

# The Intolerable Acts of 1774

The news of the Boston Tea Party reached London, England on January 20, 1774, and as a result the British shut down Boston Harbor until all of the 340 chests of British East India Company tea were paid for. This was implemented under the 1774 **Intolerable Acts** and known as the Boston Port Act. In addition to the Boston Port Act, the Intolerable Acts also implemented the **Massachusetts Government Act**, the **Administration of Justice Act**, the **Quartering Act**, and the **Quebec Act**. American colonists responded with protests and coordinated resistance by convening the **First Continental Congress** in September and October of 1774 to petition Britain to repeal the Intolerable Acts. The Intolerable Acts (also known as the Coercive Acts) were a series of laws passed by the British Parliament in 1774 to punish the American colonies, particularly Massachusetts, for the Boston Tea Party and to reassert British authority.

The Four Main Acts (and the Quebec Act):

## **1. The Boston Port Act: Closed the Port of Boston until the tea was paid for and order restored.**

*The port would remain closed until:*

- *Boston paid restitution to the East India Company for the destroyed tea*
- *Boston paid restitution to the King's treasury for lost customs duty*
- *The king was satisfied that the colony could obey British laws and that British goods could be safely traded in the harbor again*

## **2. The Massachusetts Government Act: Restricted Massachusetts' self-government, giving the royal governor increased power.**

- *Abrogated the 1691 charter*

*The act revoked the charter that established the government of Massachusetts Bay in 1691.*

- *Gave the governor more power*

*The act gave the royally-appointed governor wide-ranging powers, including the power to appoint council members.*

- *Forbade town meetings*

*The act outlawed town meetings, which were a forum for radical thinkers.*

- *Other provisions*

*The act also included provisions that required sheriffs to summon jurors at least ten days before court, and that jurors could not serve again for three years, unless it was a special jury*

## **3. The Administration of Justice Act: Allowed British officials accused of crimes in the colonies to be tried in Britain or other colonies.**

- *Its stated goal was "the impartial administration of justice in the cases of persons questioned for any acts done by them in the execution of the law, or for the suppression of riots and tumults" in Massachusetts Bay, which it claimed was "disordered." To that end, it allowed trials involving British officials charged with capital offenses, including murder, to be moved to England or another colony. Many colonists believed that relocating the trials would guarantee acquittals for the accused, and they thus began referring to the measure as the "Murder Act."*

## **4. The Quartering Act (1774 revision): Allowed British troops to be housed in private homes without consent.**

- *In the earlier act of 1765, British soldiers could only be quartered in public buildings if the area's barracks were full. In the Quartering Act of 1774, that provision was removed. Now, it was easier for the government to choose unoccupied buildings, warehouses or other public buildings and homes to house soldiers.*

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Additional Act

## **5. The Quebec Act – establishing French law and Catholicism**

- The Quebec Act was passed in response to Pontiac's rebellion and the need to regulate the French settlers and Native Americans in the region. The act was intended to gain the loyalty of the French-speaking population, but it angered many American colonists. The act is considered one of the five "Intolerable Acts" and was a major cause of the American Revolution. Primarily because it established French civil and property law instead of English and removed references to the Protestant faith in the loyalty oath (as many viewed Catholicism as loyalty to another government and to other leaders. – The Pope of the Vatican and his supporting monarchs).

Impact on the Colonies:

- The Acts were seen as a violation of colonial rights.
- Increased unity among the colonies against British authority.
- Sparked widespread protest and calls for collective action.

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## **BOSTON PORT ACT**

**AN ACT to discontinue**, in such manner, and for or such time as are therein mentioned, the landing and discharging, lading or shipping, of goods, wares, and merchandise, at the town, and within the harbour, of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts' Bay, in North America.

