

NUMBER 3. The Administration of Justice Act. Protected British officials charged with capital offences by allowing them to go to England or another colony for trial.

NUMBER 4. The Quartering Act. Made arrangements for housing British troops in American houses. It was a renewal of a similar quartering act which had expired in 1770.

Later a fifth was passed that precipitated in the colonists calling the First Continental Congress. It was called the Quebec Act. It declared all land north of the Ohio River and East of the Mississippi to be a part of Canada.

This area included what became the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Eastern Minnesota.

This act had a dual effect, one economic, the other religious. Economically the seized area became off limits to the colonies for fur trade, trapping, and hunting, each of which was big business in America.

The religious effect was that the area came under French civil law and the Roman Catholic Church. This was certainly intolerable for the Protestant colonies.

5. The First Continental Congress

The Intolerable Acts became the colonists' justification for the First Continental Congress.

On September 5, 1774, fifty-six delegates represented all the colonies except Georgia. Delegates included names that would become famous in American History: Patrick Henry and George Washington of Virginia, John and Samuel Adams of Massachusetts Bay, John Jay of New York and co-author of *The Federalist Papers*. Also included were John Dickinson of Pennsylvania and Peyton Randolph of Virginia who served as its President.

The congress rejected a plan for reconciling British authority with colonial freedom. Instead, it adopted a declaration of personal rights including life, liberty, property, assembly, and trial by jury.

It denounced taxation without representation and the maintenance of the British Army in the colonies without colonial consent. Parliamentary regulation of American commerce however was willingly accepted.

What was passed was a petition to Parliament for a redress of grievances for wrongs done since 1763. This referred back to the Navigation laws which compelled the colonies to restrict their trade to England alone or to such foreign ports as England directed.

Finally they voted to boycott British goods until Parliament complied.

On November 30, 1774, George III responded to the Congress's petition before a meeting of Parliament:

"I have taken the measures which I decree most effectual for executing the laws passed by the last Parliament for protecting commerce and preserving peace and order in Massachusetts Bay."

It should be noted that without international communications, the knowledge of events on either side of the Atlantic was slow to arrive. The colonists had petitioned the Crown on September 5, 1774. King George's response was not made known to the colonies until February of 1775.

In January of 1775, Patrick Henry of Virginia received a letter from a fellow member of the Continental Congress, Silas Deane of Connecticut. Deane related that he felt Massachusetts Bay would stand firm on the Congress's petition but needed help from the other colonies. He proposed a confederation of colonies in opposition to the British. Deane's letter read:

If reconciliation with Great Britain takes place, it will be obtained on the best terms if the colonies are untied. If no peace is to be had, without a confederation, we are ruined. United we stand, divided we fall!

Shortly after Henry received this communication the Port of Boston was closed by Great Britain, the city was garrisoned, and liberties suspended.

The military governor of Massachusetts Bay, General Thomas Gage, pronounced it high treason for the people to assemble and to petition for redress of grievances. Such were subject to immediate arrest.

Fourteen regiments of British troops were on station in Boston with several British warships cruising the harbor.

At the Virginia convention in August 1774, provision was made for Peyton Randolph, also chairman of that group, to call another convention when he thought it advisable. In February 1775, he did so and set the date for March 20 at St. John's Church in Richmond.

It was thought that Randolph was troubled by the existence of British troops in Boston and that defenses for the Virginia colony would be the important item on the agenda.

6. The Political Viewpoint of the Virginians

There were two political viewpoints among the colonists leading up to the War for Independence. A Tory was one who favored the British side and often referred to as a Loyalist.

A Tory was a supporter of traditional political and social institutions against the forces of democratization or reform while a Whig was a supporter of the war against England during the War for Independence.

The Tories who gathered in Richmond included such famous names as Edmund Pendleton, Benjamin Harrison, Carter Braxton, Robert Carter Nicholas, and Archibald Cary.

The Whig delegates were represented by some of Virginia's most distinguished personalities such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, and Patrick Henry.

It should be noted that throughout the entire colonial experience up to this time, no one even considered Independence as a valid idea. All the Americans desired was for England—the Crown and Parliament—to simply govern them under the constitution.

All the petitions, resolutions, and ambassadors were asking was that past wrongs be righted, that unjust laws be repealed, and their relationships return to their former standing.

