

Signing the Declaration of Independence

The Revolutionary War broke out in Massachusetts (Lexington and Concord) on April 19, 1775.

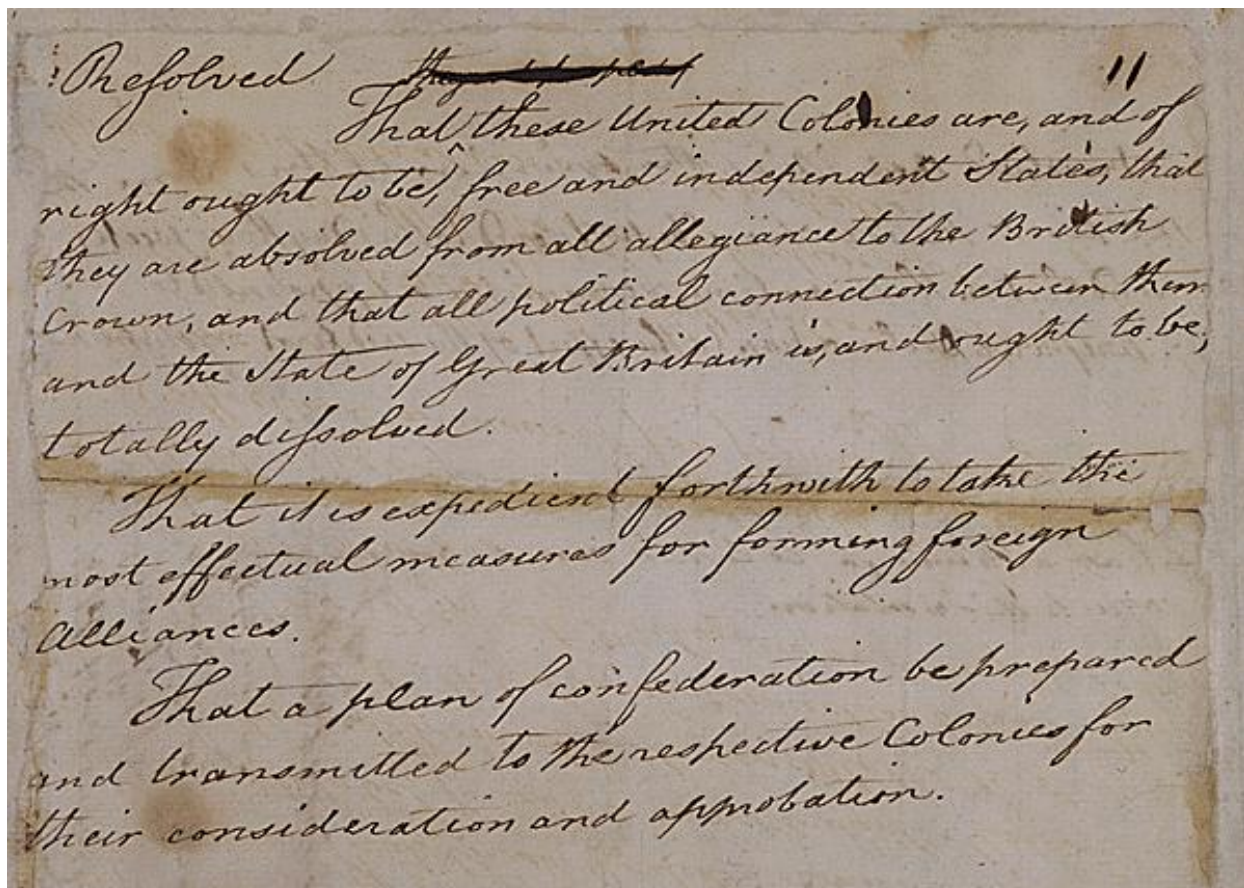
For the first few months of the conflict, the Patriots had carried on their struggle in an ad-hoc and uncoordinated manner. On September 13, 1775, the Second Continental Congress reconvened and assumed leadership of the war effort. They resolved to prepare for war but continued to seek reconciliation.

On June 7, 1776, in accordance with the terms of Virginia's instructions, Richard Henry Lee, ranking delegate from Virginia, formally proposed independence to Congress. Speaking for his colleagues, Lee introduced the following resolution, written in his own hand and reading:

Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

That it is expedient to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign alliances.

That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.



The image shows a handwritten document on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script. At the top left, it begins with 'Resolved' followed by a crossed-out phrase. The main body of the text reads: 'That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.' Below this, it says: 'That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances.' The final line reads: 'That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.' There is a small number '11' written in the upper right corner of the document.

