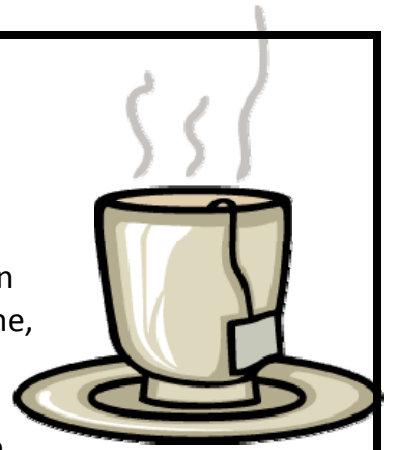


The Boston Tea Party



The Boston Tea Party was an act of political protest by the American Colonists against the British government in December, 1773. At the time, tea was a very popular drink, both in Britain and in the colonies. Tea was provided to the colonies by a British company called the East India Trading Company. If the colonists wanted tea, they had no choice but to buy it from this company, and to pay a high tax on it (extra money above the price of the tea that would go to the British government).

The colonists were unhappy with this arrangement because they felt that if their money was going to benefit the British government, then they should be represented in Parliament, meaning they ought to have some voice in the laws that were being made for them, from halfway around the world. They had asked for this many times already, but the British government had not responded to them. To show their unhappiness with the arrangement, when three ships arrived in the colonies carrying tea, the colonists refused to pay taxes it. Instead, they directed the ship to return to England. When the ship did not leave, the colonists looked for another way to send a strong message back to the British government, and decided to throw the tea into the ocean.

A group of protesters disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded the ships and threw the entire cargo—342 chests of tea—into the water. You may think that throwing tea into the water wouldn't send much of a message to England; but the chests contained 90,000 pounds of tea. In today's money the tea that was destroyed was worth about a million dollars!

No one knows for sure whether or not the colonist planned the protests. Earlier that same day there is historical record of there having been a town meeting to discuss the problem of tax on tea and what to do about it. But there is no way to tell whether or not the possibility of protest was discussed at this meeting, or whether people just decided to take action in the heat of the moment.

1. How did the colonists feel about having to pay taxes on their tea?

2. What was the first thing they did about it?

3. When this didn't work, what did they do next?
