



Causes of the Revolution

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▲ Patrick Henry speaking to the leaders of Virginia

The Long Road to Independence

The people who lived in America during colonial times grew angry about taxes and laws that they thought were unfair. They fought back in different ways. Some of them joined in protests. Others wrote powerful words. These leaders inspired the colonists to create their own country.

The Melting Pot

More than two million people lived in the 13 British colonies in the mid-1700s. Some were born in the New World, while others had crossed the dangerous ocean to make a new home.

These colonists came from different countries. Many were from England. Some came from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and Holland.

Several of these countries had longtime problems with each other. They had even fought wars. But in the colonies, things were different. People worked hard to build homes

▼ Immigrants leaving old England for America



A New Kind of Family

Some colonists married people who had come from other countries. Then they had children. For example, you might have a child who was half Scottish and half German. This helped bring the colonists together even more quickly.

▼ Map of Europe in 1740



Crossing an Ocean

If you want to cross the Atlantic Ocean now, you just take a short airplane ride. It was much harder when the colonists did it. Sometimes they could not find ships to take them. When they did find one, the trip took more than a month!

and learn new skills. They did not have time to worry about things that had happened long ago.

The people in America began to think that it did not matter where you came from. They lived in colonies that were ruled by Great Britain. So they proudly called themselves British **citizens** (SIT-uh-zuhns).



▲ Battle during the French and Indian War in Pennsylvania

Mother England

The colonists looked to Great Britain for help with many things. They followed England's laws and **customs**. They were loyal to Great Britain's king. They also enjoyed the protection of the British army.

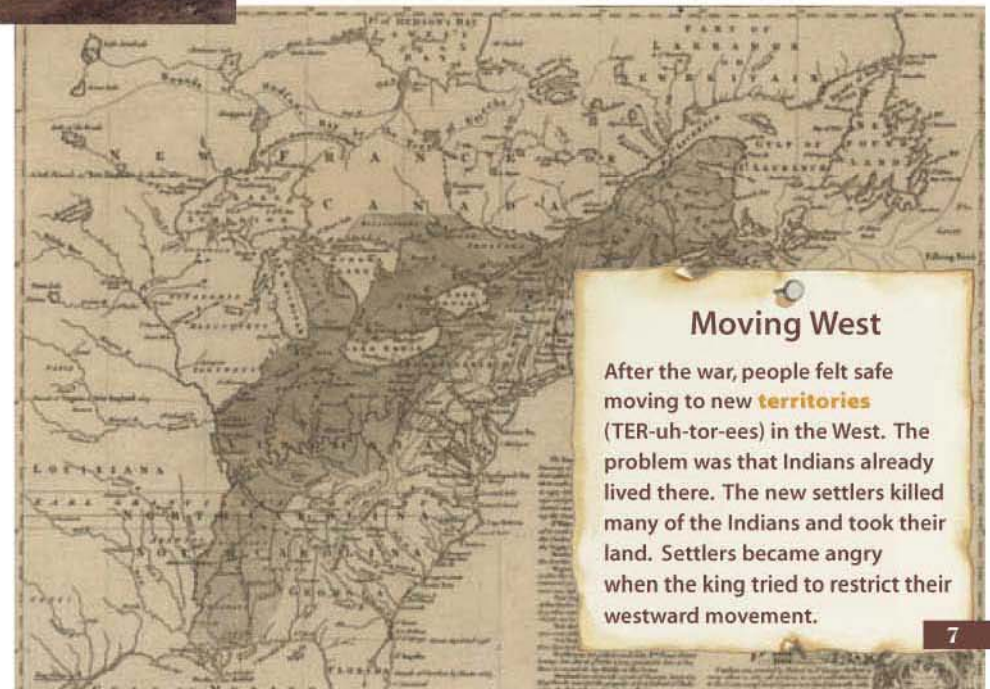
Some people called England the "Mother Country." They meant that England was like a parent. She loves you and helps you, but she also lets you know that she is the boss.

In the 1750s, Great Britain went to war with France. The two countries wanted to see, once and for all, which country

would control the New World. France had many Indians fighting on its side. So the British colonists called the war the French and Indian War.

Britain won the war, so it controlled all the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River and from Georgia to Maine. This made the New World safer for British settlers. The colonists began to think that they didn't need their "Mother" around to protect them anymore.

▼ Map of British and French settlements in North America



Stamping Out the Stamp Act

The French and Indian War was very expensive for Britain. The **government** decided it needed to raise some money. So **Parliament** (PAR-luh-muhnt) passed a special tax just for the American colonists. It was called the Stamp Act.

