



American Legends: The Boston Tea Party

Charles River Editors

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*Discusses the myths and legends of the Tea Party in an attempt to separate fact from fiction. Did the Tea Partiers dress up as Mohawks? Did Sam Adams lead the Tea Party?

*Includes contemporary accounts of the Tea Party in the newspapers and accounts written by those claiming to have participated.

*Discusses some of the aspects of the Tea Party that remain unclear.

"The people finding all their endeavours for this purpose thus totally frustrated, dissolved the meeting, which had consisted by common estimation of at least seven thousand men, many of whom had come from towns at the distance of twenty miles. In less than four hours every chest of tea on board three ships which had by this time arrived, three hundred and forty-two chests, or rather the contents of them, was thrown into the sea, without the least injury to the vessels or any other property." – Samuel Adams

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.


In the years before the American Revolution, the disputes between the colonies and Great Britain produced no shortage of legendary events, all of which can be recited by schoolchildren from an early age, but none has been mythologized or misunderstood quite like the Boston Tea Party, colonial Boston's most unique act of (relative) non-violent protest. The formation of a group of Americans calling themselves the "Tea Party" in 2009, more than 235 years after the Boston Tea Party, is testament to the enduring legacy of that iconic moment in American history.

On the night of December 16, 1773, a group of 30-130 men boarded the tea ship Dartmouth and two other ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor over the span of 3 hours in protest of the Tea Act of 1773. Agreement over what exactly happened ends there, but a number of legends have since popped up and become part of the common narrative. The urban legend that the people who boarded the ship dressed as Mohawks is not entirely true. The Tea Partiers were not protesting higher taxes on tea. The Tea Party was not coordinated by Samuel Adams. And nobody in Boston called it the "Tea Party" until nearly a century after it took place.

However, the impact of the Tea Party is beyond dispute. The bold protest and destruction of the tea induced the British to pass the Coercive or Intolerable Acts, including the closing of Boston Harbor. That spurred the colonies to send delegates to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia to craft a united response to the Coercive or Intolerable Acts and petition King George III for redress. The First Continental Congress also vowed to reconvene in the summer of 1775. By the time the Second Continental Congress met, the Revolution was underway.

American Legends: The Boston Tea Party chronicles the history that led up to the passage of the Tea Act of 1773, the events of December 16, 1773, and the legends and myths surrounding the Boston Tea Party. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the Tea Party like you never have before, in no time at all.

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