The Origins of the American Revolution

The Fight for Freedom 1765 - 1776

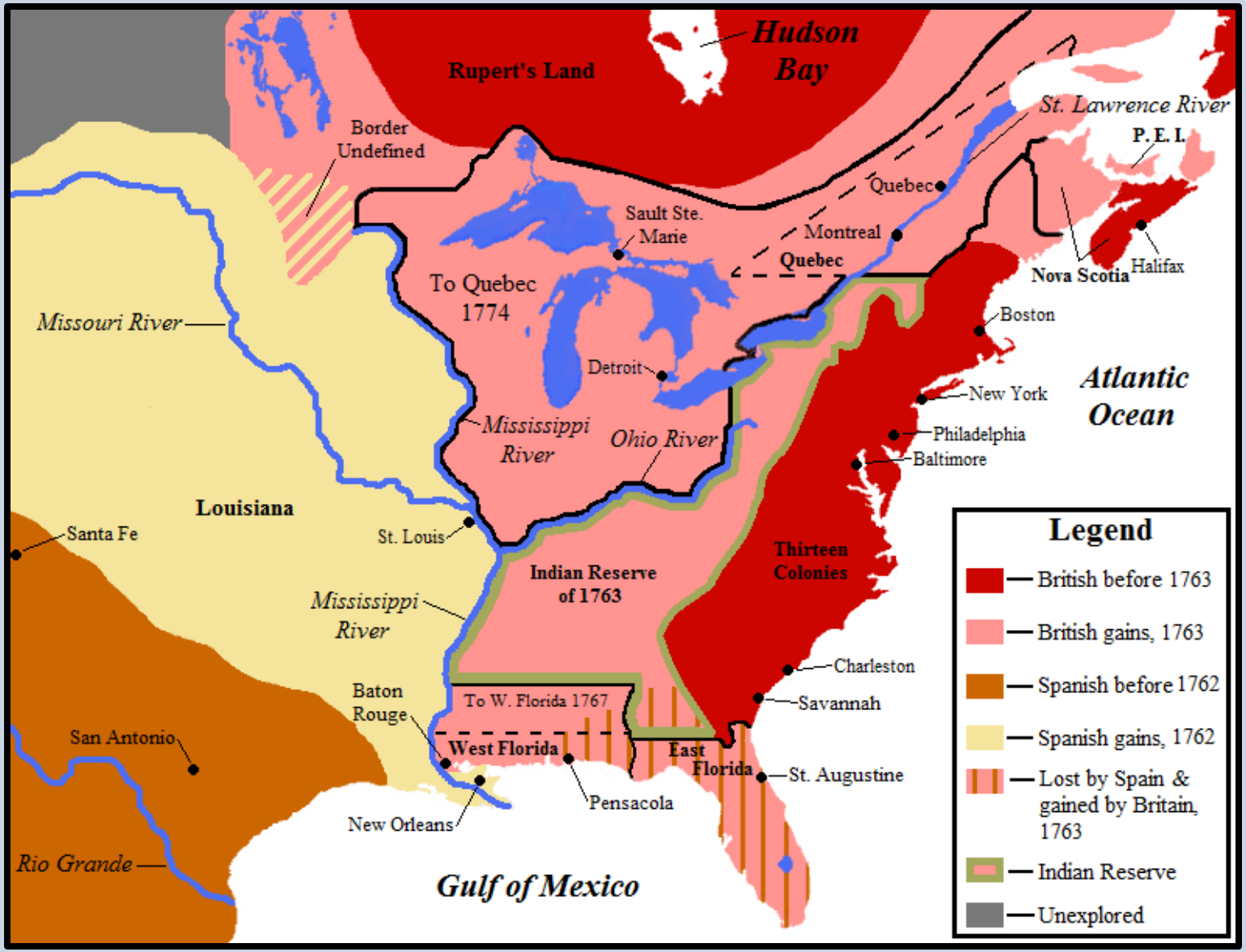
"The strength of patriotism, however it might seem to slumber, was ready to break forth in every crisis of danger, as a beam of light ceases to be invisible when it has something to shine upon. The people never lost buoyant self-reliance, nor the readiness to make sacrifices for the public good."

History of the United States, Vol. 6.
George Bancroft

In early 1763, the victorious British signed a peace treaty with France and other European states putting an end to the Seven Years War – mostly fought in Europe - and the French and Indian War fought on the American continent.

The French ceded a vast amount of territory on the American continent – all the land between the Mississippi River and the Appalachian Mountains and large swaths of Canada – to the British.

Colonists, who considered themselves British, were delighted with the Empire's military victory.



Two years later, to recover the cost of the French and Indian War (1754 – 1763) and fund 10,000 British soldiers stationed in the American colonies, Parliament passed The Stamp Act – a tax on newspapers, magazines and legal documents – and lit a slow-burning fuse that exploded into the American Revolution.