The act required people in America to buy a special stamp to put on all printed paper. This included things like newspapers, marriage licenses, and even decks of playing cards.



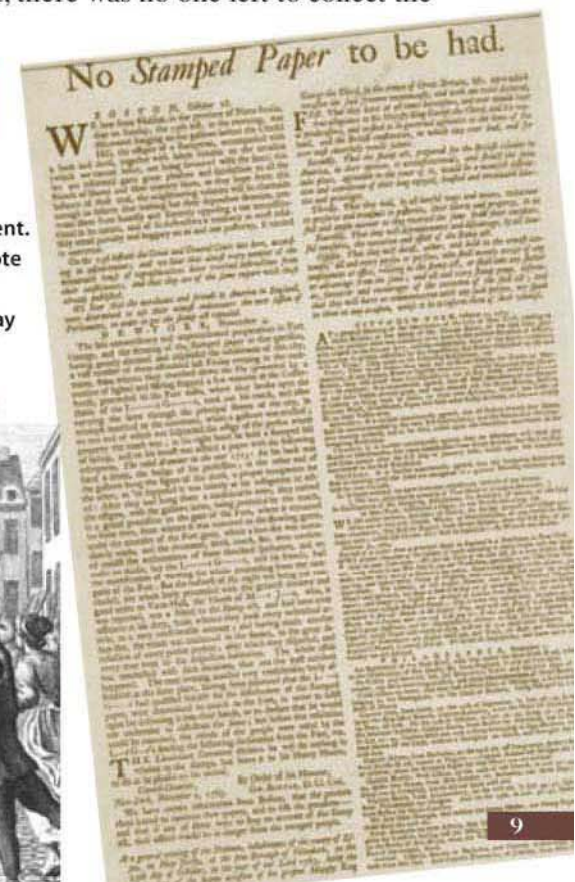
This made the colonists very angry. “We are citizens, too!” they thought. They did not want to pay a tax that the people in England did not have to pay.

So the colonists did an unexpected thing. They refused to pay the tax. Many of them gathered in large mobs and scared off the men who were sent to sell the stamps. By the time the act was officially supposed to start, there was no one left to collect the money.

Taxation without Representation

The people in the colonies had **no representatives** (rep-ri-ZEN-tuh-tivz) in Parliament. This meant they never got to vote on any of Britain’s laws. They decided they did not want to pay taxes unless they had a say.

▼ Protest of the Stamp Act

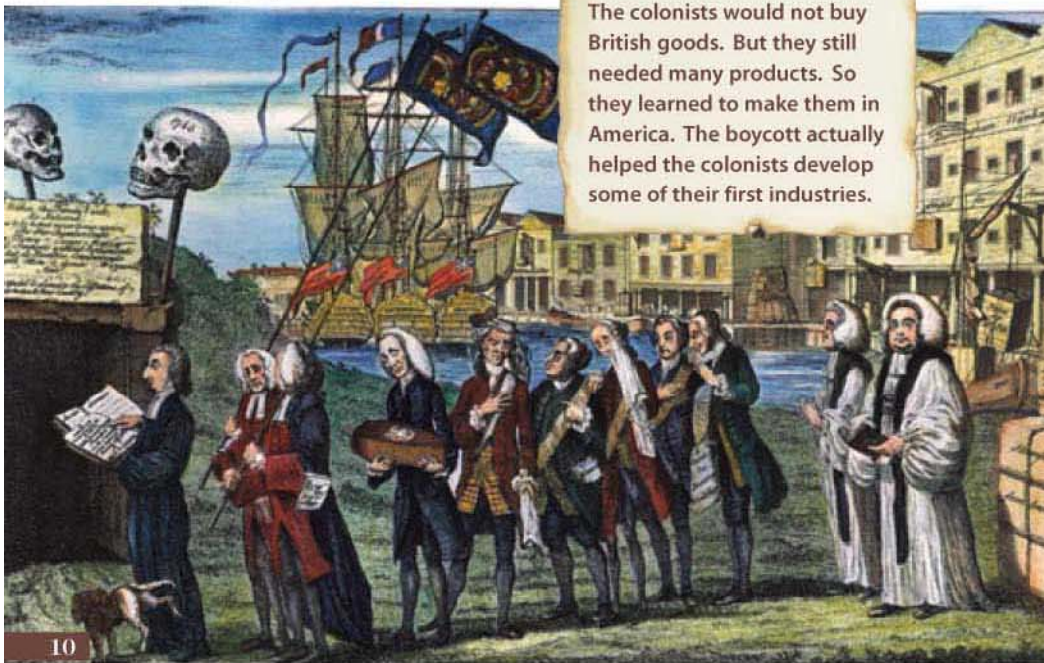


A New Way to Fight Back

The people in England were surprised at the colonists' reaction to the Stamp Act. They could tell that the tax was not going to work. So Parliament **repealed** the act.

