



Revolutionary Times



Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution

Declaration of Independence

Throughout the winter of 1775–1776, the members of the Continental Congress came to view reconciliation with Britain as unlikely, and independence was the only course of action available to them.

On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee introduced a resolution "that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states," acting under the instruction of the Virginia Convention.

The Lee Resolution contained three parts: a declaration of independence, a call to form foreign alliances, and "a plan for confederation."

Congress formed a committee to draft a declaration of independence and assigned that duty to Thomas Jefferson.

On June 11, 1776, Jefferson holed up in his Philadelphia boarding house and began to write.

Jefferson's writing was influenced by George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights, as well as by his study of natural rights theory and the writings of John Locke, including Two Treatises of Government.

Jefferson later explained that "he was not striving for originality of principal or sentiment."

Instead, he hoped his words served as an "expression of the American mind."

Through the many revisions made by Jefferson, the committee, and then by Congress, Jefferson retained his prominent role in writing the defining document of the American Revolution and, indeed, of the United States.

Jefferson was critical of changes to the document and was justly proud of his role in writing the Declaration of Independence and skillfully defended his authorship of this revered document.

Less than three weeks after he had begun, the draft went to Congress.

On July 2, 1776, Congress voted to declare independence. Two days later (July 4, 1776), it ratified the text of the Declaration.

Fifty-six men from each of the original 13 colonies signed the Declaration of Independence.

They mutually pledged "to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

Nine of the signers were immigrants, two were brothers and two were cousins.

Eighteen of the signers were merchants/businessmen, 14 were farmers and four were doctors.

Twenty-two were lawyers and nine were judges.

The average age of a signer was 45. Benjamin Franklin was the oldest delegate at 70. Thomas Lynch Jr. of South Carolina was the youngest at 27.

By the time the Declaration of Independence was adopted, the Thirteen Colonies (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia) and Great Britain had been at war for more than a year.

John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Charles Carroll were the longest surviving signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Adams and Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence; Carroll was the last signer to die - in 1832 - at the age of 95.

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: www.sar.org

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