



## **‘United Colonies’ Become the ‘United States of America’**

On September 9, 1776, the Second Continental Congress adopted a new name for what had been called the "United Colonies." The name "United States of America" has remained since then as a symbol of freedom and independence.

Benjamin Franklin popularized the concept of a political union with his May 9, 1754 warning in the Pennsylvania Gazette to the British colonies in America to 'Join or Die', exhorting them to unite against the French and the Indians, showing a segmented snake, "S.C., N.C., V., M., P., N.J., N.Y., [and] N.E."

The "Snake Cartoon," which appeared in the Gazette directly below the article, has usually been considered the first American political cartoon.

Thomas Jefferson is credited as being the first person to come up with the name (United States), which he used while drafting the Declaration of Independence. In June 1776, Jefferson's draft version of the Declaration started with the following sentence: "A Declaration of the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled."

The final version of the Declaration starts with the date July 4, 1776 and the following statement: "The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America."

Richard Henry Lee of Virginia had used the name "United Colonies" in

a June resolution to Congress; he wrote, "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."

These thoughts are included in the Declaration's final paragraph,

"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."

Also, the words "United States of America" appeared in the first draft of the Articles of Confederation on July 8, 1776, as it was submitted to Congress. The Articles weren't ratified by the states until March 1781.

The United Colonies Become the United States ... on Monday, September 9, 1776, the Continental Congress moved to approve some important resolutions. John Adams notes in his Diary on that day,

Resolved, that in all Continental Commissions, and other Instruments where heretofore the Words, 'United Colonies,' have been used, the Stile

be altered for the future to the United States.

"The abbreviation 'U. S. A.' had its beginning in poor quality gunpowder.

"Every caskful manufactured or purchased was to be examined and none received into the public magazines for the use of the United States of America but such as has been approved by the public inspector as to its quickness in firing, strength, dryness and other necessary qualities."

"The inspector was to mark each cask so approved with the letters 'U. S. A.' and such other marks as were necessary to distinguish the several sorts of powder. Robert Towers was elected by Congress the first inspector of gunpowder."

"This was the first official determination to use a distinguishing mark or brand .... this convenient and unmistakable letter triad was not settled upon. Instead, however, the Congress went back to the full words 'United States.'"

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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