



# Revolutionary Times



Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution

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Before Americans were American, they were British. Before Americans governed themselves, they were governed by a distant British king and a British Parliament in which they had no vote.

Before America was an independent state, it was a dependent colony. Before Americans expressed support for equality, their government and society were aristocratic and highly hierarchical.

These transformations were complex, but the changes owe a great deal to the Declaration of Independence of 1776, what has been properly termed “America’s mission statement.”

“The year 1776 is over. I am heartily glad of it, and hope you nor America will ever be plagued with such another.” (Letter to George Washington from George Morris, Philadelphia, 1 January, 1777)

The Spirit of ‘76 is a patriotic sentiment referring to freedom begun by the Declaration of Independence.

1776 had pivotal moments of American history, from the decision for independence to the military disasters that followed.

In early December, British commanders believed they were very close to ending the rebellion, and American leaders feared that they might be right.

Yet three months later, the mood had changed on both sides. By the spring of 1777 many British officers had concluded that they could never win the war.

At the same time, Americans had recovered from their despair and were confident that they would not be defeated.

Besides representative government, participatory politics, and popular sovereignty, Americans believed that public virtue (the subordination of self-interest to the common good) was absolutely essential in a democratic republic.

Moreover, they felt that there could be no virtue in public life without corresponding virtue in private life.

To those who risked their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor in behalf of American independence, through the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson and his congressional colleagues promised the creation of a governmental system that would be “most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness” ...

“... and derive its “just powers from the consent of the governed” as well as a social order in which all men would be “created equal” and enjoy the “unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The most important challenge to members of the revolutionary generation - indeed to subsequent generations of Americans - was translating Jefferson's idealistic rhetoric into everyday reality.

And while the winning of independence took precedence at first over the creation of a republican society, the principles outlined in the Declaration of Independence promised to lead America - and other nations on the globe - into a new era of freedom. The revolution begun by Americans on July 4, 1776, would never end.

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](http://www.sar.org)

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