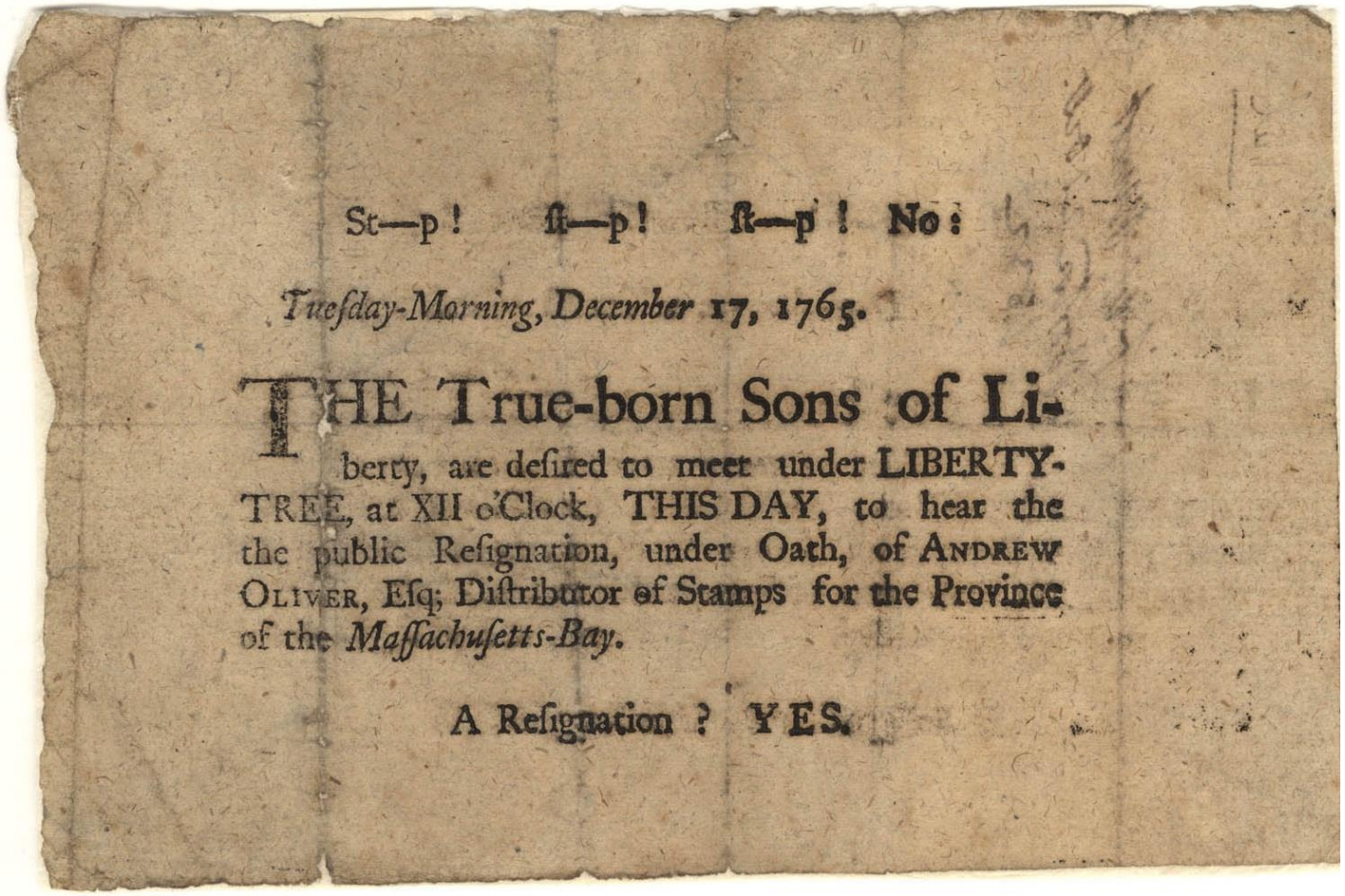
When Charles Townshend Introduced The Stamp Act in Parliament, he spoke derisively of the American colonists.

Isaac Barré, a member of Parliament from Ireland, retorted, "They fled from your tyranny to a then uncultivated and unhospitable country... And yet, actuated by the principles of true English liberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure."

Barré then coined the phrase "Sons of Liberty" which was enthusiastically embraced by colonists.

Charles Townshend

Isaac Barré



St—p! ſt—p! ſt—p! No:

Tueſday-Morning, December 17, 1765.

THE True-born Sons of Liberty, are deſired to meet under LIBERTY-TREE, at XII o'Clock, THIS DAY, to hear the the public Reſignation, under Oath, of ANDREW OLIVER, Eſq; Diſtributor of Stamps for the Province of the *Maſſachuſetts-Bay*.

A Reſignation? YES.

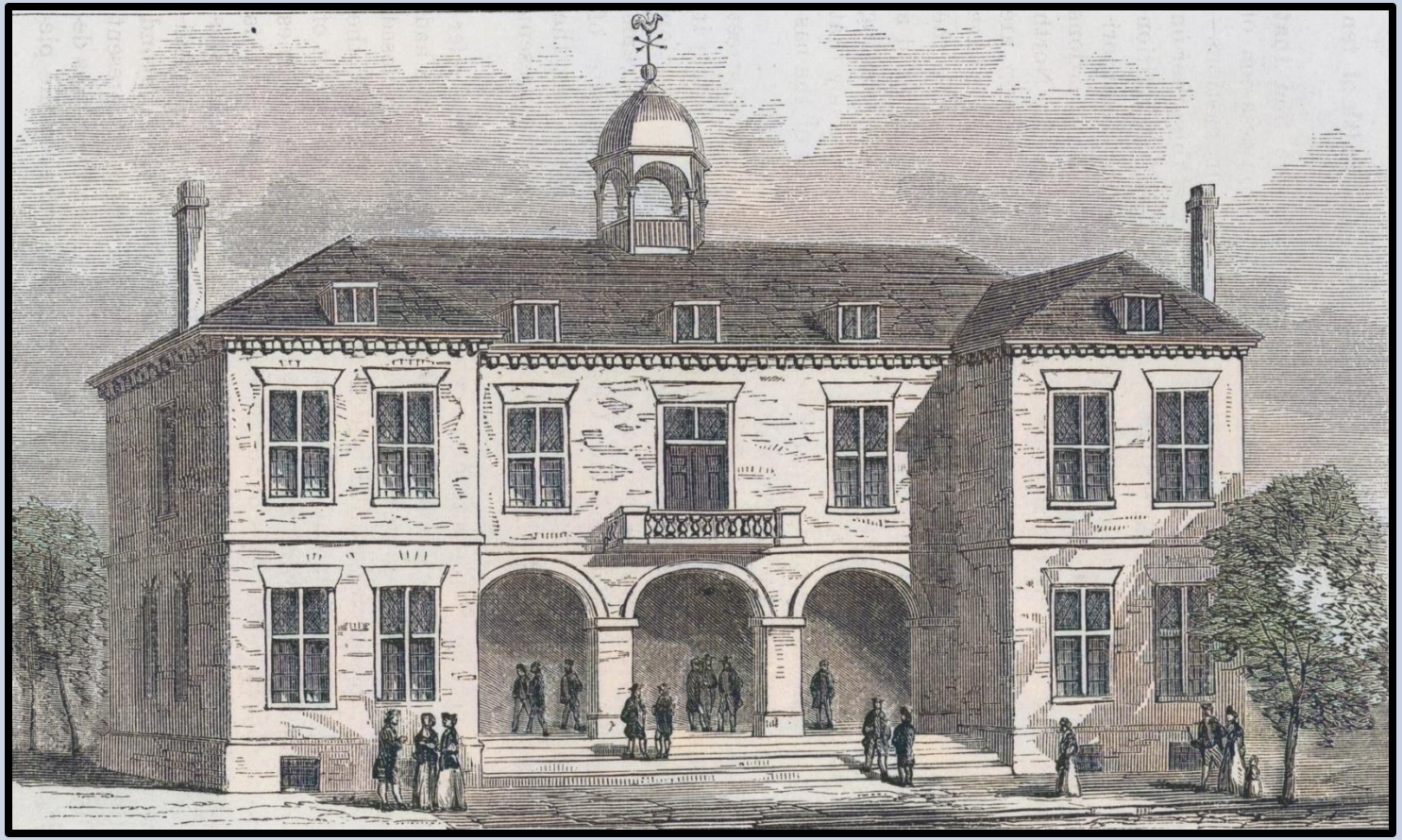
The Stamp Act provoked outrage and cries of "No taxation without representation" – a key provision of Britain's Magna Carta.