**WHEREAS** dangerous commotions and insurrections have been fomented and raised in the town of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts' Bay, in New England, by divers ill affected persons, to the subversion of his Majesty's government, and to the utter destruction of the public peace, and good order of the said town; in which commotions and insurrections certain valuable cargoes of teas, being the property of the East India Company, and on board certain' vessels lying within the bay or harbour of Boston, were seized and destroyed: And whereas, in the present condition of the said town and harbour, the commerce of his Majesty's subjects cannot be safely carried on there, nor the customs payable to his Majesty duly collected; and it is therefore expedient that the officers of his Majesty's customs should be forthwith removed from the said town: ... be it enacted ...,

That from and after June 1, 1774, it shall not be lawful for any person or persons whatsoever to lade, put, or cause to procure to be laden or put, off or from any quay, wharf, or other place, within the said town of Boston, or in or upon any part of the shore of the bay, commonly called The Harbour of Boston, between a certain headland or point called Nahant Point, on the eastern side of the entrance into the said bay, and a certain other headland or point called Alderton Point, on the western side of the entrance into the said bay, or in or upon any island, creek, landing place, bank, or other place, within the said bay or headlands, into any ship, vessel, lighter, boat, or bottom, any goods, wares, or merchandise whatsoever, to be transported or carried into any other country, province, or place whatsoever, or into any other part of the said province of the Massachusetts' Bay, in New England; or to take up, discharge, or lay on land, ... within the said town, or in or upon any of the places aforesaid, out of any boat, ... any goods, wares, or merchandise whatsoever, to be brought from any other country, province, or place, or any other part of the said province of the Massachusetts' Bay in New England, upon pain of the forfeiture of the said goods, ... merchandise, and of the said boat, ... and of the guns, ammunition, tackle, furniture, and stores, in or belonging to the same: And if any such goods, ... shall, within the said town, or in any the places aforesaid, be laden or taken in from the shore into any barge, ... to be carried on board any ship or vessel outward bound to any other country or province, ... or to be laden into such barge, ... from or out of any ship or vessel coming in ... from any other country, such barge, ... shall be forfeited and lost....

Provided also, and it is hereby declared and enacted, That nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed, to enable his Majesty to appoint such port, harbour, creeks, quays, wharfs, places, or officers, in the said town of Boston, or in the said bay or islands, until it shall sufficiently appear to his Majesty that full satisfaction hath been made by or on behalf of the inhabitants of the said town of Boston to the united company of merchants of England trading to the East Indies, for the damage sustained by the said company by the destruction of their goods sent to the said town of Boston, on board certain ships or vessels as aforesaid; and until it shall be certified to his Majesty, in council, by the governor, or lieutenant governor, of the said province, that reasonable satisfaction hath been made to the officers of his Majesty's revenue, and others, who suffered by the riots and insurrections above mentioned, in the months of November and December, in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy three, and in the month of January, in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy four.

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## ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE ACT

**AN ACT for or the impartial administration of justice** in the cases of persons questioned for any acts done by them in the execution of the law, or for the suppression of riots and tumults, in the province of the Massachusetts' Bay, in New England.

**WHEREAS** in his Majesty's province of Massachusetts' Bay, in New England, an attempt hath lately been made to throw off the authority of the parliament of Great Britain over the said province, and an actual and avowed resistance, by open force, to the execution of certain acts of parliament, hath been suffered to take place, uncontrolled and unpunished, ...: and whereas, in the present disordered state of the said province, it is of the utmost importance ... to the reestablishment of lawful authority throughout the same, that neither the magistrates acting in support of the laws, nor any of his Majesty's subjects aiding and assisting them therein, or in the suppression of riots and tumults, ... should be discouraged from the proper discharge of their duty, by an apprehension, that in case of their being questioned for any acts done therein, they may be liable to be brought to trial for the same before persons who do not acknowledge the validity of the laws, in the execution thereof, or the of the magistrate in support of whom, such acts had been done: in order therefore to remove every such discouragement from the minds of his Majesty's subjects, and to induce them, upon all proper occasions, to exert themselves in support of the public peace of the province, and of the authority of the King and Parliament of Great Britain over the same; be it enacted ...,

