

The Aftermath of the French and Indian War

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

Great Britain had much to celebrate following the French and Indian War. The long and costly conflict with France ended in 1763, and England was victorious. British subjects on both sides of the Atlantic celebrated the strength of the Empire. However, problems quickly emerged after the war—problems, which had potential consequences for British colonists in North America.

This tutorial examines the aftermath of the French and Indian War in four parts:

1. Violence in the Backcountry

Colonial pride ran high following the French and Indian War. Despite the celebratory mood, potential problems associated with the Treaty of Paris (1763) soon became apparent. During the war, the many Native American tribes that sided with the French remained a powerful force in the backcountry. The massive debt generated by the war was a serious issue as Great Britain attempted to fund a military force to protect its newly won territory.

With the end of the French and Indian War, Great Britain acquired a vast new territory, at least on paper. Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, British holdings now extended from Canada to Florida, and British military focus shifted to maintaining peace in the king's newly added lands.

Much of this territory remained under the control of the Iroquois Confederacy and other native tribes. Native Americans were upset that the French had ceded control of this territory to Great Britain without their consent. British troops took over former French forts but did not court the favor of local tribes by distributing gifts, as the French had done. They also significantly reduced the amount of gunpowder and ammunition they sold to the Native Americans. Combined with the continued advance of colonial settlers and speculators in the region, these changes pushed relationships between Native Americans and the British to the breaking point.

As a result, violence continued in the North American backcountry even as the peace agreement between France and England was signed in Paris. In May of 1763, an Ottawa war chief named **Pontiac** led a coalition of several hundred native warriors from the Great Lakes region and laid siege to Fort Detroit.



PEOPLE TO KNOW

Pontiac

Ottawa war chief who led a loose coalition of native tribes against the British Army and colonists on the frontier ranging from Virginia to Pennsylvania in 1763. Pontiac's war prompted the British to issue the Proclamation of 1763, which forbade white settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Neolin, Delaware Holy Man

Chief Pontiac was inspired by the teachings of a Delaware holy man named Neolin, who preached a doctrine of shunning European culture and expelling Europeans from native lands. In a vision, Neolin visited the Master of Life, who told him:

"The land on which you live I have made for you, and not for others. Why do you suffer the white men to dwell among you? My children, you have forgotten the customs and traditions of your forefathers."

In Neolin's vision, the Master of Life continued by asserting that native peoples should "lift the hatchet" against the English. "Wipe them from the face of the earth, and then you will win my favor back again, and once more be happy and prosperous."

Inspired by Neolin's teachings and visions, native peoples assaulted nearly every fort in the Ohio River Valley during what the British referred to as **Pontiac's War**. Pontiac and several hundred Ojibwas, Potawatomis, and Hurons laid siege to Fort Detroit. At the same time, Senecas, Shawnees, and Delawares laid siege to Fort Pitt (formerly Duquesne).



TERM TO KNOW

Pontiac's War

A war between a coalition of native groups led by Pontiac and the British following the French and Indian War.

Bloody and indiscriminate violence between native groups and individual colonists escalated. In December of 1763, residents of Paxton, Pennsylvania attacked a village of peaceful Conestoga Native Americans. The 14 Native Americans who survived the attack fled to nearby Lancaster, where the royal governor and town officials granted them shelter. A few days later, a mob broke into the place where they were staying and killed all of them.

The colonists behind these attacks, who were known as the **Paxton Boys**, justified their actions in the following statement:

The Paxton Boys "Knowing that the little Commonwealth of Indians at Conestoga that pretended to be our friends, had done us much Mischief, and were in Reality our most dangerous enemies, a Number of Persons living amongst us, who had seen their Houses in Flames, their Parents and Relatives butchered in the most inhumane Manner determined to root out this Nest of perfidious Enemies; and accordingly cut them off." (Richter, 2011, p. 204)



TERM TO KNOW

Paxton Boys

Residents of Paxton, Pennsylvania, who massacred all inhabitants of a Conestoga Native American village in 1763.



This 19th-century lithograph depicts the massacre of Conestoga Native Americans in 1763 at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where they had been placed in protective custody. None of the attackers, members of the Paxton Boys, were ever identified.