Great Britain still needed money, so they passed a new set of taxes called the Townshend (TOWNS-end) Acts. These laws taxed glass, paint, paper, lead, and tea.

▼ English cartoon showing a funeral for the Stamp Act

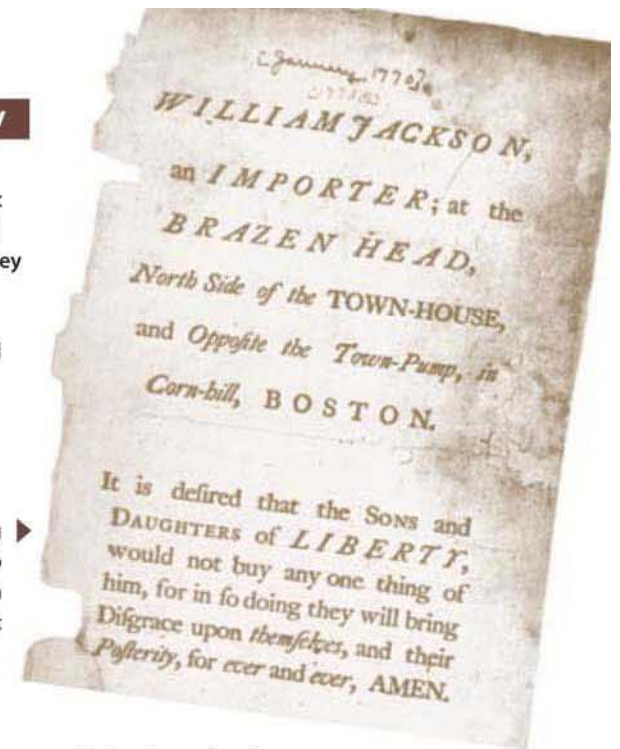


Made in the U.S.A.

The colonists would not buy British goods. But they still needed many products. So they learned to make them in America. The boycott actually helped the colonists develop some of their first industries.

Sons of Liberty

Around this time, some colonists started a secret new group. The **Sons of Liberty** met at night. They talked about their unhappiness with the British. They also helped organize some of the boycotts.



Flyer urging citizens to participate in a boycott

Once again, the people in America became angry. Nobody in England had to pay special taxes on these items. The colonists did not see why they should have to do so. Many people gave speeches and wrote articles. They convinced the colonists to try a new way to fight back. The colonists agreed to **boycott** British goods. This meant they would not buy anything made in Great Britain.

The boycott worked. Soon the merchants in England grew angry at losing their business in the colonies. They made the government repeal the taxes.

Things Go Too Far

The leaders in Great Britain were frustrated by the boycott. They decided to do something to quiet all this foolishness in America. So, they sent 4,000 soldiers to Boston. That meant there was one **redcoat** for every three colonists in town.

Do you think the people of Boston were happy about this? The colonists were mean to the soldiers. They called the soldiers names and threw things at them.

On March 5, 1770, a colonist got into a fight with a British guard. It started as a little thing, but then more and more people joined in the fight. The townspeople began pushing and shoving. They threw rocks and ice at the soldier. Soon eight more soldiers came to help him.

▼ Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre



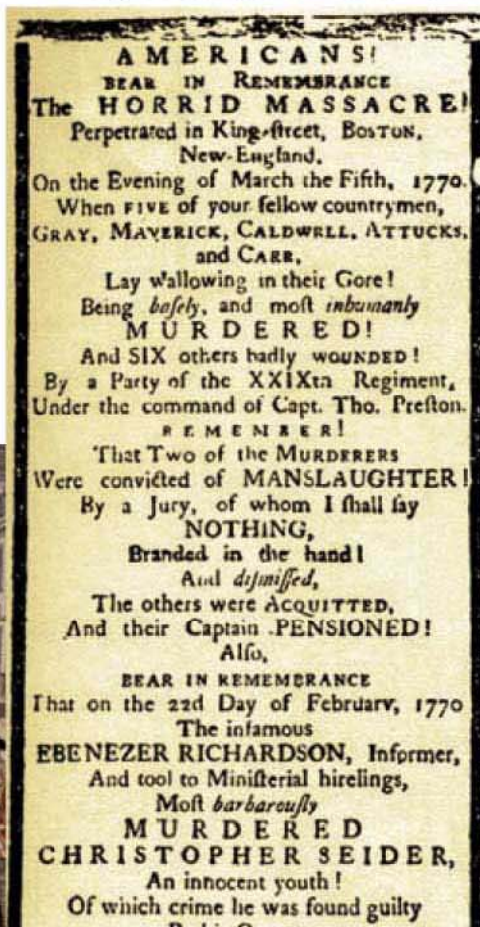
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Propaganda

Both sides were wrong on this sad day. But the colonists blamed the soldiers. People twisted the facts of what happened. A printer named Paul Revere made a famous **engraving**. It shows the soldiers shooting for no reason. This image helped spread the wrong idea.

