

Yorktown's Tea Party

While the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 is famous, a lesser known protest against the Tea Act also occurred in Virginia. On November 7, 1774 some concerned citizens of York County openly boarded a ship in the harbor and dumped two small chests of tea into the York River, tea that had been imported despite a boycott.



*Yorktown Tea Party, by Sidney King, circa 1960.
Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

The earlier Boston event was only the most extreme of many protests, not against taxation itself, but against British attempts to tax Americans without allowing them representation in Parliament. This destruction of valuable private property outraged most Britons and was a turning point in the conflicts leading up to the Revolution.

The residents and patriot leaders of this area, like others throughout the colonies, demonstrated their support of the Revolutionary cause and their refusal to import tea with this dignified, highly symbolic tea party of their own. The local merchant, who had ordered the small shipment of tea, quickly apologized in the newspaper and asked the local citizens for forgiveness.