In Boston, a loose-knit, somewhat clandestine group sprang up - the Sons of Liberty - and spread throughout the colonies.

Virginia rapidly responded to The Stamp Act. The House of Burgesses in Williamsburg passed the Virginia Resolves which asserted that, under British law, Virginians could only be taxed by an assembly they had elected.

As the issue was debated a young law student named Thomas Jefferson stood in the doorway admiring the fiery rhetoric of Patrick Henry.

Colonial Williamsburg at Night

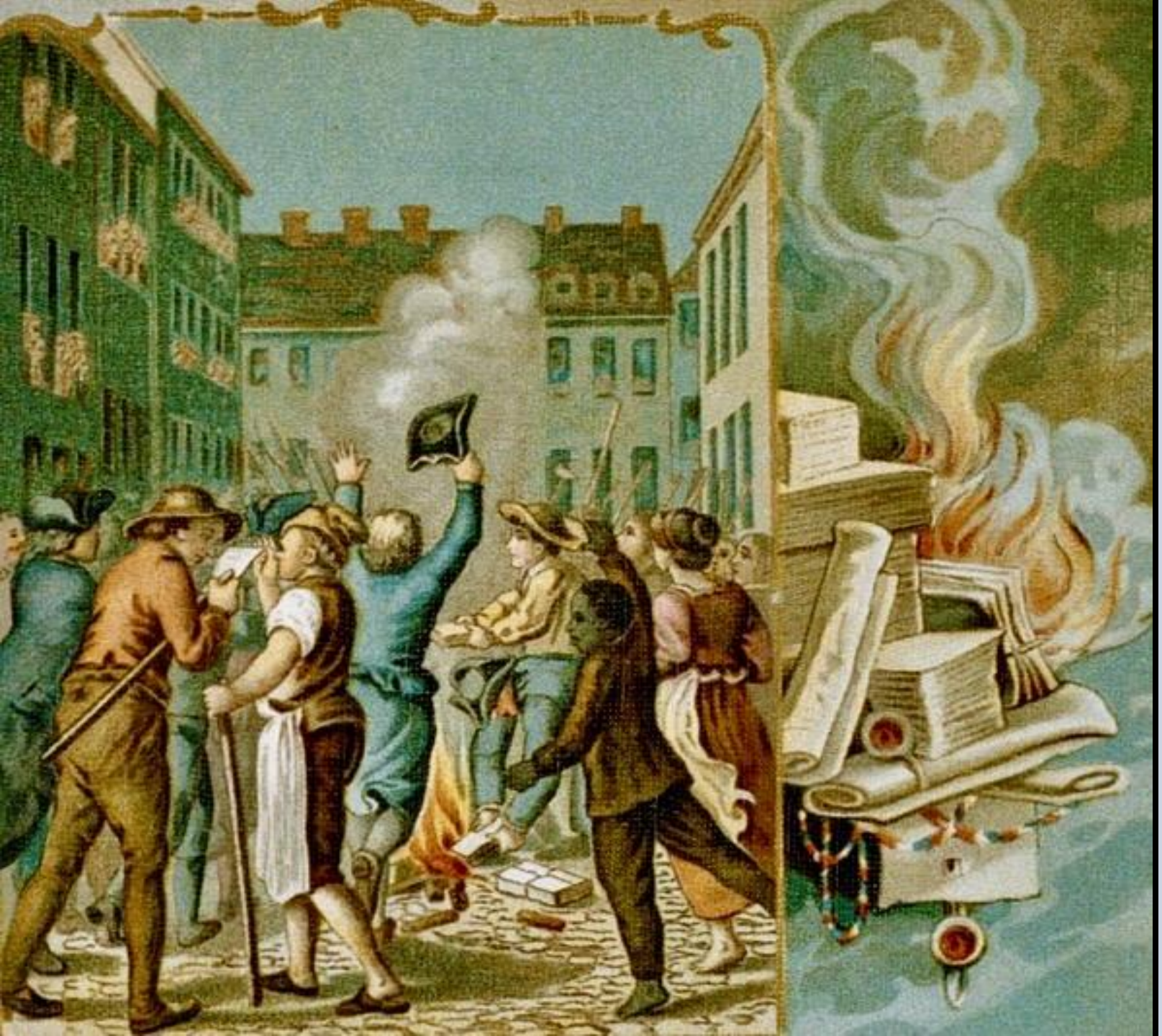


Using a communication system organized by Samuel Adams, the Massachusetts Assembly sent a letter to the other colonies – including British colonies in Canada - proposing a meeting in New York to "consult together on the present circumstances of the colonies."

From October 7 – 25, 1765, for the first time, colonial representatives gathered to discuss common concerns. The Stamp Act Congress met at Federal Hall on Wall Street.