The soldiers were scared by the noisy crowd. They got nervous. When somebody yelled, "Fire!" the soldiers shot into the crowd. Five colonists were killed. The angry people called this the Boston Massacre.

▼ Plaque at the Boston Massacre Memorial



John Adams

Doing the Right Thing

The soldiers at the Boston Massacre went on trial for murder. A well-known lawyer named John Adams defended them. Some people thought that Adams was helping the wrong side. But he thought that every person should have a fair trial. In the end, the soldiers were found innocent.

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Surprise Party

Remember how Parliament repealed the Townshend Acts? When they did that, they decided to keep the tax on tea. This was to show the colonists that Great Britain still had the power to tax its citizens.

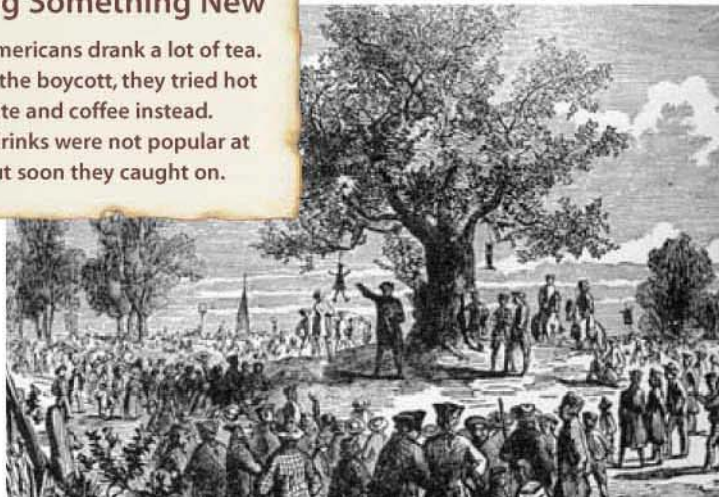
The colonists knew exactly what their leaders were up to. And they did not like it. Some colonists refused to buy British tea for more than five years.

Then, Parliament passed something called the Tea Act. This law allowed only some shop owners to **import** and sell tea. The colonists did not want Britain having so much control over their **economy**.

Trying Something New

Early Americans drank a lot of tea. During the boycott, they tried hot chocolate and coffee instead. These drinks were not popular at first. But soon they caught on.

▼ Dummy of a tax collector being hanged in protest

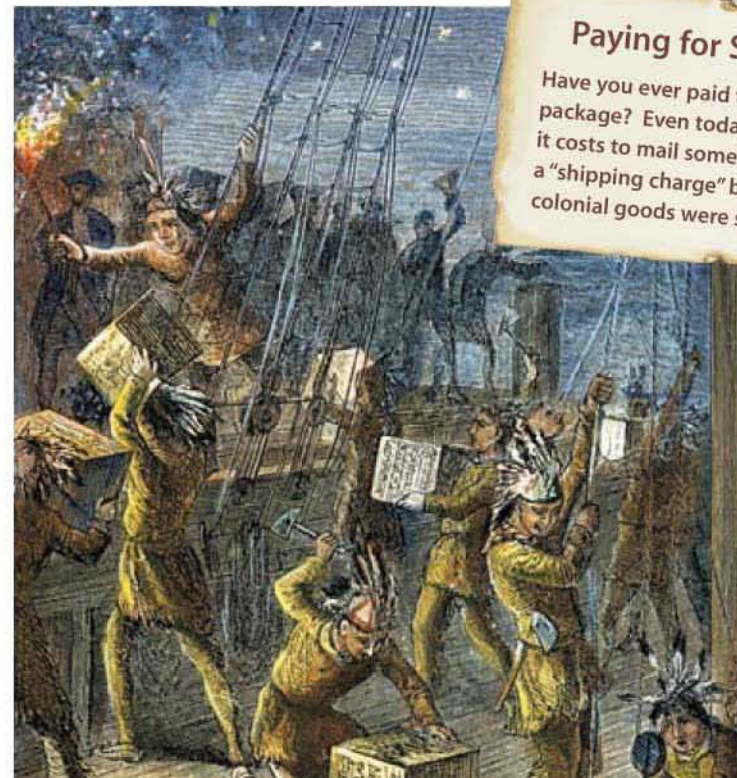


A Boston man named Samuel Adams gave many speeches. He excited people and made them angry at Great Britain's leaders. He was a member of the Sons of Liberty. These men **protested** in the streets.

