

## Contest held July 6th, 2008 in Sacramento, California

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Gray mist swirled on the docks, preventing a view of much else. The only noise was the sound of water lapping quietly. Then the mist fell back like a ghostly curtain, and all along the gray-brown line of the docks, there were ships. They stood in the water like tall, stern, immovable captains. The air was filled with a pungent, exotic scent, mixed with the tang of saltwater. The smell spread for miles. In the water of the harbor floated sodden leaves. The dark plants were everywhere, moving with the gentle motion of the water, carpeting its surface. Seaweed? No-tea!

The Boston Tea Party is one of the most famous and widely-known events of the Revolutionary War. Many people from the thirteen colonies were frustrated by the taxes levied on them by England. The taxes were minimal; however, the colonies were taxed despite the fact they weren't represented in Parliament. Though the taxes were low, the price of tea was high. Angered by the taxation without representation, colonists refused to buy tea.

The East India Company was on the verge of bankruptcy after the tea strike dragged on. In a desperate attempt to save it, England lowered the taxes to three pence a pound. Some colonists bought the cheaper tea, but the clamoring for tax removal did not cease. Six years later, England passed the Tea Act. This allowed the East India Company to sell tea directly to the colonists without paying the usual taxes imposed on the colonial merchants. The company would be able to sell tea for a lower price than the colonial merchants and run them out of business. The Patriots were furious at this attempt to disguise the taxes under cover of lower prices. So on the night of December 16th, 1773, one hundred and fifty Sons of Liberty, led by Samuel Adams, boarded three ships and threw the cargo of tea into Boston Harbor. England demanded payment for the tea. The colonists refused.

All of Boston paid dearly for the Tea Party. Retribution was swift and deadly. England, irate, ruthlessly limited the self-government in Boston, allowed soldiers to be quartered in the citizen's houses, and worst-closed Boston Harbor. Ships were Boston's link to the outside world. Ships brought in supplies. With no harbor, there could be no new supplies. No goods for shopkeepers to sell...no clothing for the cold winter...and no food. Boston was catapulted into an economic famine. For refusing to be a puppet, all of Boston was going to starve. Business would close, since no one would have money to buy goods. Mother England had dealt punishment to her rebellious child.

The only thing England didn't expect was a second mutiny. But that is exactly what happened. All of the thirteen colonies were outraged. Instead of bowing and cowering before England, they rebelled. From all over America, food was shipped to Boston. Rice from the south, fish from the coastlines, even monetary gifts were sent. The Tea Party sparked revolution in the hearts of the thirteen colonies. The colonies could see what their destiny would be under England---total subservience under tyranny and despotism. England's punishment on Boston already displayed

this. The colonies banded together with fierce loyalty. They were determined to be England's children no longer.

We think of the Revolutionary War beginning at Lexington and Concord with the famed "shot heard round the world," but in many ways, the fight for American independence began with the Boston Tea Party. America realized that England wanted them in bondage, whether economic bondage or bondage to England's laws. It took brave men like Samuel Adams to let out the first battle cry by dumping tea into Boston Harbor. It was a bold move, but Samuel Adams and all the courageous Sons of Liberty knew that suffering through any punishment England gave would be preferable to living their lives in mute obedience.

Even more importantly, the Boston Tea Party prompted the colonies to think of themselves as one united nation. Up until this time, they were thirteen independent colonies. They were not "Americans". Those from the prison colonies of Georgia saw themselves as Georgians. The refined, wealthy landowners of Virginia were proud to call themselves Virginians. The peaceful Quakers of Pennsylvania saw themselves as Pennsylvanians. Each individual colony was a matter of pride to its own citizens, and no citizen wanted to be associated with another colony.

England never intended for the colonies to lift their heads, stand to their feet and demand to be seen as a force to be reckoned with. The Boston Tea Party and its repercussions did what nothing else could. It united the thirteen colonies that were astronomically different into an entity of a single vision: freedom.

England only meant to intimidate Boston into submission. Instead, they got a rebellion. The Boston Tea Party was a catalyst that set the Revolutionary War into motion. Without it, America might never have come into existence. The desire for liberty bound the colonies during the Revolutionary War. They bound us through the American Revolution. They bound us through the War between the States and two World Wars. They bound us through Vietnam and through 9/11. They still bind us today. Because of the foundation set down by the Boston Tea Party, we continue to be fifty United States of America.