The Lee Resolution, also known as the resolution of independence, was an act of the Second Continental Congress declaring the Thirteen Colonies to be independent of the British Empire. It is the earliest form and draft of the Declaration of Independence.

Because many members of the Congress believed the actions Lee proposed to be premature or wanted instructions from their colonies before voting, approval was deferred.

On June 10, Congress appointed a committee of five to draft a statement of independence for the colonies. The committee included Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman, with the actual writing delegated to Jefferson.

Jefferson drafted the statement between June 11 and 28; he submitted drafts to Adams and Franklin who made some changes, and then presented the draft to the Congress following the July 2nd adoption of the independence section of the Lee Resolution.

On July 1, after a long day of debate, the Congress voted. Each colony had one vote, requiring the delegations to decide among themselves how to cast their single vote. Pennsylvania and South Carolina voted no; New York - whose provincial government was then fleeing the invading British Army - abstained. Delaware's two delegates were split.

Although a majority of the delegations at this moment voted in favor of the resolution, proponents of independence sought unanimous support.

On July 2, the remaining pieces fell into place. South Carolina reversed course and voted in favor of Lee's resolution.

Delaware's Caesar Rodney, in an act memorialized in 1999 on Delaware's commemorative state quarter, rode through the night to arrive at the State House to break his delegation's tie in favor of independence.

Within the Pennsylvania delegation, John Dickinson and Robert Morris, both opponents of independence, abstained, leaving Pennsylvania's delegation 3-to-2 in favor of independence. (Philadelphia Encyclopedia)

The Congress voted unanimously in favor of independence.

After voting on independence, the Continental Congress needed to draft a document explaining the move to the public.

The congressional revision process took all of July 3rd and most of July 4th. Finally, in the afternoon of July 4th, the Declaration was adopted. The words of the Lee Resolution are echoed in the Declaration of Independence. (National Archives)

Officially, the Second Continental Congress declared its freedom from Great Britain on July 2, 1776, when it approved a resolution in a unanimous vote. In the late morning of July 4, 1776, the Declaration had been officially adopted by the Continental Congress.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION
 BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
 IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

WHEN in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shewn, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inestimable to them, and formidable to Tyrants only.

He has called together legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.

He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and Convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

He has erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their Substance.

He has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the Consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

- For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us;
- For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States;
- For cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World;
- For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent;
- For depriving us, in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury;
- For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended Offences;
- For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries, so as to render it at once an Example and fit Instrument for introducing the same absolute Rule into these Colonies;
- For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments;
- For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.
- He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.
- He has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.
- He is, at this Time, transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complacit the Works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.
- He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the Executioners of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.
- He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.

In every Stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated Injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

NOR have we been wanting in Attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in GENERAL CONGRESS, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connect between them and the State of Great-Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which INDEPENDENT STATES may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Signed by ORDER and in BEHALF of the CONGRESS,

JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

ATTEST.
CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

PHILADELPHIA: PRINTED BY JOHN DUNLAP.

Under the supervision of the Jefferson committee, the approved Declaration was printed on July 5th and a copy was attached to the "rough journal of the Continental Congress for July 4th."

These printed copies, bearing only the names of John Hancock, President, and Charles Thomson, secretary, were distributed to state assemblies, conventions, committees of safety, and commanding officers of the Continental troops. (National Archives)

Some of the delegates – John Adams most famously - considered July 2 as the day of American independence. It was July 4, however, when the final editing and wording of the document was approved and sent to Philadelphia printer John Dunlap at his shop at Second and Market Streets for publication. (Philadelphia Encyclopedia)

Philadelphians first heard the document on July 8, when John Nixon, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Philadelphia militia, read the Declaration of Independence in the State House Yard.

The public reaction was passionate and widespread. According to historian William Hogeland, the crowd shouted “God bless the free states of North America!” three times. In the ultimate act of defiance, Pennsylvania militiamen removed the king’s coat of arms from the State House and threw it into a large bonfire. (Philadelphia Encyclopedia)

Signing the Declaration of Independence

One of the most widely held misconceptions about the Declaration is that it was signed that day, by all the delegates in attendance.

The engrossed document is itself largely responsible for the erroneous views which have been held respecting the date of the signing. Being headed by the legend, “In Congress, July 4, 1776,” and ending with the fifty-six signatures, the natural inference to be made, until better information was obtainable, was that this official document was signed on that day.