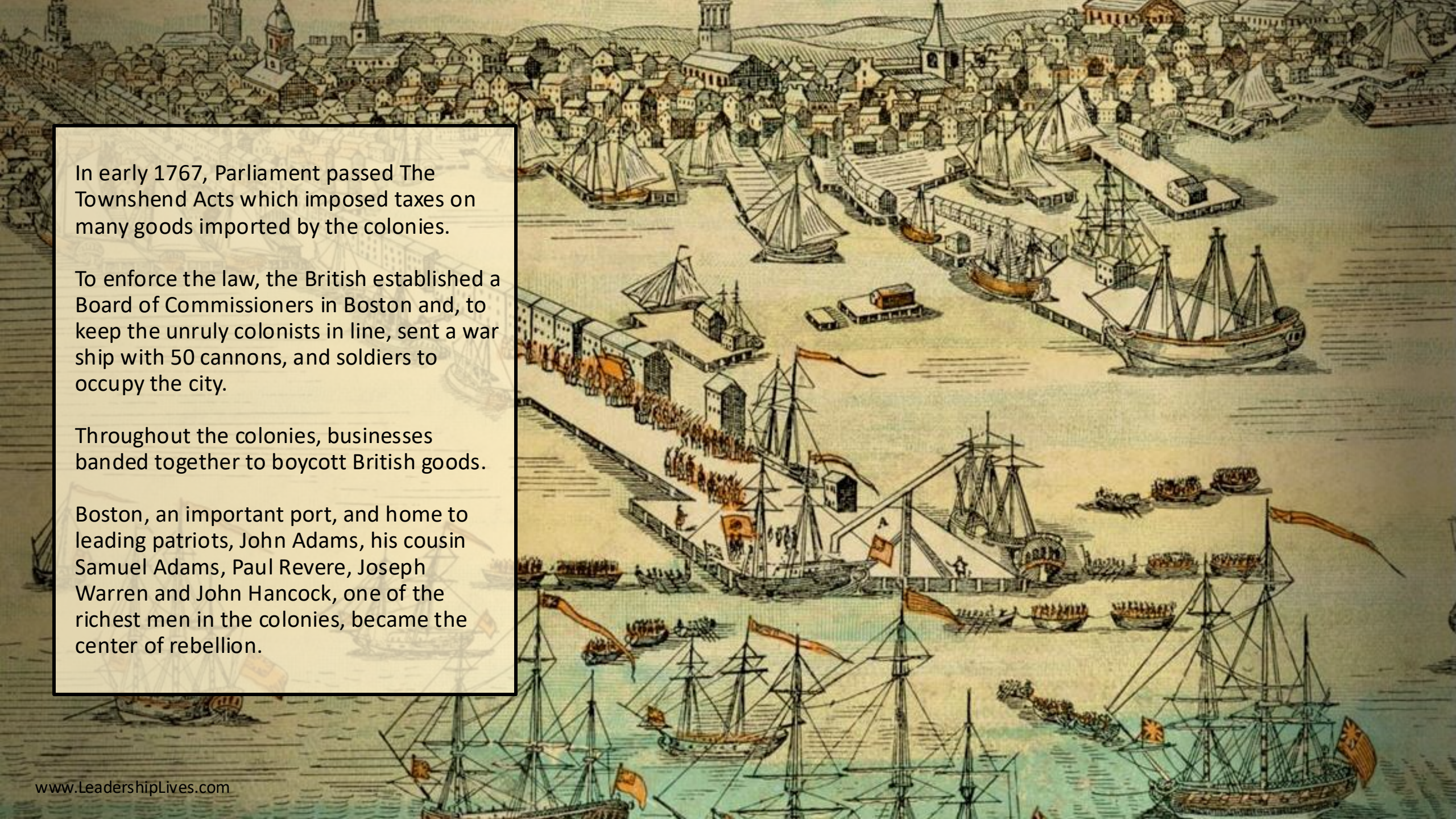
Nine colonies participated –Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and South Carolina.

Georgia and Virginia were prevented from attending by their governors.



Pressured by British businesses, who feared boycotts of their products, The Stamp Act was repealed in March 1766.

But, at the same time, Parliament passed The Declaratory Act which asserted "full power and authority to make laws and statutes ... to bind the colonies and people of America ... in all cases whatsoever."



In early 1767, Parliament passed The Townshend Acts which imposed taxes on many goods imported by the colonies.

To enforce the law, the British established a Board of Commissioners in Boston and, to keep the unruly colonists in line, sent a war ship with 50 cannons, and soldiers to occupy the city.

Throughout the colonies, businesses banded together to boycott British goods.

Boston, an important port, and home to leading patriots, John Adams, his cousin Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, Joseph Warren and John Hancock, one of the richest men in the colonies, became the center of rebellion.

