed by musket-fire.

16 April 1768: Virginia Central Court petitions the King and is prorogued.

20 April 1768: (i) Wilkes appears in court (at the Court of the King's Bench) & is freed on a technicality. (ii) That evening a large band of Irish coalheavers shout "Wilkes and Liberty" as they assault the public house in New Gravel Lane.

27 April 1768: (i) Wilkes appears at Westminster Hall, is refused bail, and is committed to the custody of the Marshal of the King's Bench Prison. He is rescued by a mob of supporters but escaped from them and surrenders at the jail. Riots continue outside the jail until 10 May. (ii) Coal-heavers' foremen reach agreement with the undertakers (Rudé p97-98) but the masters later renege on the promised wage rise.

5 May 1768: Sailors board ships at Deptford, unreef the topsails, and announce that no ships will sail until they get a pay increase.

9 May 1768: (i) The Navy Office reports that every single ship in the Thames has been disabled from sailing. (ii) Two thousand Thames watermen demonstrate before the Royal Exchange and the Mansion House. (iii) Hatters go on strike for more money.

?? May 1768: Six thousand sailors assemble at Stepney Fields; others assemble at St George's Fields and march on St James's Palace to present a petition to the King.

10 May 1768: (i) The Massacre of St George's Fields. (ii) A crowd of sailors variously numbered between 5,000 and 15,000 petition Parliament, march to Palace yard and disperse. (iii) Five hundred sawyers attack a mechanical sawmill in Limehouse.

12 May 1768: (i) A letter appears in the press from Lord Barrington to the officer in charge of the Foot Guards commending the men for their conduct. (ii) Coal-heavers march on the Mansion House.

?? May 1768: Violence breaks out between coal-heavers and sailors unloading coal ships.

17 May 1768: (i) Glass-grinders, coopers and tailors assemble to present their various petitions to Parliament. (ii) Sailors strike more or less settled as ship-owners come to terms one by one.

20 May 1768: Arrival of the Newcastle collier fleet. Crews begin to shovel the coal.

23 May 1768: Coal-heavers board the *Thomas & Maryin* Shadwell Dock and threaten any sailor who continues to load.

24 May 1768: Coal-heavers attack sailors coming ashore from the *Free Love*, killing one.

1 June 1768: Fifty coal-heavers beat up two collier captains.

6 June 1768: Further clashes; 20 coal-heavers arrested; rebellion peters out.

8 June 1768: Wilkes again in court at the King's Bench: his outlawry is reversed on a technicality. The crowds draw his coach home.

~~10 June 1768:~~ HM Customs seize John Adams's sloop *Liberty* for smuggling madeira. The Boston mob stones the Customs

Commissioners and breaks their windows, and they flee to a warship, *HMS Romney*.

16 June 1768: Mob of 30 hatters attack John Dyer.

18 June 1768: Wilkes fined £1,000 and sentenced to 22 months imprisonment. He receives gifts and messages of support from, among others, the ~~Boston Sons of Liberty~~ and the South Carolina House of Assembly.

7 July 1768: A Middlesex Grand Jury find a bill for wilful murder against Justice Gillam, who gave the order to fire on 10 May; but he is acquitted at the Old Bailey a few days later.

11 July 1768: Four coal-heavers hanged at Tyburn.

26 July 1768: (i) Seven more coal-heavers hanged at Sun Tavern Fields, Shadwell, where they had held their mass meeting. A show of force by the government accompanies this display and the rebellion comes to an end (see Linebaugh p321). (ii) Silk weavers destroy looms in Spitalfields.

~~August 1768~~: New York joins the non-importation movement.

8 August 1768: A Grand Jury at Guildford returns a true bill against Donald McLane, one of the grenadiers, while discharging two others; but the next day a jury at the Surrey Assizes finds him Not Guilty.

20 August 1768: Spitalfields silk weavers break into a house in Pratt's Alley & desstroy silk.

~~30 September~~ 1768: English government sends two regiments of regular soldiers to Boston to restore order.

