

Laws/Acts and events by the British Parliament which stress the colonies

- Navigation Act of 1660 requires exclusive use of English ships for trade in the English colonies and limits exports of tobacco and sugar and other commodities to England or its colonies.
 - This is the first of a series of Acts which were designed to direct most American trade to England; this is how the Crown strove to encourage practices which supported Mercantilism!
- Navigation Act of 1673 (aka 'Act for the Encouragement of Trade') set up the office of customs commissioner in the colonies to collect duties/taxes on goods which pass between colonial plantations.
- 1681, Edmond Andros (Governor of province of NY and the Jersey's since 1674) charged with dishonesty and favoritism in the collection of revenues.
- Circa.1686, King James II of England begins consolidating the colonies of New England into a single dominion, depriving the colonists of their local political rights and independence. Colonial legislatures are dissolved and the King's representatives assume all of the judicial and legislative power.

Resistance is progressive:

 - 1687, the Massachusetts towns of Ipswich and Topsfield resist assessments imposed by English-appointed Governor Andros in protest of their being taxed without colonial representation.
 - 1688, Governor Andros imposes a limit of one town meeting annually for each New England township; he then orders all militias to be placed under his control.
 - 1689, Governor Andros is jailed by rebellious colonists in Boston!
- Navigation Act of 1696 requires colonial trade to be done exclusively via English built ships. The Act also expands the powers of colonial custom commissioners, including rights of forcible entry, and requires the posting of financial bonds on certain goods.
- Wool Act of 1699 is designed to protect the English wool industry by limiting wool production in Ireland and forbidding the export of wool from the American colonies.
 - This forced multiple regulated sales, each of which was taxed; it created a very difficult time for shopkeepers and many colonists complained about this act, as an item had been multiple-timed taxed by the time it arrived in the colonies, thereby raising the price.
- 1708, Boston merchants accuse Governor Joseph Dudley of being in league with smugglers and illicit traders. Criticism is published in England.
- British Post Office Act of 1710 (aka 'Queen Anne Act'; took affect in colonies 1st June 1711) established a postal system and laws controlled by the postmaster general in London and his deputy in New York City
 - Colonists came to view the postal rates set forth in the Act as excessive and as an unwelcome form of taxation.
- Hat Act of 1732 was enacted to control hat production throughout the thirteen colonies. It placed limits on the manufacture, sale and exportation of hats, and restricted hiring practices (limited number of workers; can't hire blacks) and placing limits on the number of apprenticeships.
 - The law limited colonial-made supply, and the demand was met by imported British products which cost four times more than locally produced hats did.
- Molasses Act of 1733 is passed by the English Parliament. It imposes heavy duties on molasses, rum and sugar imported from non-British islands in the Caribbean to protect English planters there from French and Dutch competition. It was encouraged by large plantation owners in the British West Indies and was not passed for the purpose of making revenue, but rather to regulate trade by making British products cheaper than those from the French West Indies.
 - By imposing a tax/duty on any purchases from the French West Indies (as opposed to simply banning the purchase from them), this was seen as a tax and was largely opposed by colonists.
 - The tax was rarely paid, and bribery or intimidation of customs officials and smuggling to avoid it effectively nullified the law.
 - Growing corruption of local officials and disrespect for British law begins to be observed on a large scale.
- Iron Act of 1750 is designed to limit the growth of the iron industry in the American colonies in order to protect the English iron industry from competition.
 - If enforced, it would have severely limited the emerging iron manufacturing industry in the colonies. However, enforcement was poor because no one had any significant incentive to ensure compliance.
- Currency Act of 1751 bans the issuing of paper money and limits the amount of coinage colonies could produce.

In 1726, riots occur in Philadelphia as poor people tear down the pillories (wooden posts used to secure people for punishment) and burn them.

Emerging themes from this era . . .

- Colonial autonomy v. Crown-sanctioned oversight
 - To what extent should one attempt to regulate or dominate the other?
- Two economic tensions emerged, both of which were stimulated by the progression of the Acts:
 - Supply/demand economics
 - Protectionism of English goods
- Territorial issues (as an extension of big powers rivalry)
 - Competing territorial claims (British, French, Spanish, Dutch, Native Americans, etc) which manifested themselves in conflict.
- The idea begins to emerge in England that the colonies were not doing their share to help the mother country materialistically, nor to protect it economically; in other words, the colonies were starting to be a financial drain on England.

English-Influenced Tensions During the Colonial Era, Settlement to about 1753

Royal Governor William Cosby of New York, appointed by King George II in 1732 (served until his death in 1736), was motivated by two goals: to defend British interests and building his own private fortune.

- He became a symbol of how oppressive a Royal Governor could be; Cosby was viewed by colonists as being indifferent to the wishes and welfare of the colonists he governed. Among his actions...
 - In 1734, New York newspaper publisher John Peter Zenger is arrested and accused of seditious libel by Cosby, about whom Zenger criticized (possibly under encouragement by Cosby's political rivals) in print. Zenger is defended by attorney Andrew Hamilton, and all twelve jurors were handpicked by the Governor.
 - Most thought the case was unwinnable; Hamilton won by challenging the legality of the crime for which his client was charged, rather than claiming innocence.
 - This case holds significance for the development of judicial thought and press freedoms; both were firsts in America!
 - Cosby rigged 1734 local elections; stole from collected taxes; burned Zenger's newspapers; granted lifelong salaries to Tories, and; dismissed judges who did not rule in his favor.
 - Cosby seized lands owned by colonists in Hopewell, New Jersey, and awarded the land to his wealthy Royalist ally, Daniel Coxe.
 - Cosby pushed out the colonial settlers, putting them in a situation where they were forced to repurchase their properties.
 - Settlers retaliated against the new owners with tar/feathers, and Cosby authorizes punishment in retaliation to their resistance.

Laws pertaining to slavery:

Much of the colonies viewed slavery akin to possessions; therefore, laws which are formulated to restrict or open up slavery will have a natural tension within affected ownership classes.

- 1652, Rhode Island enacts the first law declaring slavery illegal.
- 1664, Maryland passes a law making lifelong servitude for black slaves mandatory to prevent them from taking advantage of legal precedents established in England which grant freedom under certain conditions, such as conversion to Christianity. Similar laws passed in New York, New Jersey, the Carolinas and Virginia.
- Circa.1680 the number of slaves in Massachusetts is estimated to be about 120, most of whom being domestic servants.
 - Slaves in Massachusetts could own and inherit property, and whites and blacks were held equal before the law (except that the law allowed for black slavery). Slaves could give testimony in court and they had the right to counsel and due process.
- In Virginia, slaves are assigned the status of real estate by the Virginia Black Code of 1705
- In New York, a law against runaway slaves assigns the death penalty for those caught over 40 miles north of Albany.
- Between 1660-1690 several colonies declare marriage between whites and people of African descent to be illegal
- June 1712, the Pennsylvania Assembly bans the import of slaves.
- 1740, 50 black slaves are hanged in Charleston, South Carolina, after plans for revolt are revealed.