One night in December 1773, some men dressed up as Indians and went aboard ships in Boston Harbor. They broke open 342 chests of tea and dumped it all into the harbor. The people cheered this "Boston Tea Party."

Paying for Shipping

Have you ever paid to send a package? Even today, the money it costs to mail something is called a "shipping charge" because colonial goods were sent by ship.



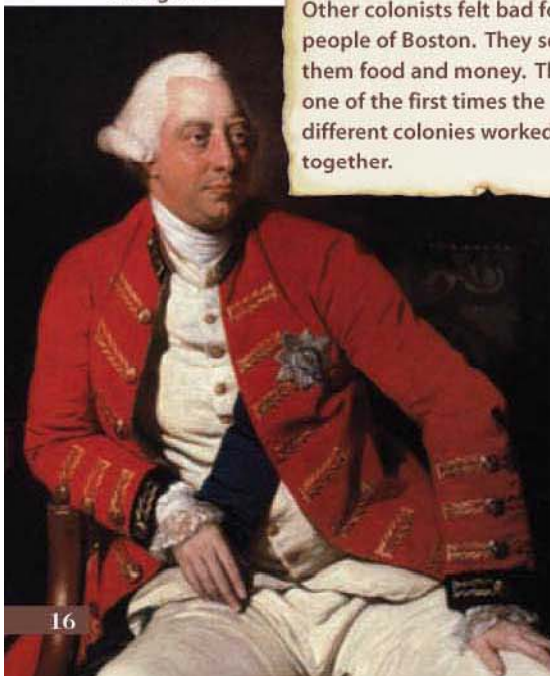
◀ Colonists dressed up as Indians during the Boston Tea Party.

The King's Plan Backfires

After the Boston Tea Party, King George III and his government decided to crack down on the colonies. They passed several harsh new laws that the colonists disliked. The colonists called these new laws the Intolerable (in-TOL-uh-r-uh-buhl) Acts.

One of these acts closed Boston Harbor. Now, nobody could fish or use the ocean for trade. This put half the people in Boston out of work.

▼ King George III of England



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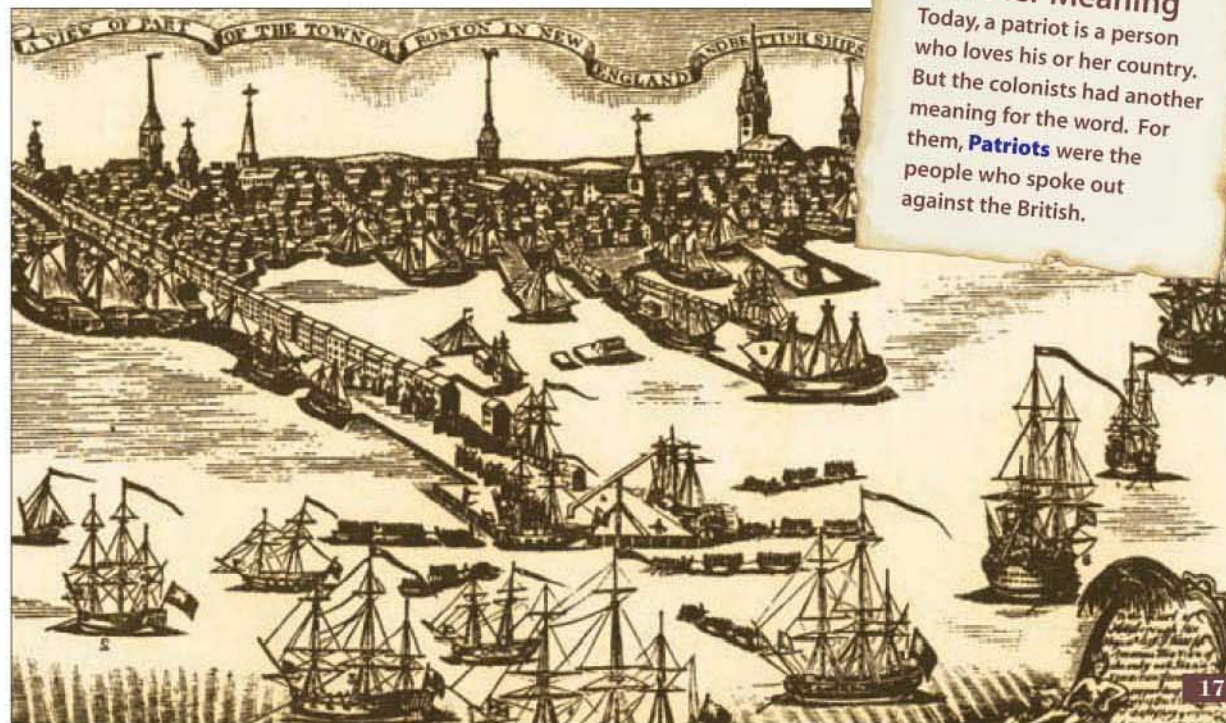
Coming to the Rescue