October 1768: Chatham (Pitt) resigns.

28 October 1768: More disorders on Wilkes's birthday.

1769

March 1769: Pennsylvania joins the non-importation movement. All other southern colonies join by the end of the year, and by spring 1770 only New Hampshire holds aloof.

8 May 1769: Norbonne (or Norborne?) Berkeley, Baron de Botetourt, is installed as Governor of Virginia (Mapp p332).

16 May 1769: After the House of Burgesses passes a series of radical resolutions, Governor Botetourt shocks them all by

dissolving the House. The Burgesses respond by crossing the road to the Raleigh Tavern, where George Washington proposes a motion for a boycott of British imports. It is passed.

May 1769: (i) The Cabinet decides to repeal the Townsend duties on everything but tea--but the decision is not enacted because the government is preoccupied with the resignation of Prime Minister and his replacement by Lord North. (ii) Daniel Boone and John Finley cross Cumberland Gap and follow the Warriors' Path to Station Camp Creek (Billington p159ff).

June 1769: Uriah Stone, a skilled hunter who was on the James Smith exploration in 1766, assembles a large group of hunters on the New River. They cross the Cumberland Gap then separated to form two bases, one at Price's Meadow on the Cumberland River and the other at Station Camp Creek. They have a successful summer and return east in the fall loaded with precious furs. They are dubbed "long hunters" because of the length of their journeys.

December 1769: Boone & Finley captured by a band of Shawnee. They escape.

Christmas 1769: The highlight of the holiday season in Virginia is a ball givin in honour of Governor Botetourt by the Speaker of the House of Burgesses. In a calculated insult to the Governor, the women wear gowns of homespun, indicating their allegiance to the boycott of imports from Britain.

1770

January-July 1770: Boone alone explores the bluegrass country.

16 January 1770: Riots in New York between Sons of Liberty and soldiers over the Tree of Liberty (Abbott pps 85ff0.

22 February 1770: Killing of Christopher Snider, age 11, in Boston

5 March 1770: (i) Boston Massacre. (ii) Lord North moves the repeal of the Townsend duties in Parliament.

25 May 1770: George Washington dines with Governor Botetourt at the Governonr's Palace in Williamsburg then goes to a meeting of the Non-importation Association, where he is named to a committee.

Summer & autumn 1770: James Knox & 40 hunters from upcountry Virginia base themselves at Price's Meadow and hunt over western Kentucky, especially the Green River Valley where they encounter Boone.

1771

Winter 1770-71: Daniel Boone & Squire Boone winter in the Green & Cumberland valleys.

March 1771: The Boones are robbed of two years' worth of furs at Cumberland Gap and return home with nothing.

16 May 1771: North Carolina militia defeats Regulators in the battle of Alamance River.

Summer 1771: Knox party hunts southward toward the Cumberland. When they return to the Green Valley in the fall they find the Indians have stolen their furs.

1772

9 June 1772: Burning of the *Gaspee*

1773

Spring 1773: Bullitt's surveying party follows the Ohio to its Falls.

16 December 1773: Boston Tea Party

1774

Spring 1774: Three surveying parties explore the Ohio, Kentucky and Licking Rivers, staking claims; James Harrod's party of Virginians build cabins and lay out a town called Harrodsburg in the rich country near Dick's River.

April 1774: Hostilities break out between frontiersmen and the Shawnee, in what becomes known as Lord Dunmore's War.

17 May 1774: General Gage arrives in Boston

?? May 1774: Virginia House of Burgesses appeals for public support of the Bostonians and is consequently dissolved.

27 May 1774: Virginian House of Burgesses meets extra-legally and proposes proposes a general congress of all the American colonies.

5 September 1774: First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia.

1775

10 March 1775: Daniel Boone begins to cut the Wilderness Trail.

18 April 1775: Gage marches to Concord and war breaks out.