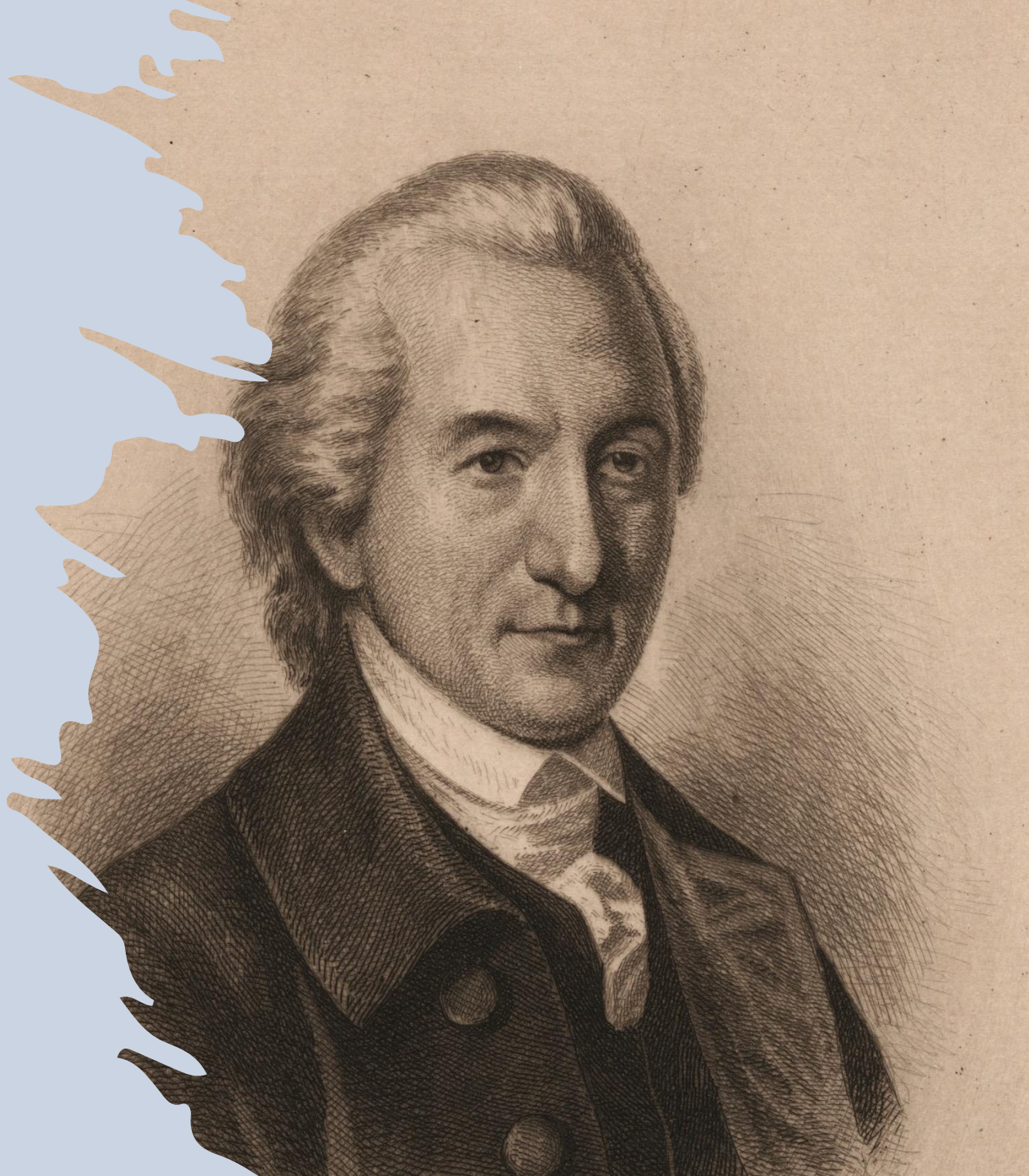
In response to The Townshend Acts, "A Farmer" from Pennsylvania began writing anonymous letters that shaped the thinking of colonists on British policies.

Initially published in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle,* the influential letters spread throughout the colonies and were published as a pamphlet – a precursor of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*.

The "Farmer," was a lawyer from Philadelphia and Delaware, John Dickinson, who served as a delegate to the 1765 Stamp Act Congress, the First and Second Continental Congresses, and in the Revolutionary army.

In his twelfth and final letter, Dickinson wrote, "For my part, I am resolved strenuously to contend for the liberty delivered down to me from my ancestors; but whether I shall do this effectually or not, depends on you, my countrymen."

The "Farmer's" letters inspired colonists to organize "nonimportation groups" to protest British taxes.



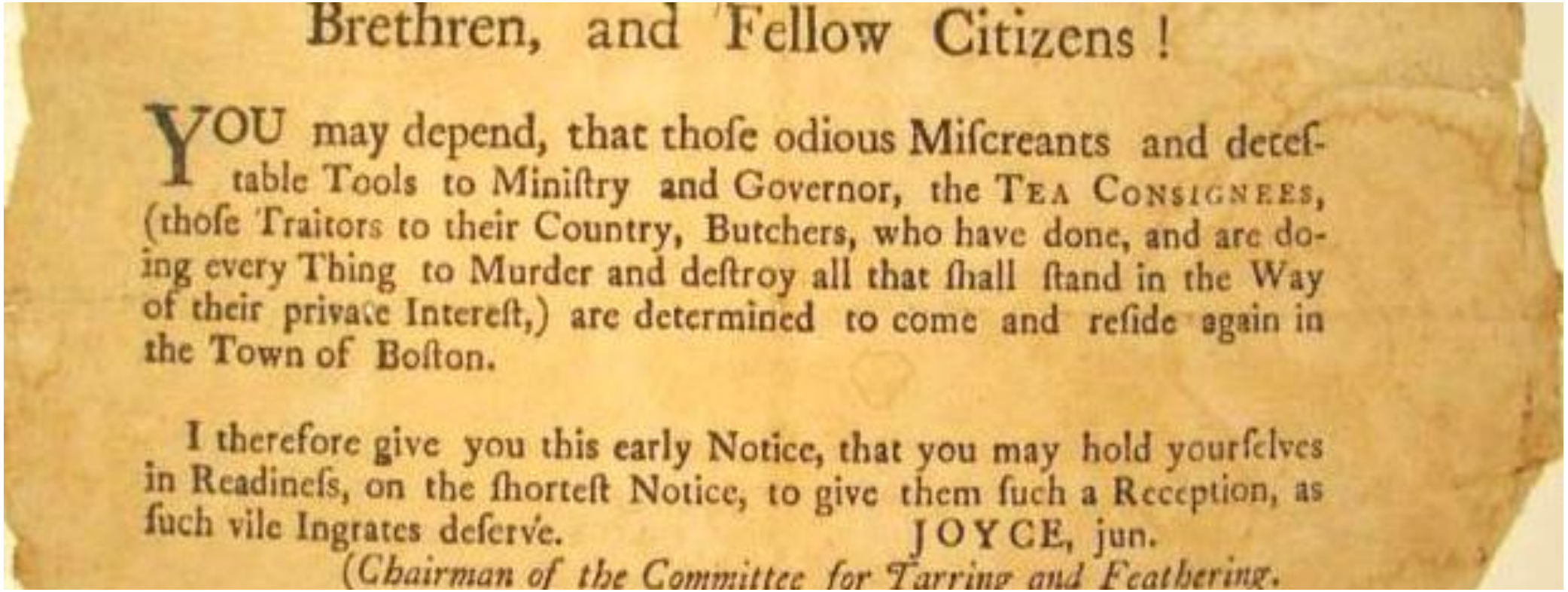
On the evening of March 5, 1770, a 13-year-old apprentice began taunting a British soldier guarding the British Custom House in Boston. The situation escalated.

