

Boston Tea Party Inspires the Princess Anne County Resolves

The famous Boston Tea Party political protest took place on December 16, 1773, when American colonists, disguised as Native Americans, dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. The protest was against the British government's Tea Act of 1773, which granted a monopoly to the British East India Company and asserted Parliament's right to tax the colonies without representation. In response the British Parliament passed a series of punitive laws known as the Intolerable Acts (or Coercive Acts).

In the summer of 1774, the citizens of Princess Anne County drafted a set of resolutions in response to the Intolerable Acts and in support of the actions of the Patriots in Massachusetts. One of the resolves read:

Resolved: That the town of Boston and Province of Massachusetts Bay, are now suffering in the common cause of America, as the said Acts would lay a foundation for the utter destruction of the rights and liberties of the subjects of British America.

The twelve resolves summarized the concerns of Princess Anne County citizens that their representatives would present to the First Virginia Convention at Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg. They emphasized the protection of rights and liberties and advocated for boycotts and other measures to oppose oppressive British policies. The citizens sought to express their sentiments on the pressing issues, to assert their rights, and to outline the steps they would take to resist British infringement on those rights. The creation of these county-level resolves was a common practice across Virginia at the time, demonstrating widespread sentiment against British colonial policies and influencing the broader movement toward the American Revolution.

It is important to note that the resolves acknowledged loyalty to the King and the British legal system but distinguished between acts of government legitimately exercised by the Crown and unconstitutional acts by Parliament. A core principle was the belief that taxation without representation was a violation of the fundamental liberties of British subjects.

The resolves serve as a valuable historical record, offering insight into the political opinions and concerns of the colonists during the lead-up to the American War for Independence. They highlight the active participation of local communities, such as Princess Anne County, in the growing movement to defend colonial liberties against what they viewed as unconstitutional British actions.