Other colonists felt bad for the people of Boston. They sent them food and money. This was one of the first times the different colonies worked together.

Another act forced colonists to allow British soldiers to move into their homes. Other new laws cut back on the freedom that the colonists had to rule themselves.

But the king had made a big mistake. A lot of people in America had stayed out of the troubles with Great Britain. They had never before seen a reason to fight. These laws were so disliked that more and more people began to think about being free.

▼ Engraving of British ships closing Boston Harbor



Another Meaning

Today, a patriot is a person who loves his or her country. But the colonists had another meaning for the word. For them, **Patriots** were the people who spoke out against the British.

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Working Together

Many people in the colonies had decided that things had to change. But they did not know what the next step should be.

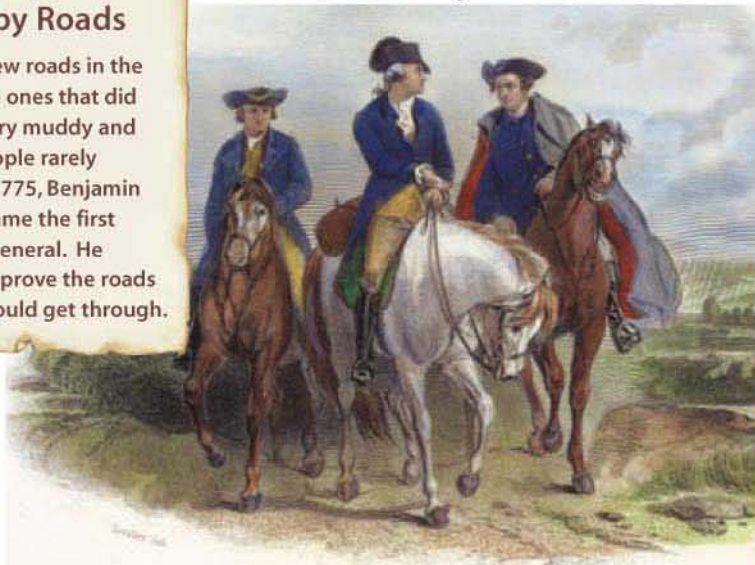
In 1774, the colonists decided to have a meeting. In the meeting, people from different colonies could talk about the problems with Great Britain.

Well-known **delegates** from the colonies came to the First **Continental** (kon-tuh-NEN-tuhl) **Congress**. They all had different ideas. But they listened to each other talk. Some of them even became close friends.

Bumpy Roads

There were few roads in the colonies. The ones that did exist were very muddy and rough, so people rarely traveled. In 1775, Benjamin Franklin became the first postmaster general. He worked to improve the roads so the mail could get through.

▼ Three Virginia delegates on the way to the First Continental Congress

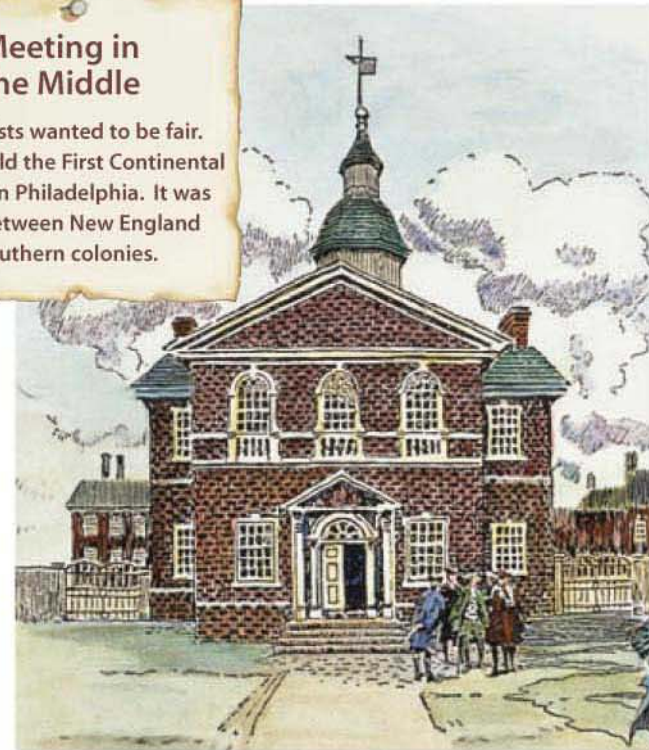


Together they wrote a message to King George. They called it the Declaration of Rights and Grievances (GREE-vuhn-zez). It politely explained all the colonists' complaints. The king refused to even read it.