That if any inquisition or indictment shall be found, or if any appeal shall be sued or preferred against any person, for murder, or other capital offense, in the province of the Massachusetts' Bay, and it shall appear, by information given upon oath to the governor ... of the said province, that the fact was committed by the person against whom such inquisition or indictment shall be found, or against whom such appeal shall be sued or preferred, as aforesaid, either in the execution of his duty as a magistrate, for the suppression of riots, or in the support of the laws of revenue, or in acting in his duty as an officer of revenue, or in acting under the direction and order of any magistrate, for the suppression of riots, or for the carrying into effect the laws of revenue, or in aiding and assisting in any of the cases aforesaid; and if it shall also appear, to the satisfaction of the said governor ... that an indifferent trial cannot be had within the said province, in that case, it shall and may be lawful for the governor ..., to direct, with the advice and consent of the council, that the inquisition, indictment, or appeal, shall be tried in some other of his Majesty's colonies, or in Great Britain; and for that purpose, to order the person against whom such inquisition or indictment shall be found, ... to be sent, under sufficient custody, to the place appointed for his trial, or to admit such person to bail, taking a recognizance ... from such person, with sufficient sureties, ... in such sums of money as the said governor ... shall deem reasonable, for the personal appearance of such person, if the trial shall be appointed to be had in any other colony, before the governor, ... of such colony; and if the trial shall be appointed to be had in Great Britain, then before his Majesty's court of King's Bench, at a time to be mentioned in such recognizances; and the governor, ... or court of King's Bench, where the trial is appointed to be had in Great Britain, upon the appearance of such person, according to such recognizance, or in custody, shall either commit such person, or admit him to bail until such trial....

II

And, to prevent a failure of justice, from the want of evidence on the trial of any such inquisition, indictment or appeal, be it further enacted, That the governor ... is hereby authorised and required, to bind in recognizances to his Majesty all such witnesses as the prosecutor or person against whom such inquisition or indictment shall be found, or appeal sued or preferred, shall desire to attend the trial of the said inquisition, ... for their personal appearance, at the time and place of such trial, to give

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evidence: and the said governor ... shall thereupon appoint a reasonable sum to be allowed for the expenses of every such witness ...

### **VI**

[Persons brought before justices etc. accused of any capital crime in the execution of their duty, to be admitted to bail.]

### **VIII**

And be it further enacted ... That this act ... shall ... be, and continue in force, for and during the term of three years.

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## MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNMENT ACT

*An ACT for the better regulating the government* of the province of the Massachusetts' Bay, in New England.

**WHEREAS** the method of electing such counsellors or assistants, to be vested with the several powers, authorities, and privileges, therein mentioned, ... in which the appointment of the respective governors had been vested in the general courts or assemblies of the said colonies, hash, by repeated experience, been found to be extremely ill adapted to the plan of government established in the province of the Massachusetts' Bay ... , and hath ... for or some time past, been such as had the most manifest tendency to obstruct, and, in great measure, defeat, the execution of the laws; to weaken the attachment of his Majesty's well disposed subjects in the said province to his Majesty's government, and to encourage the ill disposed among them to proceed even to acts of direct resistance to, and defiance of, his Majesty's authority: And it hath accordingly happened, that an open resistance to the execution of the laws hath actually taken place in the town of Boston, and the neighbourhood thereof, within the said Province: And whereas it is, under these circumstances, become absolutely necessary, ... that the said method of annually electing the counsellors or assistants of the said Province should no longer be suffered to continue, but that the appointment of the said counsellors or assistants should henceforth be put upon the like footing as is established in such other of his Majesty's colonies or plantations in America, the governors whereof are appointed by his Majesty's commission, under the great seal of Great Britain: Be it therefore enacted ..., that from and after August 1, 1774, so much of the charter ... [of 1691] ... which relates to the time and manner of electing the assistants or counsellors for the said province, be revoked, ... and that the offices of all counsellors and assistants, elected and appointed in pursuance thereof, shall from thenceforth cease and determine: And that, from and after the said August 1, 1774, the council, or court of assistants of the said province for the time being, shall be composed of such of the inhabitants or proprietors of lands within the same as shall be thereunto nominated and appointed by his Majesty . . . , provided, that the number of the said assistants or counsellors shall not, at any one time, exceed thirty six, nor be less than twelve.