It is further misinforming, not only as regards the date of signing, but in its title, “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States,” under the date July 4. For on that day, New York’s delegates had no authority to vote, so that unanimity was procured by their silence, but twelve colonies, therefore, taking part in the final ballot.” (Friedenwald)

On July 4, 1776, 12 of the 13 colonies voted in favor and New York abstaining due to lack of instructions from their Colony.

The Declaration of Independence was unanimously approved when the New York Convention gave its approval on July 9, 1776.

On July 19, Congress was able to order that the Declaration be “fairly engrossed on parchment, with the title and stile [sic] of ‘The unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States of America,’ and that the same, when engrossed, be signed by every member of Congress.”

On August 2, 1776, John Hancock, the President of the Congress, was the first to sign the sheet of parchment measuring 24¼ by 29¾ inches. He used a bold signature centered below the text.

In accordance with prevailing custom, the other delegates began to sign at the right below the text, their signatures arranged according to the geographic location of the states they represented.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

Wotton Gwinnett
Lymann Hall,
Geo Walston.

Gym Hooper
Joseph Hewes,
6
John Pinn

Edward Rutledge.

Geoth Weyward Jun^r
 Thomas Lynch Jun^r
 Arthur Middleton

Samuel Chavoy
Wm. Paro
Thos. Stone
Charles Conell of Haverhill

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Th Jefferson
Wm Harrison
Th Nelson Jr
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carver Braxton

Benjamin West
Ben. Franklin
John Norton
Goslyn
Smith

James Wilson
Gro. Trops
Casar Honey
Graham
Thom. H. H. H.

Chas. Livingston
Saan! Amos
Lewis Morris

1604, 1605, 1606, 1607, 1608, 1609, 1610, 1611, 1612, 1613, 1614, 1615, 1616, 1617, 1618, 1619, 1620, 1621, 1622, 1623, 1624, 1625, 1626, 1627, 1628, 1629, 1630, 1631, 1632, 1633, 1634, 1635, 1636, 1637, 1638, 1639, 1640, 1641, 1642, 1643, 1644, 1645, 1646, 1647, 1648, 1649, 1650, 1651, 1652, 1653, 1654, 1655, 1656, 1657, 1658, 1659, 1660, 1661, 1662, 1663, 1664, 1665, 1666, 1667, 1668, 1669, 1670, 1671, 1672, 1673, 1674, 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, 1679, 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683, 1684, 1685, 1686, 1687, 1688, 1689, 1690, 1691, 1692, 1693, 1694, 1695, 1696, 1697, 1698, 1699, 1700, 1701, 1702, 1703, 1704, 1705, 1706, 1707, 1708, 1709, 1710, 1711, 1712, 1713, 1714, 1715, 1716, 1717, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1725, 1726, 1727, 1728, 1729, 1730, 1731, 1732, 1733, 1734, 1735, 1736, 1737, 1738, 1739, 1740, 1741, 1742, 1743, 1744, 1745, 1746, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1755, 1756, 1757, 1758, 1759, 1760, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795, 1796, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821, 1822, 1823, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, 1848, 1849, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854, 1855, 1856, 1857, 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 22

Wm Whipple
Sam Adams
John Adams
Robt Treat Paine
Elbridge Gerry

William Ellery
Roger Sherman
Sam^l Huntington
M^{rs} Williams
Oliver Wolcott
Malthew Thomson

On August 2, the journal of the Continental Congress noted that “The declaration of independence being engrossed and compared at the table was signed.” Eventually 56 delegates signed, although all were not present on August 2 and they signed later.

New Hampshire, the northernmost state, began the list, and Georgia, the southernmost, ended it.

Among the later signers were Elbridge Gerry, Oliver Wolcott, Lewis Morris, Thomas McKean, and Matthew Thornton, who found that he had no room to sign with the other New Hampshire delegates (he signed under the Connecticut’s delegation signatures).

Some of the signers were not present during the July 4 vote; different members made up several of the State delegations. Some of the delegates who voted for declaration of independence did not sign the actual document, and several of those that signed had not voted on July 4. In addition, not all of the delegates were in Philadelphia on August 2.

Most likely, 50 of the 56 signers signed the Declaration of Independence on August 2, 1776; five more signed later in 1776. Thomas McKean, the 56th (and last) signer, signed sometime after January 1777. (NPS)

Not All Delegates Who Voted for Independence Signed the Declaration of Independence

A few delegates who voted for adoption of the Declaration on July 4 were never to sign in spite of the July 19 order of Congress that the engrossed document “be signed by every member of Congress.”