The delegates knew a fight was coming. They told the leaders of the colonies to start forming **militias** (muh-LISH-uhz).

Meeting in the Middle

The colonists wanted to be fair. So they held the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. It was halfway between New England and the southern colonies.



▲ Site of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

What Should We Do Now?

The colonists organized many small armies. This angered the British soldiers. On April 19, 1775, redcoats marched to Lexington, Massachusetts. They planned to **confiscate** (KON-fuh-skate), or take, weapons hidden there.

A colonial militia group waited for the British. Nobody knows who fired the first shot. But soon the two sides clashed. Many other battles followed.



Commander-in-Chief

The delegates needed a strong leader for their army. They chose a man from Virginia named George Washington. He left right away to join his soldiers.

The colonists wondered, “What should we do now?” It was one thing to talk about breaking away from England. It was another to actually fight to form a new country.

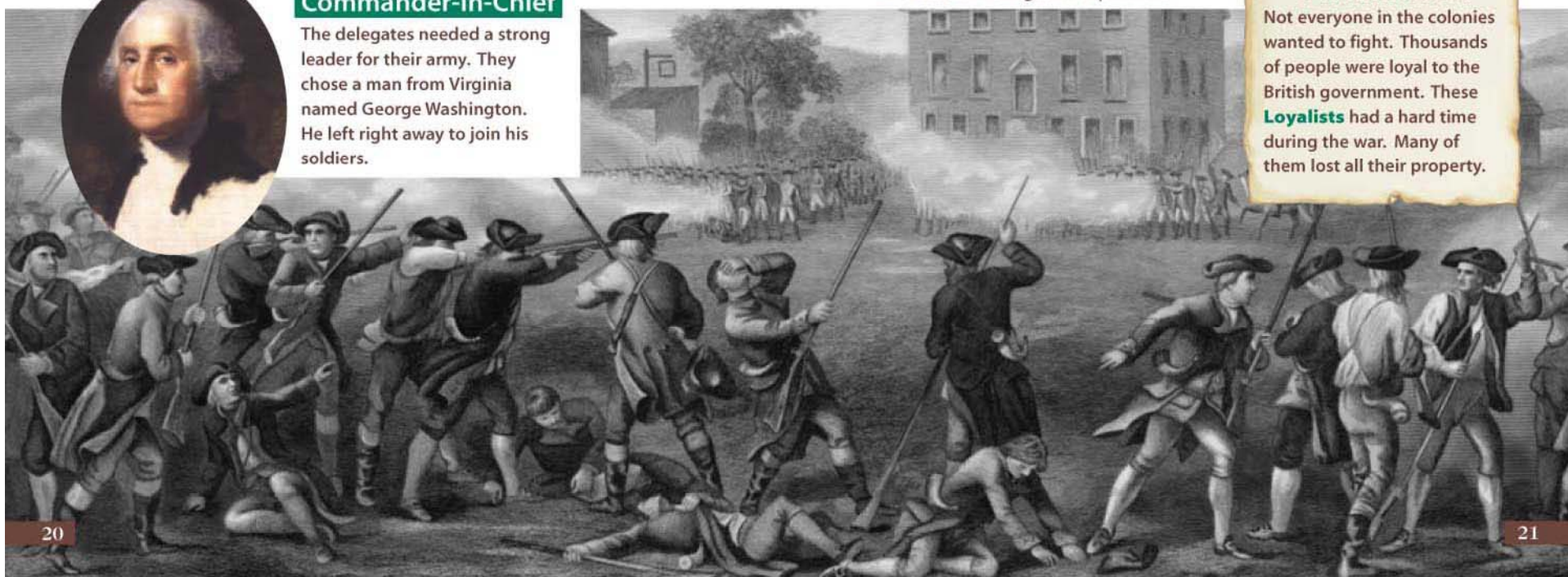
They called another meeting, the Second Continental Congress. First, the delegates worried about being ready to fight. They organized the small armies into one large Continental Army.

Then, they spent a long time arguing about what the colonies should do next.

▼ Battle of Lexington in April 1775

Outnumbered

Not everyone in the colonies wanted to fight. Thousands of people were loyal to the British government. These **Loyalists** had a hard time during the war. Many of them lost all their property.



