

# Time Capsules

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A misunderstanding over the date of the Greenwich Tea Burning allowed a false impression to stand for many years. In all accounts of this event published previous to 1874, the date was given as Nov. 22, 1774, instead of Dec. 22 of that year.

The mistake was picked up because of a misinterpretation of the journal of Philip Vickers Fithian whose name is listed on the Tea Burners' monument as one of those taking part in the burning of the tea which had been taken off the brig "Greyhound" and stored in a nearby house. According to Thomas Cushing and Charles E. Sheppard, authors of the "History of Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland Counties," the list of names is probably not correct, either, as it was left open to argument of whether Fithian actually took part but merely recorded this act of defiance against the British rule.

The Fithian journal, after some entries in November, goes on to re-

cord events in December without giving the month. Under the date of "Friday 23" he says "Last night the tea was, by a number of persons in disguise, taken out of the house and consumed with fire. Violent and different are the words about this uncommon maneuver among the inhabitants. Some rave, some curse and condemn, some try to reason; many are glad the tea is destroyed, but almost all disapprove the manner of the destruction."

Quoting from the Fithian journal, Robert Johnson's "History of Salem County" used the November date until the mistake was discovered and the rightful date of Dec. 22 then became the official anniversary date. It was some time, however, until all the publications issued after Johnson's "History of Salem" and subsequent publications caught up with the mistake. Now there seems to be no doubt that the historic event took place Dec. 22, 1774.