### II

And it is hereby further enacted, That the said assistants or counsellors, so to be appointed as aforesaid, shall hold their offices respectively, for and during the pleasure of his Majesty....

### III

And be it further enacted ..., That from and after July 1, 1774, it shall and may be lawful for his Majesty's governor for the time being of the said province, or, in his absence, for the lieutenant governor, to nominate and appoint, under the seal of the province, from time to time, and also to remove, without the consent of the council, all judges of the inferior courts of common pleas, commissioners of Oyer and Terminer, the attorney general, provosts, marshals, justices of the peace, and other officers to the council or courts of justice belong....

### VI

And be it further enacted ..., That, upon every vacancy of the offices of chief justice and judges of the superior court of the said province, from and after July 1, 1774, the governor for the time being, or, in his absence, the lieutenant governor, without the consent of the council, shall have full power and authority to nominate and appoint the persons to succeed to the said offices, who shall hold their commissions during the pleasure of his Majesty ...

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## VII

And whereas, by several acts of the general court, ... the freeholders and inhabitants of the several townships, districts, and precincts, qualified, as is therein expressed, are authorized to assemble together, annually, or occasionally, upon notice given, in such manner as the said acts direct, for the choice of selectmen, constables, and other officers, and for or the making and agreeing upon such necessary rules, orders, and byelaws, for the directing, managing, and ordering, the prudential affairs of such townships, districts, and precincts, and for other purposes: and whereas a great abuse has been made of the power of calling such meetings, and the inhabitants have, contrary to the design of their institution, been misled to treat upon matters of the most general concern, and to pass many dangerous and unwarrantable resolves: for remedy whereof, be it enacted, that from and after August 1, 1774, no meeting shall be called by the select men, or at the request of any number of freeholders of any township, district, or precinct, without the leave of the governor, or, in his absence, of the lieutenant governor, in writing, expressing the special business of the said meeting, except the annual meeting in the months of March or May, for the choice of select men, constables, and other officers, or except for the choice of persons to fill up the offices aforesaid, on the death or removal of any of the persons first elected to such offices, and also, except any meeting for the election of a representative or representatives in the general court; and that no other matter shall be treated of at such meetings...

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## QUARTERING ACT OF 1774

### ***Whereas doubts have been entertained...***

...whether troops can be quartered otherwise than in barracks, in case barracks have been provided sufficient for the quartering of all the officers and soldiers within any town, township, city, district, or place within His Majesty's dominions in North America; and whereas it may frequently happen from the situation of such barracks that, if troops should be quartered therein they would not be stationed where their presence may be necessary and required be it therefore enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords ... and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled ... that, in such cases, it shall and may be lawful for the persons who now are, or may be hereafter, authorized by law, in any of the provinces within His Majesty's dominions in North America, and they are hereby respectively authorized, empowered, and directed, on the requisition of the officer who, for the time being, has the command of His Majesty's forces in North America, to cause any officers or soldiers in His Majesty's service to be quartered and billeted in such manner as is now directed by law where no barracks are provided by the colonies.

### **II**

*And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that, if it shall happen at any time that any officers or soldiers in His Majesty's service shall remain within any of the said colonies without quarters for the space of twenty four hours after such quarters shall have been demanded, it shall and may be lawful for the governor of the province to order and direct such and so many uninhabited houses, outhouses, barns, or other buildings as he shall think necessary to be taken (making a reasonable allowance for the same) and make fit for the reception of such officers and soldiers, and to put and quarter such officers and soldiers therein for such time as he shall think proper.*

### **III**

*And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that this act, and everything herein contained, shall continue and be in force in all His Majesty's dominions in North America, until March 24, 1776.*



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## QUEBEC ACT

**AN Quebec ACT for making effectual Provision** for the Government of the Province, in North America.

***MAY it therefore please Your most Excellent Majesty***

That it may be enacted: [Boundaries defined, Boundaries of Proclamation of 1763 extended to include territory west to the Mississippi, north to the frontiers of the Hudson's Bay territory, and the islands in the mouth of the St. Lawrence.]