The Power of Words

The colonists were considering doing something that had never been done before. But they had many concerns.

How could a few scattered colonies defeat powerful Great Britain? If they did win, what would they do without a king to tell them how to live? Could they really choose their own leaders?

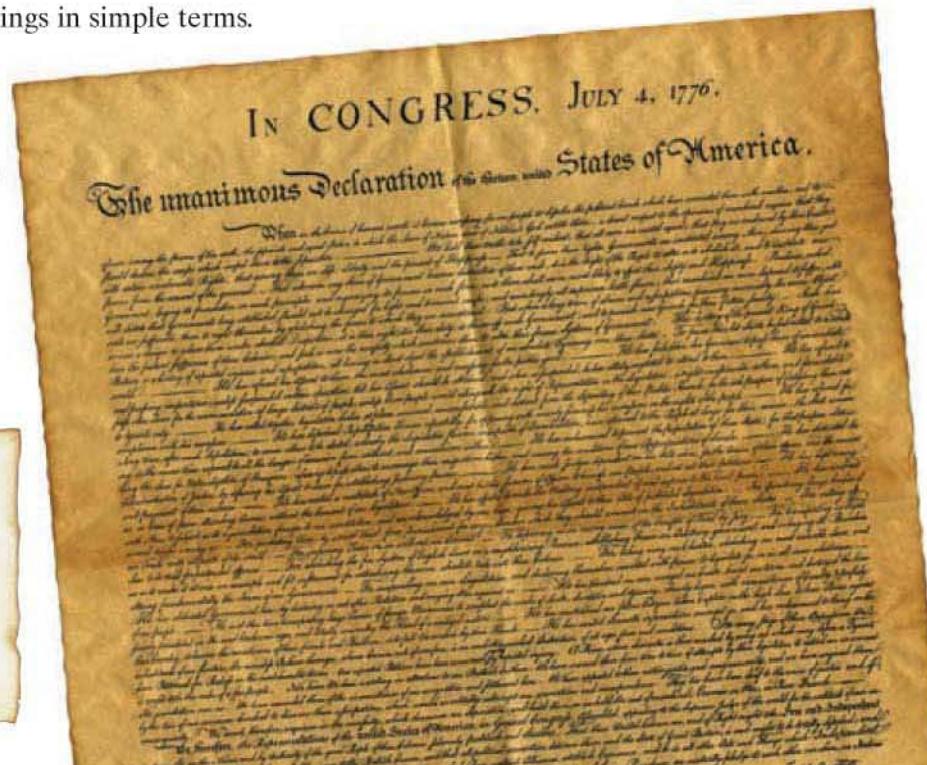
A man named Thomas Paine wrote a **pamphlet** called *Common Sense*. He explained things in simple terms.



◀ Thomas Paine, the author of *Common Sense*

Taking the High Road

Thomas Paine never took any money for his political writings. He said that being paid for his work would take value away from it.



He pointed out that governments led by kings do not work very well. Paine also argued that it was silly for a tiny island 3,000 miles (4,830 km) away to be in charge of America.

Common Sense sold many copies in a short time. It helped convince the colonists that the best thing to do was to break their bonds with England.

In July 1776, the Continental Congress sent the Declaration of Independence to King George. They were no longer British citizens. They were no longer colonists. They were Americans.



An Inspiring Speech

A lawyer named Patrick Henry also influenced many people. He gave a famous speech in Virginia. He said that nothing was more important than freedom. "As for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Glossary

- boycott**—to stop buying or using something for political reasons
- citizens**—people who are loyal to a country and receive protection from it in return
- confiscate**—take away something that belongs to someone else without permission
- Continental Congress**—the first governmental meetings in the United States
- customs**—habits and practices of a group of people
- delegates**—people who are sent to a meeting to speak for a larger group of people
- economy**—the activities of a country that have to do with money
- engraving**—a design that is cut or carved into metal or wood
- government**—the people and organizations that run a country
- import**—to use ships to bring goods into a country
- Loyalists**—people who supported the British government during the American Revolution
- militias**—armies made up of ordinary people who are not paid to be soldiers
- pamphlet**—a short book with a paper cover
- Parliament**—group of people that makes the laws in Great Britain
- Patriots**—people who lived in the colonies and fought against British rule
- protested**—objected or fought against something
- redcoat**—a British soldier, so-called because of his red uniform coat
- repealed**—threw out, cancelled
- representatives**—members of government, usually ones that were chosen by a vote, to act on behalf of others
- Sons of Liberty**—colonists who protested the actions of the British leaders
- territories**—areas of land outside the official colonial borders