

Navigation Acts



Navigation Acts - The English Parliament

This article on Navigation Acts of Colonial America provides facts and information about the effects of these laws and taxes.

The Navigation Acts were a series of Acts passed in the English Parliament in 1651, 1660 & 1663

The colonies represented a lucrative source of wealth and trade. The Navigation Acts were designed to regulate colonial trade and enabled England to collect duties (taxes) in the Colonies.

[American Colonies Index](#)
[Taxation in the Colonies](#)



History of the 13 Colonies and the laws & taxes that sparked rebellion against the British

The definition and purpose of the Navigation Acts and the cry of "No taxation without representation!"

The Navigation Acts

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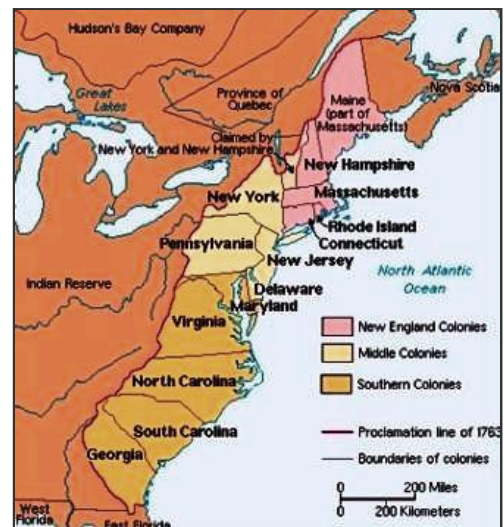
- 1651 Navigation Act
- 1660 Navigation Act
- 1663 Navigation Act aka the Staple Act
- The Navigation Acts of 1673 (aka the Plantation Duty Act), 1696 and 1773 (aka the Molasses Act) closed the loopholes of the previous Navigation Acts and increased taxes

Purpose of the Navigation Acts

The Purpose of the Navigation Acts was to encourage British shipping and allow Great Britain to retain the monopoly of British colonial trade for the benefit of British merchants. The 1660 Navigation Act ensured that the importation and exportation of goods from [British Colonies](#) were restricted to British ships which were under the control of British mariners. The following Navigation Acts ensured that the highly lucrative profits to be made from the natural resources and industries in the Colonies securing advantages for the products in Great Britain.

Navigation Acts - Background Information

The background to the Navigation Acts dates back to the period in English History when King Charles 1 had been executed and the country was ruled by Oliver Cromwell and the parliamentarians in England. In 1642, parliament exempted New England exports and imports from all duties, and a few years later all goods carried to the southern colonies in English vessels were put on the free list. This was great news for the American colonies. However in 1651 this position



Map of the Thirteen Colonies

changed with the passing of the first Navigation Act of 1651. Exports are goods sent for sale outside a colony or country. Exported goods **earn** money. Imports are goods brought into a colony or country. Imported goods **cost** money - refer to Triangular Trade.



Navigation Acts - The 1651 Navigation Act restricted Dutch Shipping

The 1651 Navigation Act was passed in the English Parliament. The reason for the First Navigation Act was to restrict Dutch shipping. The Dutch were the biggest competition to England. The rise of the Dutch carrying trade threatened to drive English shipping from the seas. The 1651 basically stated that **'no goods of the growth, production, or manufacture of Asia, Africa, or America, shall be imported only by ships that belong to the people of the British Commonwealth.'** The 1651 Navigation Act attempted to ensure the monopoly on British colonial trade for the benefit of British merchants - to the detriment of the Dutch maritime trade. The Act led to the First Anglo-Dutch War. The First Navigation Act was largely ignored, especially in the Colonies.



Navigation Acts - The 1651 Navigation Act is declared Void

In 1660 King Charles II was restored to the English throne. The 1651 Navigation Act was declared void. King Charles had other plans, he desperately needed money and so did England. He wanted profits to benefit the monarchy and England above everyone else. A Bill for the second 1660 Navigation Act was passed to close the loopholes of the first Act .

Navigation Acts - The 1660 Navigation Act

The 1660 Navigation Act was designed to prevent fraudulent evasions of the 1651 Navigation Act. The original words and text of the 1660 Navigation Act are detailed as follows:

Navigation Act of 1660

For the increase of shipping and encouragement of the navigation of this nation, wherein, under the good providence and protection of God, the wealth, safety, and strength of the kingdom is so much concerned...from thence forward, no goods or commodities whatsoever shall be imported into or exported out of any lands, islands, plantations, or territories to his Majesty belonging or in his possession...in Asia, African, or America, in any other ship or ships, vessel or vessels whatsoever, but in such ships or vessels as do truly and without fraud belong only to the people of England...or are of the built of and belonging to any of the said lands, islands, plantations, or territories, as the proprietors and right owners thereof, and whereof the master and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the mariners at least are English.

The 'goods and commodities' were tobacco, sugar, rice, cotton, wool, dyeing woods - indigo, etc. Such goods could only be shipped to England. Such goods were to pay heavy duties (taxes) when shipped to England. The money from the taxes went to England, not the colonies from where they originated. Other, non-specified goods, could go directly to foreign ports from English colonies in English ships.

Navigation Acts - The 1663 Navigation Act aka the Staple Act

The Navigation Act of 1663 was also called the Act for the Encouragement of Trade or the Staple Act. The 1663 Navigation Act stated that Colonial exports (mainly American) had to be transported in English, or colonial, ships and that all Colonial imports had to first pass through English ports - whether the goods were for England or another country in Europe. The goods were then to be inspected and taxed. This meant that the English colonies could only receive European goods via England. The 1660 and 1663 Navigation Acts increased the cost, and shipping time, for the colonies.



Navigation Acts of 1673, 1696 and 1773

The Navigation Acts of 1673, 1696 and 1773 were designed to:

- Close more trade loopholes
- Increase the list of 'goods and commodities'
- Increase the duties (taxes) on the goods
- Appoint vice-admiralty courts in Colonial America to enforce the navigation laws

Navigation Acts - The 1733 Navigation Act (the Molasses Act)

The 1733 Navigation Act, also called the Molasses Act added 'fuel to the fire'. The 1733 Navigation Act imposed heavy duties (taxes) on sugar from the West Indies to the American colonies raising the price of West Indian sugar. This forced the colonists to purchase sugar from Britain instead.

Effect of the Navigation Acts

The series of Navigation Acts were seen as a detriment to the American colonies and sowed the seeds of dissension and rebellion in the colonies. At the start of the American Revolution most of colonial traders were involved in smuggling to avoid restrictions placed on trade by the Navigation Acts. The Navigation Acts were repealed in 1849.

The Navigation Acts and the Fur Trade

Beaver fur was the raw material for a good quality felt, that was highly suitable for hat making. Beaver hats served as a status symbol for position and wealth in the 1600 and 1700's. The sales of hats made from beaver skins were an extremely important source of income to the British nation. From 1700 to 1770 the beaver skins that were exported from the American colonies to Great Britain were used to make 21 million hats which the British exported from England to other parts of Europe. Beaver pelts were the first great American trade commodity.



D'Orsay
Beaver Hat

The Navigation Acts and the Beaver Fur Trade



Continental
Beaver Hat

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