Those who might have suggested the idea of independence were often accused of treason. The reason the resultant war was called the Revolutionary War was because British people, both in England and in America, were so loyal to the Crown that even independence was considered an act of revolution.

However, the last ten years had tightened the screws on the colonists to such a degree that the idea was gaining support although in hushed tones. Independence was simply a last-ditch option.

Those who ultimately bought the idea did so reluctantly and made the choice on an establishment viewpoint rationale: Integrity plus loyalty equals honor: $I + L = H$.

Integrity: A System of thought based on an absolute scale of values.

Loyalty: Faithfulness to that system of thought under pressure.

Honor: The application of those standards to experience.

George III and Parliament had consistently over 10 years strayed from the inflexible standards of just government.

These standards demanded the citizen's loyalty.

Honor requires that the patriot remain loyal to the law of the land rather than to the leader of the land when the two are at odds.

Though there were two opinions present at Richmond, independence had not been voiced by anyone.

What happened at St. John's Church in March 1775 changed those opinions. One man with a flair for the dramatic and a talent for oratory would succeed in uniting some Tories and Whigs into one unit: patriots in defense of a just cause.

7. Patrick Henry and the Great Awakening

The Great Awakening started in Europe in the early 1700s. It was later brought to the American colonies by the Anglican evangelist, George Whitefield:

The best-known evangelist of the eighteenth century and one of the greatest itinerant preachers in the history of Protestantism. In 1739, his reputation as a dramatic preacher went before him. His visit became a sensation, especially when it culminated in a preaching tour of New England during the fall of 1740 when Whitefield addressed crowds of up to eight thousand people nearly every day for over a month.⁷

Whitefield was the catalyst for what was called the Great Awakening. It captured the attention of the colonists from 1735–43. It was characterized by revivals and open-air meetings where personalities such as Whitefield and Johnathan Edwards delivered their messages.

⁷ M. A. Noll, "Whitefield, George," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 1170.

The soteriology of the First Awakening was exemplified in the practice of George Whitefield and the thought of Johnathan Edwards. Whitefield regularly preached that salvation belonged completely to God, and that humans did not possess the natural capacity to turn to Christ apart from God's saving call.

The First Awakening also brought to an end the Puritan conception of society as a beneficial union of ecclesiastical and public life. The leaders of the Awakening called for purity in the churches, even if it meant destroying Puritanism's historically close association between church and state.⁸

Whitefield's preaching had its influence on Hanover County, Virginia, and particularly on Patrick's mother, Sarah. She was drawn to the preaching of Presbyterian pastor, Samuel Davies whose homiletical style had tremendous influence on Henry.

Henry was captivated by Davies's messages from the pulpit as well as adopting some of his style of oratory in his later careers as lawyer and a burgess in the Virginia legislature.

Henry, who, either in Virginia or at the Continental Congress, listened to many of the best speakers in America, always said that Davies was the greatest orator he ever heard. Henry was eleven years old when Davies started his crusade in Hanover, twenty-three when Davies left to assume the presidency of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton. It indeed seemed that God had given Patrick a superlative tutor and mentor in oratory during his formative years. If he could not study rhetoric in Athens and Rhodes or listen to a Marcus Antonius and Lucius Crassus, as did Cicero, still he was singularly fortunate for a backcountry lad.⁹

From his childhood to international prominence, Patrick Henry was influenced by a number of contributing forces: the Great Awakening and the impact of George Whitefield, the preaching of Samuel Davies, the guidance and leadership of his mother, Sarah Henry, and the influence of the Word of God upon his soul.

⁸ Ibid., "Great Awakening," 483.

⁹ Robert Douthat Meade, *Patrick Henry: Patriot in the Making*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1957), 71.

Might not the depth of Henry's religious convictions and the peculiar admixture of constant self-questioning and self-judgment be the real source of his amazing power of oratorical ability—which ability, more than any other one single factor, had won for him a reputation in the annals of American history? The overwhelming mass of tributes to Henry's speaking ability defy the imagination of the reader. The bitterest of Henry's personal enemies heralded him as the foremost of American orators of his day. He was labeled by John Randolph as "Shakespeare and Garrick¹⁰ combined."