THINK ABOUT IT

Compare the statement from the Paxton Boys, which was issued shortly after the violent attacks against the Conestoga Native Americans, with the image above, which was produced several decades later. How did the Paxton Boys describe the Conestoga Native Americans? Does the image celebrate or criticize the Paxton Boys' actions? Why?

Pontiac's War and the actions of the Paxton Boys revealed that relations between Native Americans and Europeans had descended into racial war. Both sides saw themselves as inherently different from the other and believed that the other should be eradicated. The prophet Neolin insisted that the Master of Life had created places for native peoples and Europeans to occupy separately. Pontiac echoed Neolin's sentiments when convincing tribes to join together against the British: "It is important for us, my brothers, that we exterminate from our lands this nation which seeks only to destroy us."

Likewise, the Paxton Boys viewed all Native Americans as "savages" and blamed all Native Americans for any violence that occurred against colonists. This explains why the Paxton Boys felt justified in attacking the Conestoga people, who had lived peacefully with nearby settlers. The fact that no one identified the Paxton Boys as having committed the massacre (despite offers of a reward for their capture) suggests that other

colonists held similar views.

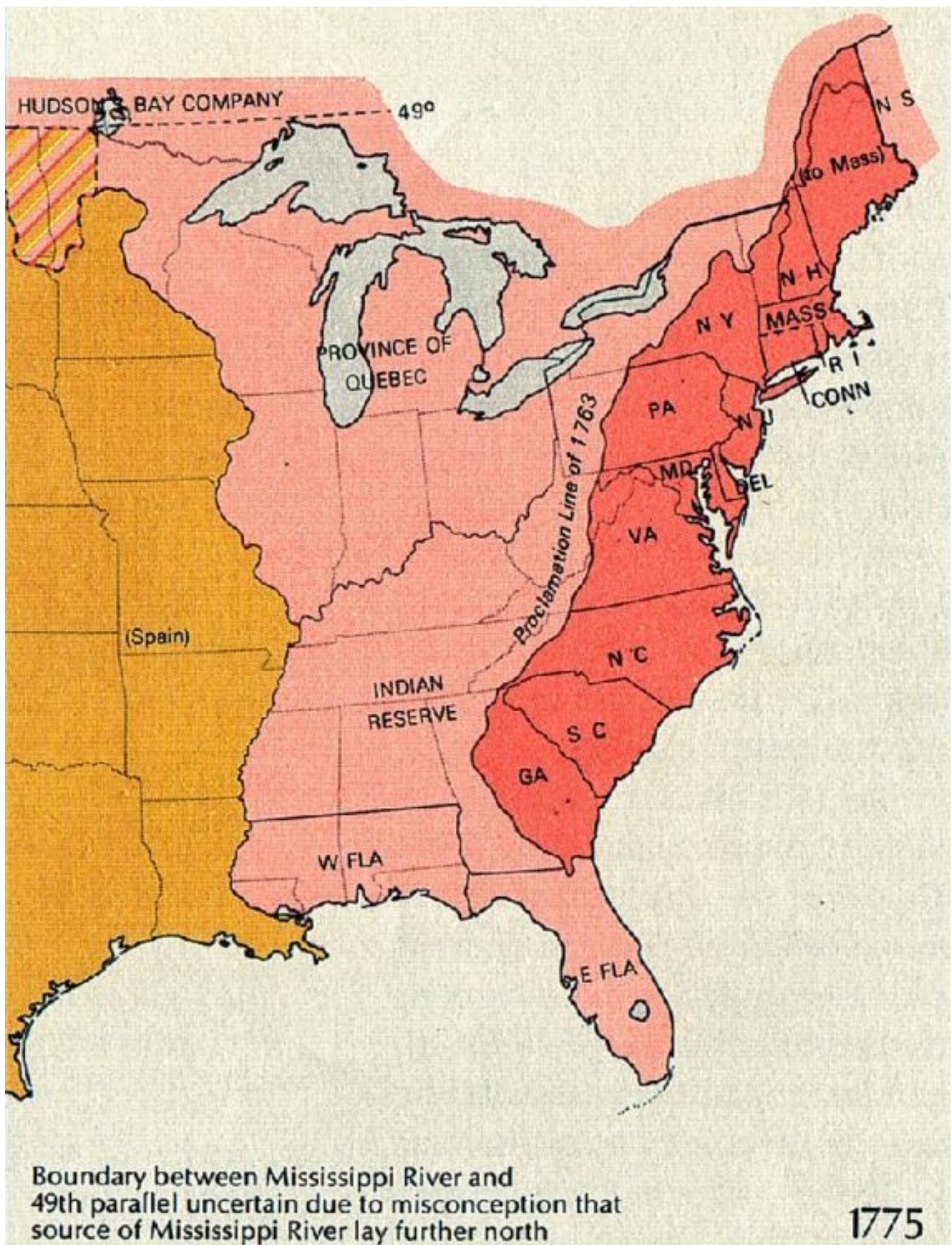


DID YOU KNOW

Benjamin Franklin was among the few critics of the Paxton Boys. He referred to them as “barbarous Men” who acted “in Defiance of Government” and “of all Laws human and divine....”

2. The Proclamation of 1763

Persistent conflict in the backcountry prompted the British government to issue the **Proclamation of 1763**, which, in addition to creating a new British province of Quebec in Canada, prohibited further colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains by banning the sale of Native American lands to private individuals (see map below).



Map of British North America showing the Proclamation Line of 1763. The Province of Quebec would ultimately comprise much of the territory north of the Ohio River. The so-called Indian Reserve, in which the sale of land to individual settlers was prohibited, extended west of the crest of the Appalachian Mountains and south of the Ohio River.



TERM TO KNOW

Proclamation of 1763

Prohibited further colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains by banning the sale of Native American lands to private individuals.

The Proclamation was an attempt to stabilize the situation, but it failed because it was unable to bridge the cultural and racial divides that had emerged between colonists and Native Americans. Violence between settlers and natives persisted. Land speculators saw the proclamation as infringing upon their ability to profit from Western lands. George Washington himself ordered agents to buy as much Native American land as possible while keeping the transactions secret.



