“The Quartering Act”

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KEY POINTS

* The Quartering Act is the name of at least two 18th-century Acts of the Parliament of Great Britain.
* Two 18th-century Acts of the Parliament of Great Britain, the Quartering Acts, ordered the local governments of the American colonies to provide housing and provisions for British soldiers.
* They were amendments to the Mutiny Act, which had to be renewed annually by Parliament.
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Quartering Act of 1765

Lieutenant-General Thomas Gage, commander-in-chief of forces in British North America, and other British officers who fought in the French and Indian War, found it hard to persuade colonial assemblies to pay for the quartering and provisioning of troops on the march. As a result, Gage asked Parliament to find a solution. Most colonies had supplied provisions during the war, but the issue was disputed in peacetime. Following the expiration of an Act that provided British regulars with quartering in New York, Parliament passed the Quartering Act of 1765, which went far beyond what Gage had requested. The colonies disputed the legality of this Act since it seemed to violate the Bill of Rights of 1689, which forbade taxation without representation and the raising and/or keeping of a standing army without the consent of Parliament. No standing army had been kept in the colonies before the French and Indian War, so the colonies questioned why a standing army was needed after the French had been defeated.

This first Quartering Act was given Royal Assent in March 1765, providing that Great Britain would house its soldiers in American barracks and public houses, as by the Mutiny Act of 1765. However “if its soldiers outnumbered the housing available, they would be quartered "in inns, livery stables, ale houses, victualing houses, and the houses of sellers of wine and houses of persons selling of rum, brandy, strong water, cider or metheglin". Colonial authorities were required to pay the cost of housing and feeding these troops.

Refusal in New York

When 1,500 British troops arrived at New York City in 1766, the New York Provincial Assembly refused to comply with the Quartering Act and did not supply billeting for the troops. The troops had to remain on their ships. With its great impact on the city, a skirmish occurred in which one colonist was wounded following the Assembly's refusal to provide quartering. For failure to comply with the Quartering Act, Parliament suspended the Province of New York's Governor and legislature in 1767 and 1769, but never carried it out, since the Assembly soon agreed to contribute money toward the quartering of troops. The Quartering Act was circumvented in all colonies other than Pennsylvania. This Act expired on 1767.