The tributes of the founding fathers of America to Henry's oratorical abilities filled pages in the works of biographers. Henry's bitterest critic, Thomas Jefferson, wrote years later in his autobiography, "I attended the debate at the door of the lobby of the House of Burgesses, and heard the splendid display of Mr. Henry's talents as a popular orator. He appeared to me to speak as Homer wrote."¹¹

The Christianity of Patrick Henry was a comprehensive world-view that shaped his perspective on every area of his life, including his politics. The modern notion that "religion and politics don't mix" was an idea completely foreign to Henry and many of his co-patriots. On the contrary, their religion—Christianity of the Bible—was the foundation of their political and social philosophy.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here. —Patrick Henry

8. The Virginia Convention:

Visual:
The Virginia Convention:
Names &
Counties of
those who
spoke in the
debate.

There were 120 delegates to the Virginia Convention including Tories and Whigs. Men of differing opinions but patriots all. Men who were loyal to the Crown and to Parliament but who were frustrated and bewildered by the slow but steady erosion of their freedoms over the past decade.

On every occasion of governmental encroachment they along with the members of other colonial governments, had petitioned the Crown for redress of grievances.

¹⁰ "David Garrick 1717–1779, Hereford, Herefordshire, England. English actor, producer, and dramatist. Introduced a revolutionary new style of natural, interpretive acting and initiated other reforms in staging. Regarded as one of the greatest actors in the history of the English stage" (*Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary* [Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Publishers, 1995], 401).

¹¹ James M. Wells, *The Christian Philosophy of Patrick Henry*, ed. Carris J. Kocher (Concordville, Penn.: Bill of Rights Bicentennial Committee, 2004), 18.

On Thursday, March 23, 1775 at 10 o'clock A.M., **Peyton Randolph**, acting president of the convention, brought the fourth session of the convention to order.

The first to gain the floor was a Tory from Caroline County, **Edmund Pendleton**. He spoke in very gentlemanly phrases about the “unhappy contest between Great Britain and her colonies.” He referred to a resolution passed in December of 1774 by the Jamaican assembly which supported the colonies claims on constitutional grounds.

Pendleton concluded his remarks by wishing, “That the assembly be assured that it is the most ardent wish of this colony to see a speedy return to those halcyon days when we lived a free and happy people.”

Robert Carter Nicholas, a Tory from James City, was recognized next. He seconded the resolution which was adopted.

At this point **Patrick Henry**, a Whig from Hanover County, was recognized:

“I could but unite in the vote of thanks for the truly patriotic address of the Legislature of Jamaica. That address was noble and inspiring, but in my opinion, it is absurd to rest quietly expecting a return of the halcyon days of old. I beg to offer the following resolutions:

“Resolved, That a well-regulated militia is the natural strength and only security of a free government;

“That the establishment of such a militia is, at this time, peculiarly necessary for the protection and defense of the country.

“Resolved, therefore, That this Colony be immediately put into a state of defense and that a committee be named by the Convention to prepare a plan for embodying, arming and disciplining such a number of men as may be sufficient for that purpose.”

Payton Randolph then recognized **Richard Henry Lee**, a Whig from Westmoreland County:

“I rise to second the resolutions of the gentleman from Hanover. I think they are timely and highly important. No member can question the fact that our state of affairs is very alarming. We use but a natural right in making provision for our protection, we mean no aggression, no violence, no treason, but if the powers in England choose to regard this action as such, on them will fall the responsibility of the course taken by them.”

The first to take opposition to Henry and Lee was **Benjamin Harrison**, a Tory from Charles City:

“I desire to raise my voice in opposition to the adoption of the resolutions at this time. I consider them as rash and inexpedient. The report from England, as we all know, is that our petition to the King passed at the late Convention has been graciously received. No sufficient time has passed for a reply to come to us. I am as warm a friend of liberty as any man in this Convention, and as little disposed to submit, but national civility and filial respect demand that we should do nothing hastily, offer no provocation. I speak as a farmer, for the farmers of Charles City County and throughout the Colony, and I deprecate any step which will stop the production of tobacco and corn and reduce the people to starvation.”