Over the next few hours, 300 – 400 colonists gathered to throw snowballs and other projectiles at the soldiers.

In the end, five colonists were dead, and two soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter. The British called it "The Incident on King Street."

Paul Revere and Sam Adams, members of the Sons of Liberty, called it "The Boston Massacre."

Three years later, Parliament passed The Tea Act to help the failing East India Company. Colonists were enraged and major ports refused to allow tea to be delivered.



Brethren, and Fellow Citizens !

YOU may depend, that thoſe odious Miſcreants and deteſtable Tools to Miniſtry and Governor, the TEA CONSIGNEES, (thoſe Traitors to their Country, Butchers, who have done, and are doing every Thing to Murder and deſtroy all that ſhall ſtand in the Way of their private Intereſt,) are determined to come and reſide again in the Town of Boſton.

I therefore give you this early Notice, that you may hold yourſelves in Readineſs, on the ſhorteſt Notice, to give them ſuch a Reception, as ſuch vile Ingrates deſerve.

JOYCE, jun.

(Chairman of the Committee for Tarring and Feathering.

Spurred by Samuel Adams, on the night of December 16, 1773, the Sons of Liberty, disguised as Mohawk Indians, held a Tea Party in Boston Harbor.

Boarding three ships, the *Dartmouth*, *Eleanor,* and *Beaver*, they threw 342 crates of tea overboard. The stage was now set for the American Revolution.

"This is the most magnificent Movement of all. There is a Dignity, a Majesty, a Sublimity, in this last Effort of the Patriots, that I greatly admire. The People should never rise, without doing something to be remembered—something notable And striking. This Destruction of the Tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important Consequences, and so lasting, that I can't but consider it as an Epoch in History."

John Adams
Diary entry, December 17, 1773

In angry response, Parliament rapidly passed a series of new laws the colonists dubbed The Intolerable Acts. Most notably:

The Boston Port Act closed the port of Boston as of June 1, 1774, until colonists paid for the tea that had been destroyed.

The Massachusetts Government Act revoked the colony's charter of 1691 and crushed almost all forms of self-government.

The Administration of Justice Act permitted Royal governors to move trials of British officials to any location. George Washington called this the "Murder Act." He believed it allowed British officials to escape justice.

The Quebec Act expanded the territory of the Province of Quebec into what is now Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, parts of Minnesota and Indiana voiding the land claims of the Ohio Company.

The Intolerable Acts prompted colonists to redouble efforts to strengthen local militias.

In 1754, with extraordinary prescience, Benjamin Franklin designed a woodcut, *Join, or Die*. Twenty years later, shocked by Parliament's decision to close the port of Boston, the colonists chose to unite.

In 1764, the redoubtable Samuel Adams organized "committees of correspondence" to coordinate colonial resistance. Now this underground network of 7,000 to 8,000 patriots called for a meeting – the First Continental Congress.

The First Continental Congress met from September 5 – October 26, 1774, at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia.

56 elected delegates from twelve colonies participated. Only Georgia, where Loyalist sympathies prevailed, abstained.

Congress's first order of business was to endorse the Suffolk Resolves.

Initiated by four Massachusetts counties, the Resolves called for a boycott of British goods and urged each colony to organize and train a militia.

As the delegates gathered in Philadelphia, British General Thomas Gage, in charge of enforcing The Intolerable Acts in Boston, ordered his soldiers to remove gunpowder stored in nearby Somerville.

Alarm and outrage was immediate. Militiamen by the thousands headed towards Boston in a foreshadowing of the Spring 1775 battles at Lexington and Concord.

John Adams wrote to Abigail from Philadelphia:

"When the horrid news was brought here of the bombardment of Boston, which made us completely miserable for two days, we saw proofs both of the sympathy and the resolution of the continent.

War! war! war! was the cry, and it was pronounced in a tone which would have done honor to the oratory of a Briton or a Roman."

Highly-regarded Peyton Randolph of Virginia was unanimously elected president of the First Continental Congress and re-elected president by the Second Continental Congress.

Randolph was Speaker of Virginia's House of Burgesses as had been his father, grandfather and great grandfather.

In contrast to the inflammatory rhetoric of fellow Virginian Patrick Henry, Randolph was a voice of calm and reason.

In October 1775, Randolph suffered a stroke and died while having dinner with his cousin, Thomas Jefferson.

John Hancock replaced Randolph as president of the Second Continental Congress.

Congress appointed Robert Livingston from New York's Hudson River Valley, to write an Address to the People of Great Britain explaining the contentious issues from the colonists' perspective.

In his thoughtfully worded document, Livingston wrote, "The cause of America is now the object of universal attention; it has at length become very serious. This unhappy country has not only been oppressed, but abused and misrepresented; and the duty we owe to ourselves and posterity, to your interest, and the general welfare of the British Empire, leads us to address you on this very important subject."

Not ready to declare independence, the primary goal of the First Continental Congress was to send a letter to King George III seeking repeal of The Townshend Acts and reconciliation.

To that end, a committee was formed to write a Petition to the King stating the colonists' loyalty to the crown and desire to stay connected to Britain.

In fits and starts, the Petition made its way to London where it was finally presented to Parliament on January 19, 1775, and overlooked, in Benjamin Franklin's words amidst "a great Heap of letters."

In London, only Edmund Burke, known as "a friend of America" recognized the conflict had escalated to a new level.
His words of warning in Parliament fell on deaf ears.

In March 1775, Virginians – including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson - met at St. John's Episcopal Church in Richmond to avoid interference from the royal governor.

Speaking in support of arming Virginia's militia, Patrick Henry concluded with the immortal words, "Give me liberty or give me death." and swayed the vote in support of the cause.

