



Revolutionary Times



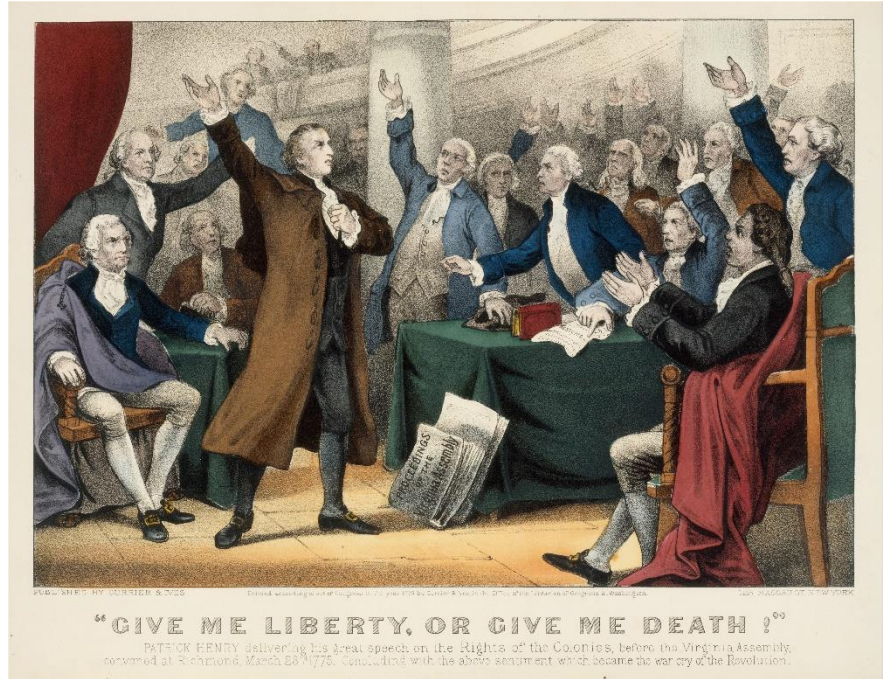
Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution

‘Give Me Liberty, Or Give Me Death’

Patrick Henry was the son of John Henry, a well-educated Scotsman who served in the colony as a surveyor, colonel, and justice of the Hanover County Court.

Before he was 10, Patrick received some rudimentary education in a local school, later reinforced by tutoring from his father, who was trained in the classics.

As a youth, he failed twice in seven years as a storekeeper and once as a farmer; and during this period he increased his responsibilities by marriage, in 1754, to Sarah Shelton.



The demands of a growing family spurred him to study for the practice of law, and in this profession he soon displayed remarkable ability.

Within a few years after his admission to the bar in 1760 he had a large and profitable clientele.

He was especially successful in criminal cases, where he made good use of his quick wit, his knowledge of human nature, and his forensic gifts.

Patrick Henry spoke to the second Virginia convention in March 1775, to discuss the events in Philadelphia and the need to form armed militias in Virginia in case British troops attempted to control the area.

On the 23rd, Henry presented a proposal to organize a volunteer company of cavalry or infantry in every Virginia county. By custom, Henry addressed himself to the Convention's president, Peyton Randolph of Williamsburg.

Henry's speech on that day served to finalize support in Virginia to oppose any British military intervention in that colony; but what remains unknown is what Henry actually said in his speech.

Years later, biographer William Wirt in 1817 reconstructed the speech based on the recollections of Thomas Jefferson and others.

Wirt's account ends with the famous lines, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?"

“Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”

The convention passed the resolution offered by Henry to form militias to defend Virginia, and in the following month, fighting broke out at Lexington and Concord between British troops and the colonists, marking the official start of the Revolutionary War.

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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