

# Research paper on the whiskey rebellion

[Parts of the World](#), [European Union](#)



The Whiskey Rebellion, which began on March 3, 1791, happens to be one of the topmost events within the early history of America (Humphrey, 2003). It took place when the U. S. Congress within Philadelphia approved a federal excise tax amounting to seven cents per gallon on whiskey in an attempt of paying off debts suffered by the Revolutionary War. Although, at that time, the majority of Americans felt negatively concerning taxation, the Western Pennsylvania's intrepid farmers proved outright unreceptive to the idea (Humphrey, 2003).

In 1790, the United State's new national government was making an attempt of establishing itself; considering that the government had taken up the debts accumulated by the colonies throughout the Revolution, the government turned out to be deep in debt. In the 1791 Congress' winter session, both houses passed a bill putting an excise tax onto all distilled spirits (Humphrey, 2003). Alexander Hamilton, who happened to be the United States Secretary of the Treasury at that time, proposed the bill in order to assist in the prevention of the national debt from increasing. This resulted in loud remonstrations from all districts belonging to the new nation; however, these protests turned out to be loudest within Pennsylvania's western counties (Humphrey, 2003). Acceptance of the excise tax differed due to the scale of production; the large producers who were producing alcohol as a business venture happened to be more willing to consent to the new tax since they were capable of making a tax payment of six cents per gallon annually. On the other hand, a smaller producer, who only produced whiskey sporadically, had to make payments at a rate of nearly nine cents per gallon throughout the year. Large producers were capable of reducing

the cost of the excise tax in case they produced even greater quantities; therefore, the new tax offered the large producers an advantage over small producers (Humphrey, 2003). As a result, the perspective of the smaller producers regarding the tax was remarkably different, these small producers were mostly found in the western counties. They considered this idea as being abhorrent. Conversely, the frontier farmers despised the excise since it was only payable in cash; this is something that is exceedingly rare on the western frontier. Because of the considerable effort necessary for transporting any product over the mountains back into the markets of the East, farmers perceived that it made much more sense transporting the distilled spirits of their grain instead of the raw grain itself (Humphrey, 2003).

The Whiskey Rebellion 1794 turned out to be an uprising within the Pennsylvania counties West of the Alleghenies, brought by the excise tax of 1791 (Hogeland, 2006). The settlers, the majority of them being Scotch-Irish, who considered whiskey as a significant economic commodity, despised the tax, terming it as discriminatory, as well as detrimental not only to their liberty, but also to their economic welfare. This led to countless public protests with rioting (Hogeland, 2006) breaking out in 1794 opposed to the efforts by the central government in enforcing the law. Troops summoned by President Washington suppressed the rioting thereby leading to the evaporation of resistance. Nonetheless, Hamilton decided to make an example of the settlers by illustrating the newly formed government's power of enforcing its law thereby arresting most of the settlers. However, President Washington pardoned two of the rebels convicted of treason. As a

result, the tax got repealed in 1802 (Hogeland, 2006).

Considering that transporting grain crops above the rocky roads into bigger Eastern markets was extremely hard, as well as costly, most of the frontier farmers transformed their grain into whiskey, thus enhancing its value together with its marketability (Hogeland, 2006). However, the latest tax overlooked these basics of forged life thereby making the farmers lack a way of paying the tax before making a sale above the mountains and into the east. Consequently, the opposition of the tax extended from Pennsylvania, to Virginia, Carolinas and Kentucky, with the majority of farmers deeming that a regime that played a small part within their life did not have any business of stealing money, which they had earned (Hogeland, 2006); therefore, these farmers declined to pay tax. During the following three years, those farmers making an attempt of obeying the law got mocked; tax collectors got tarred, as well as feathered; while government officials got threatened with mail delivery getting disrupted. Furthermore, public protests together with riots disrupted peace within the region (Hogeland, 2006). This led to a grouping of farmers within Washington County in Pennsylvania challenging and then burning the house of Brig. Gen. John Neville, who at the time was not only President Washington's pal, but also the Revenue Inspector within southwestern Pennsylvania, on August 1, 1794 (Hogeland, 2006).

Realizing that he had to maintain influence if the young government had to survive, on August 7 President Washington gave out a command to the rebels to go back home while summoning an armed force of thousands from the four states (Hogeland, 2006). Following failure by negotiators in trying to calm the rebellion, President Washington, adhering to Federalist Alexander

Hamilton's advice, made a decision of making an illustration of the insurgents by riding into Western Pennsylvania in the company of 13, 000 armed forces thereby quashing the insurgence. Washington escorted the troops up to Bedford, whereby he had an overnight stay at David Espy's house. However, the following day, he examined the convened troops, gave General Lee commands, and returned to Philadelphia (Hogeland, 2006). Apparently, this was the final time that Washington individually escorted armed forces to the turf, as well as the only moment he did this as the President.

When the force of federal got to Pennsylvania, the insurgence had already collapsed while the majority of the insurgents had escaped. Although the rebellion came to an end on the 13th day of November, 1794 at night plus the capturing of nearly 150 insurgents who were left, the tax continued until 1801 when it officially abolished (Humphrey, 2003).

## **References:**

Hogeland, W. (2006). *The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, And the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty*. New York: Scribner.

Humphrey, C. S. (2003). *The Revolutionary Era: Primary Documents on Events from 1776 To 1800*. Oklahoma : Greenwood Publishing Group.