



Mapping America's Road From Revolution To Independence



By Rick Russack

BOSTON, MASS. – “We Are One: Mapping America’s Road From Revolution to Independence,” on view in the McKim Exhibition Hall of the Boston Public Library in Copley Square through November 29, is a remarkable exhibit that presents the story of the American Revolution in an unusually broad context.

Organized by the library’s Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, the exhibit covers the period from 1765 to the creation of the new national government and its installation in Washington, D.C. Included are about 60 maps plus 40 other objects – prints, powder horns and weapons, among them – that bring history alive.



Old Hendrik, a Mohawk chief, was killed while fighting with the British Colonial troops at the Battle of Lake George in 1755. This hand colored engraving was published in London, circa 1740. Courtesy John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, R.I.



William Price's 1769 map of Boston shows a small city, but a major seaport. The map is the best visual record of Boston prior to the Revolution. Courtesy Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library.

The exhibit is broken down into four sections: “Prelude to Rebellion,” “Britain’s North American Empire,” “The War For Independence” and “The New Nation.”

The aim of the Stamp Act, enacted by the British Parliament in 1765, shortly after the

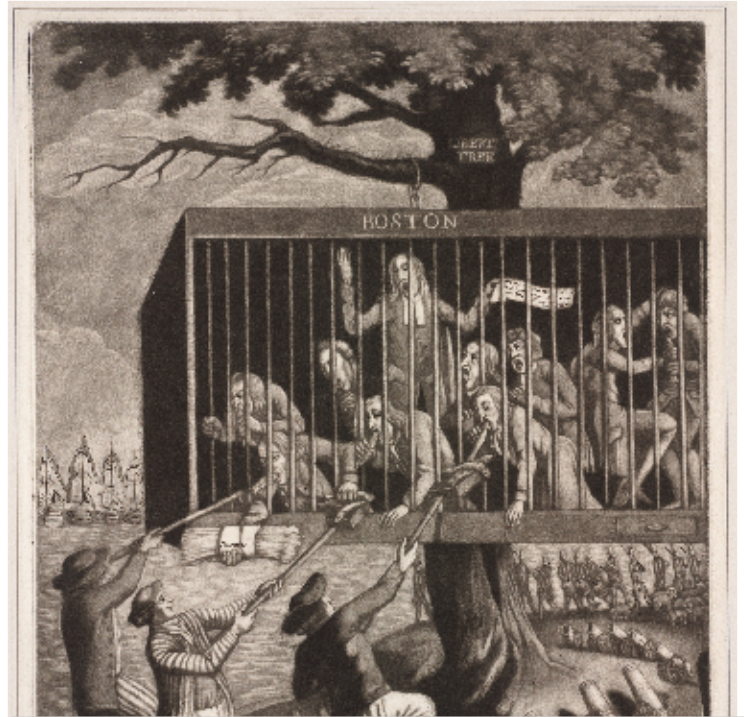
end of the French and Indian War, was to raise revenues to offset the cost of the French and Indian War (1754–1763), fought by Great Britain and the Colonists against France and their Native American allies. This war was one battleground of Europe’s Seven Years War, with each group seeking control of North America.

Great Britain and the Colonies were ultimately successful in this war and, as a result, Great Britain acquired control of most of France’s territory in North America, along with Spanish-held Florida and certain Native American lands. It was a very expensive war for the British. Throughout the 1760s, Great Britain, trying to recoup its costs, enacted revenue-enhancing duties and levies that

were very unpopular in the Colonies, especially in Boston.

Although the population of Boston at the time was only 15,000, it was a prosperous city and one of the three largest seaports in the Colonies. The livelihood of many Bostonians relied on an active seaport. The new levies and taxes, restricting port activity, undermined the city's prosperity. The increased military presence of British troops, to protect the Colonies from the vanquished French, added to the tensions among the residents of Boston, the military and the government in London.

“Prelude to Rebellion” is the first part of the exhibit. It focuses on events during the



Numerous cartoons were published in London and the Colonies satirizing events and people during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Published in London in 1775, “The Bostonians in Distress” by Phillip Dawe alludes to the closing of Boston’s seaport by the British after the Boston Tea Party. Members of the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Indians, dumped 92,000 pounds of tea into Boston Harbor. Courtesy Trustees of Boston Public Library, Print Department.



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James Peale (1749–1831) painted “Washington and His Generals at Yorktown” after the surrender of Great Britain’s General Cornwallis. The officers survey the scene of the battle. Courtesy [Colonial Williamsburg Foundation](#)

ten-year period, 1765–1775, prior to the Revolution. Explained in the section are events such as the passage of the Stamp Act, the Boston Massacre and the Tea Tax. Several maps are displayed to tell the story, including a 1769 map of Boston that provides an accurate view of pre-Revolutionary Boston. Boston was already occupied by British troops at this time and the map shows a thickly settled town with numerous wharves.

A colorful manuscript map prepared by Lieutenant William Pierie of the Royal Artillery in 1775 shows the city, surrounding



Revolutionary War soldiers used a variety of weapons. Pistols, such as this Eighteenth Century French flintlock, were considered a secondary weapon. They were single shot, slow to load and accurate only to about 15 feet. Courtesy John M. Lewis.

landscape and the harbor islands. Surveys such as this provided information about the geography of North America and were very useful to the British military when full-scale war broke out.

Also on view is Paul Revere’s print “The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a Party of the

29th Reg[imen]t.” It shows eight British soldiers firing into a crowd of helpless civilians, five of whom were killed. Revere’s intention was to create a piece of visual propaganda. He took some liberties with the facts to accomplish what he wanted to demonstrate. A more accurate, rarely seen drawing of the site of the massacre, attributed to Revere, is also displayed. One of the civilians killed was an African American, Crispus Attucks, likely an escaped slave,

whose plain pewter, tin and wood teapot is in the show. The British soldiers were indicted for murder and tried several months later. They were defended by John Adams and Josiah Quincy, who won their acquittal. This portion of the exhibit also deals with the Boston Tea Party. Dressed as Native Americans, members of the Sons of Liberty dumped more than 90,000 pounds of tea...

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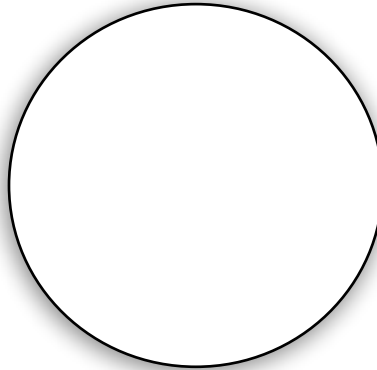
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