Nonsigners included John Dickinson, who clung to the idea of reconciliation with Britain. Dickinson recognized the symbolic importance of a unanimous decision, did not cast his vote. Realizing he could no longer stay in Congress, Dickinson left and volunteered for the Pennsylvania militia. Robert R. Livingston, one of the Committee of Five, thought the Declaration was premature.

Not All Delegates Who Signed the Declaration of Independence Voted for Independence

The delegates from New York in Congress on July 4 were William Floyd, Francis Lewis, George Clinton, Henry Wisner, John Alsop, Robert R. Livingston, Philip Livingston, and possibly, Lewis Morris – they abstained from voting. Later, New York delegates William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, and Lewis Morris signed the Declaration of Independence.

On July 20, Pennsylvania’s entire membership was rearranged, and only four of those who had represented Pennsylvania previous to that time, Franklin, Morris, Morton, and Wilson, were re-elected; they each signed the Declaration of Independence.

However, the new delegates representing Pennsylvania, Benjamin Rush, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, and George Ross did not vote for, but ultimately signed the Declaration of Independence.

Signers of the Declaration of Independence (In order of States)

President of Congress

John Hancock
(Massachusetts Bay)

New Hampshire

Josiah Bartlett
William Whipple
Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts Bay

Samuel Adams
John Adams
Robert Treat Paine
Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Stephen Hopkins
William Ellery

Connecticut

Roger Sherman
Samuel Huntington
William Williams
Oliver Wolcott

New York

William Floyd
Philip Livingston
Francis Lewis
Lewis Morris

New Jersey

Richard Stockton
John Witherspoon
Francis Hopkinson
John Hart
Abraham Clark

Pennsylvania

Robert Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin
John Morton
George Clymer
James Smith
George Taylor
James Wilson
George Ross

Delaware

Caesar Rodney
George Read
Thomas McKean

Maryland

Samuel Chase
William Paca
Thomas Stone
Charles Carroll

Virginia

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Thomas Jefferson
Benjamin Harrison
Thomas Nelson, Jr.
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carter Braxton

North Carolina

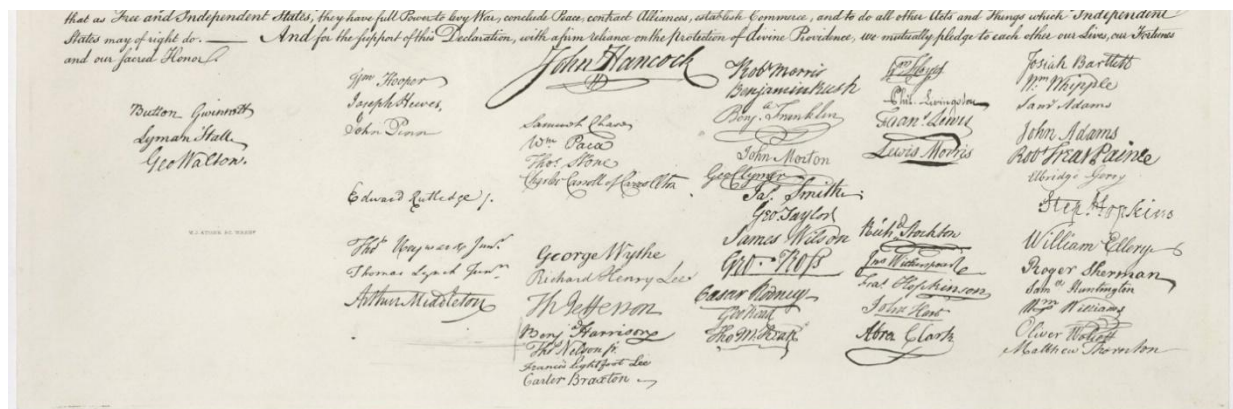
William Hooper
Joseph Hewes
John Penn

South Carolina

Edward Rutledge
Thomas Heyward, Jr.
Thomas Lynch, Jr.
Arthur Middleton

Georgia

Button Gwinnett
Lyman Hall
George Walton



The Declaration of Independence ends, stating “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Micheal W Smith writes, about what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence ...

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the revolutionary army, another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the revolutionary war.

What kind of men were they? Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners, men of means, well educated. But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.

Vandals or soldiers or both, looted the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. The owner quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his wife’s bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart. Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Information here is primarily from National Archives; Herbert Friedenwald, Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, Michael W Smith, and National Park Service.

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the American Revolution, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young