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4/1/26

Civics

### The American Revolution

During the time of the American Revolution, America was ruled by Great Britain. Great Britain governed over many countries in the 20th century such as India, Canada, New Zealand, and other large masses of land in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. As the 1770s approached, tensions and conflicts between Britain and its colonies had begun escalating. Colonists had to pick a side, for some, it was easy but for others, it was a matter of loyalty or betrayal. For that reason, the mother country took many measures by tightening its control by raising taxes to pay off the debt of the French and Indian War. For example, the Stamp Act required colonists to purchase government-issued stamps for legal documents and other papered goods. These acts provoked great displeasure among many colonists, resenting the taxes. Ultimately this led to the American Revolution and the emergence of three groups, The Quakers, The Patriots, and The Loyalists who had a great rivalry as they had different views on independence, government, and loyalty.

One of the groups formed under the belief economics grievances, liberty, and desire to be self governed. A rally was held under the saying of “No taxation without representation!” These colonists were known as Patriots. Patriots were people who were middle to lower class individuals living in New England states and recognized the deep and unfair authority that the British had over them. They claimed that the British were violating their rights and had no consent to pose taxes on them due to economic hardships and brutal restrictions. (Cited from Students of History). “Patriots chose to oppose the unfair taxation because of the economic hardships, restrictions, and British brutality during occupation. (Your Middlesex Magazine). One

such patriot was Nathaniel Heard from Woodbridge Township who was a brigadier general and served in the war. (Woodbridge Township History)

However there were some colonists who supported these rules and stayed loyal to The Crown. They were known as Loyalists, and were typically upper class colonists who lived in urban cities mostly in the middle colonies. They were wealthy, owned land, and had valuable relationships and ties with royal jobs. Loyalists also believed in reconciliation, but were met with disparage and mistrust for they did not believe in Patriot causes. They believed bonds with the British should be built stronger in order for them to thrive. Loyalists supported the taxation and did not want the change of self-government. Loyalists also feared change because of family relationships, economic reasons, or strong belief and passion in monarchy and aristocracy. (Cited from Students of History). A notable loyalist was “Governor William Franklin, who chose to stay loyal to the Crown because of his position in government as a royal official.” (Your Middlesex Magazine)

Among those two sects, coexisting were Quakers, these colonists were members of religious groups. Quakers were colonists who were neutral about the situation feeling as though it was wrong to support either side. Quakers were spread out among all colonies introducing new ideas of peace. They were neutral against taxation. They came from multiple different classes and their neutral stance derived from religious beliefs and their personal morals. They believed that both colonists and loyalists had valid points and that it was unethical to fight for either side. Their motive was peace, whichever side was able to justify that, they approved. Although, they commonly met with force to pick a side and usually defaulted to the Patriots. (Cited from Students of History). “ In Middlesex County during the American Revolution, the war eventually came to every doorstep, forcing residents to make decisions that had lasting consequences.” (Your Middlesex Magazine).

The American Revolution set off many points of views, but what was it like in Woodbridge Township? The Woodbridge Township's population back then was evenly composed of cultural diversity including Loyalists and Patriots, these differences fueled conflicts creating a virtual civil war that divided families. Some chose to remain loyal to the crown while others believed that these imposed rules were breaking their natural rights. So they then sought to become independent of British ruling. Woodbridge Township being part of Middlesex County was a significant landmark because it was in between Staten Island and Philadelphia. It was heavily contested and used for military grounds and campsites known as the crossroads of the American Revolution meaning that it was a major location for political and military action to visit New Jersey states. These factors could have affected daily life in ways of separation and fear. There was always soldier action shifting throughout the streets, civilians protesting against British laws to show their commitment and passion for equality, and local communities directly getting involved with action in fighting for rights. These opposing views also affected deep family ties and relationships causing outbreaks of arguments and urges to pick a side. This also could have overworked colonist's reputations and the life they had built. It also could have pulled some families together in commitment to fight for peace and self-legislation against British rule. Some Loyalists were confined to live abroad giving their dedication to Britain staying loyal to the crown, while Patriots took action in jurisdiction and gained independence. Families also suffered a shortage in resources such as food and supplies used for the war. (According to the Historical Association of Woodbridge).

These three groups in the revolution were separate and distinct. Patriots and Loyalists were of opposing views. Quakers were neutral and were reluctant to take a stand. The Patriots wanted independence from British rule and wanted Americans to have more say in the governance of the country and to have the ability to use resources for the welfare of the people.

Patriots wanted better living conditions for the people. Patriots paved the way for the modern day government system of voting for a suitable leader of their choice to enforce the laws of the land. On the contrary, the loyalists desired to remain under British rule as they thought this would make the Thirteen colonies continue to thrive and remain part of a successful nation. They believed that Britain provided stability and protection. Some loyalists were employed or had ties with the British government and felt obligated to the Crown as the Crown provided their livelihood. Despite their differences, both groups were fighting for what they thought to be the best for the future of the county and their families. Both groups were affected by war during the process and both helped shape the America we live in today.

If I were to go back to this point in time, Woodbridge would always be bustling with activity because of the military workings causing fear and unpredictability. My family and I would live in panic, wondering what will happen next. Everyone will always be alert because there would be soldiers found in the streets making it increasingly dangerous to be outside.

In my opinion, if I lived through the Revolution, I would choose to be a Patriot because they played an active role in creating a better future and opportunities for Americans to govern themselves and not remain under the British, showcasing independence and fair ruling. Patriots fought for a more democratic society where Americans would have the right to choose who represents their best interests. This still exists today as we continue to thrive in a democratic society where free and fair elections are held. Unnecessary amounts of taxes obligated to one entity without their consent is unreasonable. While taxation still exists today, the taxes are used for the development of the country and to provide good living standards to all. I believe that it is the right thing to stand up for justice and equality because it can forecast a better future and government while still fulfilling our natural human rights as stated in the Constitution.

In conclusion, the American Revolution was a notable event in American history that helped shape our society and government today following the rules of the Constitution and the natural human rights stated in the Declaration of Independence, (The right to life, liberty, and pursuit to happiness). Today we rely on our government for an equitable life as opposed to the era of the revolution. Loyalists stayed loyal to the crown, but did not strive to make a difference and improve American peoples' lives, and Quakers created building tensions in not choosing a side and often being punished. Patriots stepped into the role of leadership and independence pushing for a more desirable life.

#### Work Cited

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