

## Quartering Act (March 24, 1765)

In 1763, the French and Indian War ended with two important outcomes: a British victory over their traditional enemy France and an equally tremendous British debt.

At the time, the British government decided to keep a standing (permanent) army in North America. Although the mission of the peacetime army was not clearly defined, it seemed to be a combination of defending newly acquired Canada and Florida and managing Indian affairs.

Britain spent an inordinate amount of money in winning the war, and the spoils of that victory, a huge amount of land in North America, now required even more investment, as the territory had to be garrisoned, administered, and protected. That meant more soldiers.

One of the major problems for the British in dealing with a far-flung, enormous empire wasn't just the issues of defense (fighting off opposing armies, Native American raids, and so forth), but the administrative issues that defense brought up, such as housing soldiers.

Housing and feeding a group of several hundred or even a few thousand soldiers was a difficult and costly proposition.

General Thomas Gage, the new British commander-in-chief, recommended that Parliament pass a quartering law for the colonies. Expecting trouble in America, General Gage wanted the legal authority to provide living quarters for his troops.

The Quartering Act of 1765 directed colonial governors and their councils to hire inns and vacant buildings as quarters for soldiers when regular barracks were unavailable.

The law also required colonial governments to furnish the soldiers with firewood, bedding, candles, salt, vinegar, cooking utensils plus a daily ration of beer, cider, or rum. Furthermore, the Quartering Act authorized innkeepers to feed the soldiers at the colonies' expense.

Contrary to popular belief, the Quartering Act of 1765 did not require that colonists shelter soldiers in their private homes.

The act did require colonial governments to provide and pay for feeding and sheltering any troops stationed in their colony. If enough barracks were not made available, then soldiers could be housed in inns, stables, outbuildings, uninhabited houses, or private homes that sold wine or alcohol.

Nevertheless many American colonists saw the Quartering Act as one more way Parliament was attempting to tax them without their consent. Others suspected that the real purpose of keeping a small standing army in America – stationed in coastal cities, not on the frontier – was not for defense, but to enforce new British policies and taxes.

Americans saw the Quartering Act of 1765 as an attempt to force the colonists to pay for a standing army that they did not want. When Parliament was forced to repeal the hated Stamp Act in 1766, Massachusetts' radical leader, Sam Adams, pointedly asked, "Is not [the Quartering Act] taxing the Colonies as effectively as the Stamp Act?"

# Georgii III. Regis.

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C A P. XXXIII.

An Act to amend and render more effectual, in His Majesty's Dominions in *America*, an Act passed in this present Session of Parliament, intituled, *An Act for punishing Mutiny and Desertion, and for the better Payment of the Army and their Quarters.*



Whereas in and by an Act made in the present Session of Parliament, intituled, An Act for punishing Mutiny and Desertion, and for the better Payment of the Army and their Quarters; several Regulations are made and enacted for the better Government of the Army, and their observing strict Discipline, and for providing Quarters for the Army, and Carriages on Marches and other necessary Occasions, and inflicting Penalties on Offenders against the same Act, and for many other good Purposes therein mentioned; but the same may not be sufficient for the Forces that may be employed in His Majesty's

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*WHEREAS in and by an act made in the present session of parliament, intituled, An act for punishing mutiny and desertion, and for the better payment of the army and their quarters;*

*several regulations are made and enacted for the better government of the army, and their observing strict discipline, and for providing quarters for the army, and carriages on marches and other necessary occasions, and*

*inflicting penalties on offenders against the same act, and for many other good purposes therein mentioned; but the same may not be sufficient for the forces that may be employed in his Majesty's dominions in America: and*

*whereas, during the continuance of the said act, there may be occasion for marching and quartering of regiments and companies of his Majesty's forces in several parts of his Majesty's dominions in America: and*

*whereas the publick houses and barracks, in his Majesty's dominions in America, may not be sufficient to supply quarters for such forces: and*

*whereas it is expedient and necessary that carriages and other conveniences, upon the march of troops in his Majesty's dominions in America, should be supplied for that purpose:*

*be it enacted by the King's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same,*

*That for and during the continuance of this act, and no longer, it shall and may be lawful to and for the constables, tithingmen, magistrates, and other civil officers of villages, towns, townships, cities, districts, and other places, within his Majesty's dominions in America, and*

*in their default or absence, for any one justice of the peace inhabiting in or near any such village, township, city, district or other place, and for no others; and*

*such constables, tithingmen, magistrates, and other civil officers as aforesaid, are hereby required to quarter and billet the officers and soldiers, in his Majesty's service, in the barracks provided by the colonies; and*

*if there shall not be sufficient room in the said barracks for the officers and soldiers, then and in such case only, to quarter and billet the residue of such officers and soldiers, for whom there shall not be room in such barracks, in inns, livery stables, ale-houses, victualling-houses, and*

*the houses of sellers of wine by retail to be drank in their own houses or places thereunto belonging, and all houses of persons selling of rum, brandy, strong water, cyder or metheglin, by retail, to be drank in houses; and*

*in case there shall not be sufficient room for the officers and soldiers in such barracks, inns, victualling and other publick alehouse, that in such and no other case, and upon no other account,*

*it shall and may be lawful for the governor and council of each respective province in his Majesty's dominions in America, to authorize and appoint, and they are hereby directed and empowered to authorize and appoint, such proper person or persons as they shall think fit, to take, hire and make fit, and*

*in default of the said governor and council appointing and authorizing such person or persons, or in default of such person or persons so appointed neglecting or refusing to do their duty,*

*in that case it shall and may be lawful for any two or more of his Majesty's justices of the peace in or near the said villages, town, townships, cities, districts, and other places, and they are hereby required to take, hire, and*

*make fit for the reception of his Majesty's forces, such and so many uninhabited houses, outhouses, barns or other buildings, as shall be necessary,*

*to quarter therein the residue of such officers and soldiers for whom there should not be rooms in such barracks and publick houses as aforesaid, and to put and quarter the residue of such officer and soldiers therein.* [This is a portion of the initial part of the Act, other provisions were included in the Act.]

The Quartering Act did become a divisive issue in 1766, after 1,500 British soldiers disembarked at New York City.

The New York Provincial Assembly refused to provide funds to cover the costs of feeding and housing these men as required by the law. In response, the British Parliament voted to suspend the Provincial Assembly until it complied with the act.

As it turned out, the suspension was never put into effect since the New York Assembly later agreed to allocate revenue to cover some of the costs of quartering these troops. The Quartering Act of 1765 was largely circumvented by most colonies during the years before the Revolution.

Information here is primarily from the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation; Yale Law School; Britannica; study-com; Constitutional Rights Foundation; history-com;

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the American Revolution, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young