The Virginians then voted to urge the Second Continental Congress to declare independence from Britain when the delegates reconvened in Philadelphia in May.

In Massachusetts, once again, trouble was brewing.

At the direction of the government in London, the British were planning to squash the Massachusetts Provincial Congress which was meeting in Concord where a large stockpile of the patriots' weapons was stored.

The president of the Provincial Congress was Joseph Warren, a 34-year-old physician and widower with four children. Warren sent Paul Revere to warn the Provincial Congress that the British intended to seize the weapons and arrest and imprison Samuel Adams and John Hancock. The patriots hid the weapons.

A week later, on the night of April 18, 1775, Warren notified Revere that the British were ready to march to Concord. The question was which route would they take.

Revere had already arranged with the sexton at the Old North Church to post a signal to indicate which way the British were going – "one if by land, two if by sea." When Revere spotted two lanterns, he slipped by the British in a rowboat and crossed the river to Charlestown.

Avoiding British sentries, Revere rode through Somerville, Medford and Arlington shouting "the Regulars are coming out!" As Revere spread the alarm, as many as 40 colonists jumped on their horses to alert others.

In the early hours of April 19, 1775, 700 well-trained British troops marched eighteen miles from Cambridge to Concord.

In Lexington, the soldiers fought a brief battle with the militia. Eight patriots were killed and nine were wounded.

The news tore through the region. When the soldiers reached Concord two hours later, the colonists were better prepared.

In Concord, a unit of British soldiers guarded the North Bridge. Militia units took up a position nearby.

When the patriots saw smoke rising over Concord, they thought the town was being burned. They moved forward. The British retreated but paused to pull up planks so the colonists could not follow.

A colonist yelled at the soldiers to stop tearing up the planks. The British fired and killed two militia men and wounded one.

The Minute Men fired back – "the shot heard round the world."

The patriots' gunfire wounded four of the eight British officers present and seven soldiers.

The British retreated. The militia chased them. In Lexington, the British were reinforced by fresh units, but the Americans pressed on firing from behind trees and stone walls. By the time the British got back to Boston, almost 300 soldiers were dead, wounded, or had fled.

Patriots from all over New England rushed to join the fight. The numbers swelled. 20,000 patriots surrounded Boston and held the city under siege for the next ten months. The American Revolution had begun.

Inspired by the battles in Massachusetts, in May 1775, Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold and the Green Mountain Boys, surprised and captured Fort Ticonderoga and Fort Crown Point in upstate New York. It was the first-time colonists initiated military action against the British.

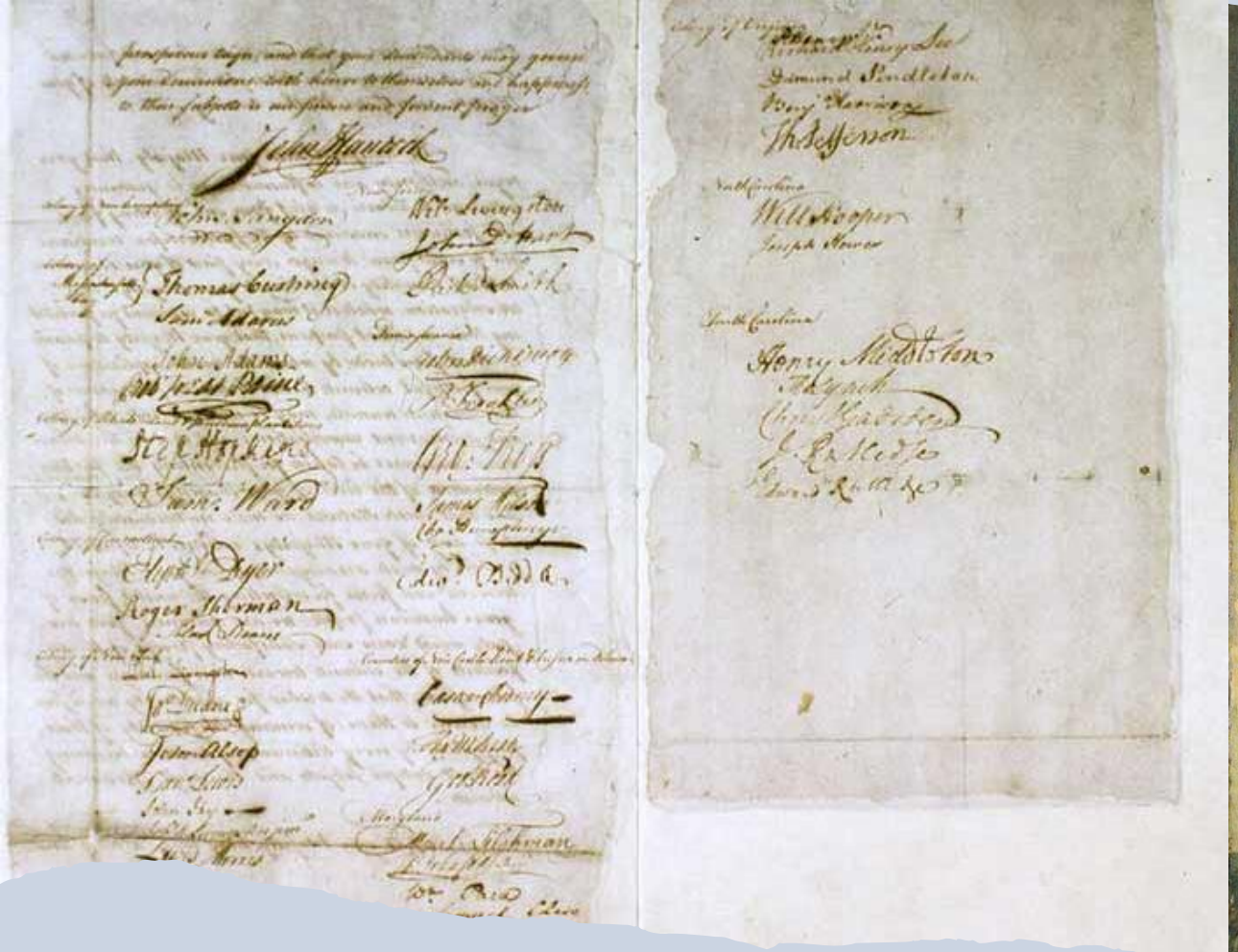
In addition to holding a large stash of armaments, Fort Ticonderoga was strategically located on Lake Champlain. Capturing the fort hindered British communication and blocked an attack on Boston from that direction.