***... And whereas the Provisions made by the said Proclamation,*** in respect to the Civil Government of the said Province of Quebec, and the Powers and Authorities given to the Governor and other Civil Officers of the said Province, by the Grants and Commissions issued in consequence thereof, have been found, upon Experience, to be inapplicable to the State and Circumstances of the said Province, the Inhabitants whereof amounted at the Conquest, to above Sixty five thousand Persons, professing the Religion of the Church of Rome....

***It is hereby declared,*** That His Majesty's Subjects professing the Religion of the Church of Rome, of, and in the said Province of Quebec, may have, hold, and enjoy, the free Exercise of the Religion of the Church of Rome, subject to the King's Supremacy, declared and established by an Act made in the First Year of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, over all the Dominions and Countries which then did, or thereafter should, belong to the Imperial Crown of this Realm; and that the Clergy of the said Church may hold, receive, and enjoy their accustomed Dues and Rights, with respect to such Persons only as shall profess the said Religion.

***Provided nevertheless,*** That it shall be lawful for His Majesty, His Heirs or Successors, to make such Provisions out of the rest of the said accustomed Dues and Rights, for the Encouragement of the Protestant Religion, and for the Maintenance and Support of a Protestant Clergy within the said Province, as he or they shall, from Time to Time, think necessary or expedient....

***And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid,*** That all His Majesty's Canadian Subjects within the Province of Quebec, the Religious Orders and Communities only excepted, may also hold and enjoy their Property and Possessions, together with all Customs and Usages, relative thereto, and all other their Civil Rights, in as large, ample and beneficial Manner, as if the said Proclamation, Commissions, Ordinances, and other Acts and Instruments, had not been made, and as may consist with their Allegiance to His Majesty, and Subjection to the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain; and that in all Matters of Controversy relative to Property and Civil Rights, Resort shall be had to the Laws of Canada, as the Rule for the Decision of the same; and all Causes that shall hereafter be instituted in any of the Courts of Justice, to be appointed within and for the said Province by His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, shall, with respect to such Property and Rights, be determined agreeably to the said Laws and Customs of Canada, ...

***And whereas the Certainty and Lenity of the Criminal Law of England,*** and the Benefits and Advantages resulting from the Use of it, have been sensibly felt by the Inhabitants from an Experience of more than Nine Years, during which it has been uniformly administered; be it therefore further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the same shall continue to be administered, and shall be observed as Law, in the Province of Quebec, as well in the Description and Quality of the Offense, as in the Method of Prosecution and Trial, and the Punishment and Forfeitures thereby inflicted, to

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the Exclusion of every other Rule of Criminal Law, or Mode of Proceeding thereon, which did or might prevail in the said Province before the Year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and sixtyfour; any Thing in this Act to the Contrary thereof in any Respect notwithstanding;

***And whereas it may be necessary to ordain many Regulations,*** for the future Welfare and good Government of the Province of Quebec, the Occasions of which cannot now be foreseen, nor without much Delay and Inconvenience be provided for, without entrusting that Authority for a certain Time, and upon proper Restrictions to Persons resident there:

***And whereas it is at present inexpedient to call an Assembly;*** be it therefore enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for His Majesty, ... and with the Advice of the Privy Council, to constitute and appoint a Council for the Affairs of the Province of Quebec, to consist of such Persons resident there, not exceeding Twenty three, nor less than Seventeen, as His Majesty, ... shall be pleased to appoint; ... which Council, so appointed and nominated, or the major Part thereof, shall have Power and Authority to make Ordinances for the Peace, Welfare, and good Government of the said Province with the Consent of His Majesty's Governor, or, in his Absence, of the Lieutenant Governor, or Commander in Chief for the Time being ...