

The Stamp Act

1765

The Stamp Act was a tax on the British colonies in America. Parliament put it into place in March 1765. Parliament wanted to pay a debt from the war with France. British Prime Minister George Grenville liked the Stamp Act. He wanted to find a way for Britain to get money. Paper products were taxed with a stamp on them. These products included documents and newspapers. The stamp proved tax had been paid on the product. The money went to the British government. Some of the money was used to pay for the British soldiers who were protecting the American colonies.

Many colonists opposed the Stamp Act. There had been other British taxes before. One was the Sugar Act, which was a tax on trade. It taxed activity between the colony and England or among colonies. Colonists agreed this tax was legal. The Stamp Act was different. It was an internal tax. It was the first time colonists faced a direct tax from Parliament on something made and sold within the same colony. Colonists thought only the colonial government, not parliament, could impose this type of tax. The British did not think they were doing anything wrong.

The Stamp Act brought together colonists of different types. Some had money. Some did not. James Otis wrote a pamphlet about the Stamp Act, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*. The pamphlet criticized the Stamp Act.

There were riots against the Stamp Act. The Stamp Act riots were violent. Rebels went after tax agents. They also went after tax collectors. They held public protests. They talked about why they did not like the Stamp Act. Shopkeepers also came together. They would not sell British products. The Sons of Liberty made sure they did not. They were a group of men in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The Sons of Liberty would threaten tax collectors and agents who collected the tax. Sometimes, the Sons of Liberty might attack them or damage their homes. In Pennsylvania, the state assembly met. It said the Stamp Act was unconstitutional. Merchants in England were also hurt by the Stamp Act. The sale of British-made products declined.



Grenville was a defeated man. England spent money to make products, but no one in America bought them. This was because of the tax. Because the tax was

never collected, no tax money went to England.

Grenville was replaced as prime minister in July 1765. The Marquis of Rockingham took over. He wanted to fix the situation that Grenville had created. He called a session of Parliament. They got rid of the Stamp Act on March 17, 1766.

Name: _____ Date: _____

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Discussion Questions:

1. What debt was the Stamp Act supposed to pay?
2. Where was the money from the Stamp Act supposed to go?
3. What was the difference between the Stamp Act and the Sugar Act?
4. Who made sure colonial shopkeepers did not sell British items?
5. When was the Stamp Act removed?