REFLECT

Put yourself in the shoes of a colonial land speculator. How would you have reacted to the violence between colonists and Native Americans and the issuing of the Proclamation of 1763?

3. The Costs of Colonial Protection

The need to protect and maintain Great Britain's newly acquired lands imposed a greater financial burden on the Empire. The war debt was a primary concern. The war had nearly doubled the national debt, from £75 million in 1756 to £135 million in 1763. At the same time, British landowners were seeking tax relief. As a result, a number of people in Great Britain agreed that colonists in North America should share the financial burden associated with administering and protecting the Empire.

Colonists had done little to help themselves in this regard. In fact, royal officials complained about colonial merchants who traded with the French during the war. Smuggling was rampant, and a survey of colonial customs collections in 1760 revealed that prevention and collection cost more than the revenue from import duties. In the context of these actions, along with complaints from British military officers about the conduct of colonial militias, some royal officials looked at colonial North America and saw a prosperous people who had an unfairly light tax burden. In their view, something had to change.

Imperial administrators concluded that the colonists should help to pay for the army that would protect the Empire and enforce initiatives such as the Proclamation of 1763. According to Gijle (2006, pp. 19–22), estimates suggested that the army would cost between £200,000 and £300,000 pounds. The question then became how to raise this money. Powerful members of the British aristocracy convinced Parliament to refrain from raising taxes on land. The government responded by strengthening the enforcement of imperial customs laws and, when necessary, raising colonial import duties. In this way, the colonies would help to pay for their protection.

4. Imperial Regulation

Beginning in 1764, Prime Minister **George Grenville** sought legislation that would raise about £100,000—half of the estimated cost for the army—in the colonies. Parliament responded by first enacting the **Currency Act of 1764**.



PEOPLE TO KNOW

George Grenville

British prime minister from 1763 to 1765; Charged with raising revenue for the defense of the British Empire, Grenville oversaw the Sugar and Stamp Acts, which began the series of conflicts between Britain and its North American colonies.



TERM TO KNOW

Currency Act of 1764

An act that prohibited the colonies from printing additional paper money, and that required colonists to pay British merchants in gold and silver instead of colonial paper money.