At this point **Thomas Jefferson**, a Whig from Albemarle, was recognized by President Randolph:

“I am sorry to disagree with my friend from Charles City. I love him for his great heart and know his sturdy character for independence. But, sir, the colony should be prepared. I recognize no allegiance to Parliament—only to the King of England. England is tied to the Empire by the tie of the Crown only and is a self-governing dominion; and I regard these acts of Parliament—attempting to tax our people and shutting up the port of Boston, as the acts of a foreign power which should, by all the means in our power, be resisted. I call earnestly upon the Convention to support the resolution.”

With that **Edmund Pendleton**, the Tory from Caroline and the one who posed the Jamaican resolution, again gained the floor:

“I hope this Convention will proceed slowly before rushing the country into war. Is this a moment to disgust our friends in England who are laboring for the repeal of the unjust taxes which afflict us, to extinguish all the conspiring sympathies which are working in our favor, to turn their friendship into hatred, their pity into revenge? Are we ready for war? Where are our stores—where are our arms—where are our soldiers—where our money, the sinews of war? They are nowhere to be found in sufficient force or abundance to give us reasonable hope of successful resistance. In truth, we are poor and defenseless, and should strike when absolutely necessary—not before. And yet the gentlemen in favor of this resolution talk of assuming the front of war, and assuming it, too, against a nation one of the most formidable in the world. A nation ready and armed at all points; her navy riding in triumph in every sea; her armies never marching but to certain victory. For God’s sake, Mr. President, let us be patient—let us allow all reasonable delay, and then if the worse come to the worst, we will have no feeling of blame. Give a little time, take no hostile action, and these tyrants will be overthrown in England and men in sympathy with America will assume authority. Our ills will pass away and the sunshine of the halcyon days of old will come back again. We must arm, you say; but gentlemen must remember that blows are apt to follow the arming, and blood will follow blows, and, sir, when this occurs the dogs of war will be loosed,¹² friends will be converted into enemies, and this flourishing country will be swept with a tornado of death and destruction.”

Needful to offer a second harrumph to the warmongers, **Robert Carter Nicholas**, the Tory from James City, was again recognized by the President:

¹² “The dogs of war” is a phrase spoken by Mark Antony in Act 3, Scene 1, Line 273 of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: “Cry, ‘Havoc,’ and let slip the dogs of war.” In the scene, Mark Antony is alone with Julius Caesar's body, shortly after Caesar's assassination.

“I agree heartily with the gentleman from Caroline. I consider the resolutions of the gentleman from Hanover as hasty, rash, and unreasonable. But more than that, I deem the militia upon which the gentleman depends as wholly insufficient. It will prove the bane of the war into which the gentleman from Hanover wishes to hurry us. Sir, I hope this resolution will be voted down but, sir, if the colony is to be armed, let us do it in the proper way. Let Virginia, if she means war, raise at once a force of 10,000 men to be trained and serve for the war. Short enlistments, such as this gentleman contemplates, will prove the bane of the war. But I speak for peace—not war, till it is forced upon us.”

Having remained quite during the debate, **Thomas Nelson**, Whig from York County and later a signatory on the Declaration of Independence and Governor of Virginia, was given permission to speak:

“I am a merchant of Yorktown, but I am a Virginian first. Let my trade perish. I call God to witness that if any British troops are landed in the County of York, of which I am a lieutenant, I will wait for no orders, but will summon the militia and drive the invaders into the sea.”

With Pendleton still recommending patience, Nicholas hopefully exaggerating the need for the availability of 10-thousand trained troops, and Nelson vowing to advance upon the British without delay, **George Washington**, a Whig from Fairfax, asked for permission to speak:

“Mr. President, I am a soldier and believe in being prepared. For that and other reasons, I will give my vote for the resolutions of the gentleman from Hanover. Rather than submit to the present condition of things, I will raise one thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march myself at their head to the relief of Boston.”¹³

¹³ Robert Lecky, Jr., *The Proceedings of the Virginia Convention in the Town of Richmond on the 23rd of March 1775* (Richmond: St. John’s Church, 1927), 7–13.

When Washington made that pledge of support, Patrick Henry saw the opportunity to strike. Obtaining permission to speak, he delivered the most important oration in our nation's history. Its power of presentation matching the power of his logical rationales convinced the Convention to approve his resolutions. Washington began to recruit soldiers, armed resistance with the Mother Country was put in play, and Virginia loosed those "dogs of war."