

Colonization and Revolutionary War The Declaration of Independence

During the years right before the Revolutionary War, more and more colonists wanted independence. Patriots gave speeches urging the colonists to take up arms and fight the British **tyrants**¹. Patrick Henry, a **patriot**² from Virginia, gave a famous speech to the legislature of his state. Patrick Henry **proclaimed**³: "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me **liberty**⁴ or give me death!"

As fighting from the war spread, many more colonists became convinced they needed to cut ties with Britain. They still considered themselves British, but the king was not respecting their rights. They stood together as colonists to defend themselves and their interests. Before long they would call themselves Americans.

On May 10, 1775, representatives from every colony met at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. They gathered in response to the battles of Lexington and Concord. The representatives agreed the time for negotiating with Britain was over. They decided that the Congress should rule the colonies and they should declare independence. The Continental Army was formed, and George Washington was named its leader. Washington would organize the Minutemen and come up with a plan to battle the British troops.

Thomas Jefferson set to work right away and drafted the Declaration of Independence. It took him a little more than two weeks. Although he was only 33 years old, Jefferson **eloquently**⁵ wrote why the colonists didn't want British rule. He listed all of the rights that every man deserved. He wrote that England was denying the colonists these rights. The Declaration of Independence clarified the values of the colonists. The war was not just about taxes, it was about freedom.

¹ **tyrants** – people who use their power in a cruel or unjust way

² **patriot** – a person who loves his country and gives it loyal support

³ **proclaimed** – declared in a public way

⁴ **liberty** – freedom

⁵ **eloquently** – expressed in a smooth and clear way

It was about the relationship of any government to its people. Finally, the war was about the responsibility of the government to protect the rights of the people.