

Edenton Tea Party October 25, 1774

The Edenton Tea Party was one of the earliest organized women's political actions in United States history. Mrs. Penelope Barker organized, fifty-one women in Edenton, North Carolina and together they formed an alliance wholeheartedly supporting the American cause against "taxation without representation."

In response to the Tea Act of 1773, the Provincial Deputies of North Carolina resolved to boycott all British tea and cloth received after September 10, 1774. The women of Edenton signed an agreement saying they were "determined to give memorable proof of their patriotism" and could not be "indifferent on any occasion that appears nearly to affect the peace and happiness of our country . . . it is a duty that we owe, not only to our near and dear connections . . . but to ourselves."

The custom of drinking tea was a long-standing social English tradition. Social gatherings were defined by the amount and quality of tea provided. Boycotting a substance that was consumed on a daily basis, and that was so highly regarded in society, demonstrated the colonists' strong disapproval of the Tea Act. The Boston Tea Party, in December 1773, resulted in Parliament passing an Act as proof of the Crown's absolute authority. Following the example of their Boston patriots, the women of Edenton boldly protested Britain's what they considered unjust laws.

News of the Edenton Tea Party quickly reached Britain. During the 1770s, political resistance was common. But an organized women's movement was not. So, the Edenton Tea Party

shocked the Western world. From England, in January 1775, Arthur Iredell wrote his brother, James Iredell, describing England's reaction to the Edenton Tea Party. According to Arthur Iredell, the incident was not taken seriously because it was led by women. He sarcastically remarked, "The only security on our side . . . is the probability that there are but few places in America which possess so much female artillery as Edenton."

. Even though the Edenton Tea Party was ridiculed in England, it was praised in the colonies. The women of Edenton represented American frustrations with English monarchical rule and the need for American separation and independence.

Source: New York History Museum & Library;
<https://wams.nyhistory.org/settler-colonialism-and-revolution/the-american-revolution/edenton-tea-party/>



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