The Currency Act aimed to standardize the currency used in Atlantic trade, which made it a logical reform designed to help stabilize the imperial economy. The act brought American economic activity under greater British control. Colonists relied on their paper currency to conduct trade and, with gold and silver in short supply, found their finances tight. Not surprisingly, many colonists complained about this regulation.

Parliament then reorganized and attempted to stabilize customs collection further by enacting the **Sugar Act of 1764**. The act lowered duties on molasses—a significant North American import from the British West Indies—by half, from six pence per gallon to three. Grenville and Parliament designed this measure to address the rampant colonial smuggling involving French islands in the Caribbean that had been a problem during the French and Indian War. By lowering the duty on molasses, Parliament hoped that colonial traders, especially New England mariners, would be enticed to comply with imperial law rather than continue illegal trade.



TERM TO KNOW

Sugar Act of 1764

An act that lowered import duties on molasses by half and strengthened customs enforcement by trying violators in vice-admiralty courts.

Similar to the Navigation Acts of the late 17th century, which designated goods that colonists could import and taxed the goods accordingly, the Currency and Sugar Acts were in the tradition of Parliament regulating commerce in the American colonies as part of the mercantilist system.

To give teeth to these new regulatory measures, Parliament strengthened enforcement provisions. Prior to the 1764 Sugar Act, colonial smugglers were often tried in local courts and sympathetic colonial juries usually refused to convict them. To ensure that smugglers were punished for their actions, the Sugar Act required violators to be tried in the **vice-admiralty courts**. These Crown-sanctioned tribunals, which settled disputes that occurred at sea, operated without juries.



TERM TO KNOW

Vice-Admiralty Courts

British royal courts that settled disputes occurring at sea; they operated without juries.

Some colonists, particularly merchants and shippers, saw this aspect of the Sugar Act as particularly dangerous. They believed it violated their right, as Englishmen, to trial by jury—according to the English Bill of Rights. To deprive defendants of a jury, colonists contended, reduced liberty-loving Englishmen to political slavery. In the British Atlantic world, some colonists perceived this loss of liberty as paralleling the enslavement of Africans.



BRAINSTORM

Do you think that depriving colonists of a trial by jury was truly parallel to the enslavement of Africans?

Why or why not?

Given their important role in the Atlantic economy and their participation in the French and Indian War, many

American colonists believed they were on equal political footing with Great Britain. They also believed that their rights were protected by the English Bill of Rights, and by a government that properly constituted a balance between royalty, nobility, and common citizens. The enactment of the Currency and Sugar Acts seemed to suggest otherwise. In criticizing such measures, some colonists argued that their liberty as British citizens was threatened. From the perspective of Grenville, Parliament, and imperial officials, such measures were necessary to maintain order and ensure a steady stream of revenue for the Empire.

The stage was set for an imperial crisis.



SUMMARY

The British Empire gained supremacy in North America with its victory over the French in 1763, but problems arose afterward. The end of the war did not resolve conflicts between Native Americans and colonists. It can be argued that following the victory, violence worsened and descended into race warfare. Imperial expansion raised issues associated with administration and regulation, particularly with maintaining an army in North America. The initial steps that Great Britain took to create a more coherent and unified Empire after the French and Indian War raised suspicions among some colonists. These suspicions would grow during the coming years.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- [Map of territorial growth](#) | License: Public Domain



TERMS TO KNOW

Currency Act of 1764

An act that prohibited the colonies from printing additional paper money; required colonists to pay British merchants in gold and silver instead of the colonial paper money.

Paxton Boys

Residents of Paxton, Pennsylvania, who massacred an entire village of Conestoga Native Americans in 1763.

Pontiac's War

A war between a coalition of native groups led by Pontiac and the British following the French and

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PEOPLE TO KNOW

George Grenville

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DATES TO KNOW

1763

The Treaty of Paris ends the French and Indian War; the British government establishes the Proclamation Line; George Grenville becomes prime minister.

1763

Pontiac's War is launched; the Paxton Boys attack Conestoga Native Americans.

1764

Parliament enacts the Currency Act and the Sugar Act.