On the same day Fort Ticonderoga was captured, May 10, 1775, delegates from twelve colonies gathered at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress.

This time, Georgia sent an observer. When Congress declared a ban on trade with Britain, Georgia became a full participant in the proceedings.

For the next six years, Congress remained in session, acting as a federal government – raising militias, appointing diplomats and drafting documents.

To avoid capture when the British seized Philadelphia, the representatives relocated to Baltimore and, later, to courthouses in York and Lancaster, PA before returning to the Pennsylvania State House.



In a futile effort to avoid war, on July 8, 1775, the Continental Congress sent The Olive Branch Petition, drafted by John Dickinson, to King George III.

The king refused to read the document when it arrived at Parliament on August 24th. In response to the news of the Battle of Bunker Hill, the king had already declared the colonies in rebellion.

In mid-June, colonists in Massachusetts became aware of a British plan to capture the hills surrounding the waterfront and seize control of Boston Harbor.

During the night,1200 patriots crept up Bunker and Breed's hills in Charlestown to fortify positions.

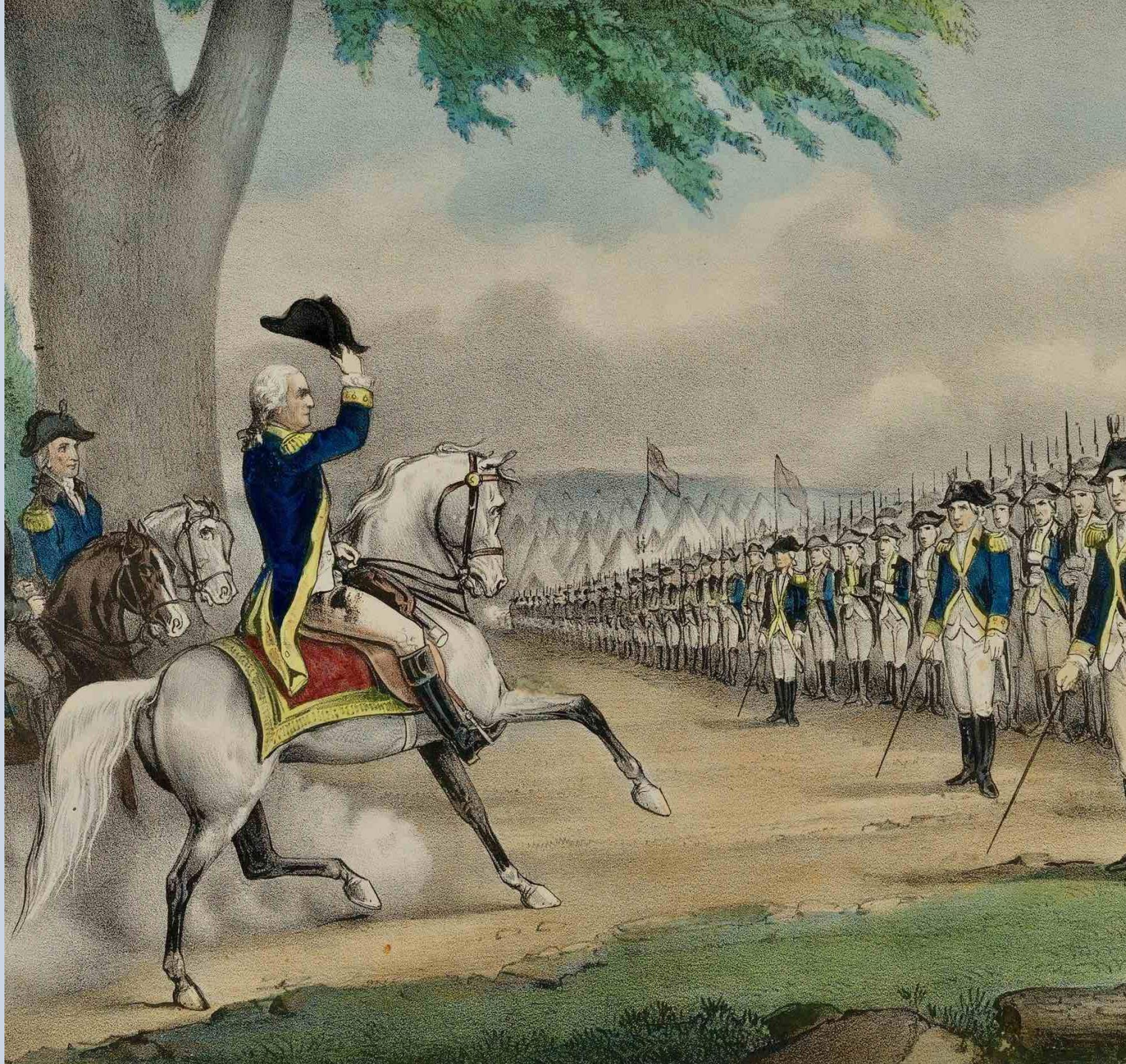
The British attacked on the morning of June 17th. A bloody battled ensued. The British won but at an enormous cost which influenced their future actions in New York and New Jersey. The outnumbered militia had proven their skill and determination against the world's premier fighting force.

The greatest loss for the patriots was the death of Joseph Warren. It was rumored that General Gage said that killing Warren was the equivalent of killing 500 colonists.

At the same time, in Philadelphia, the Continental Congress was voting to consolidate the regional militias into a Continental Army and approving John Adams' proposal to appoint "the modest and virtuous, the amiable, generous and brave George Washington"* to be Commander in Chief.

When Washington arrived in Cambridge on July 2nd and heard the gruesome details of the battle of Bunker Hill, he recognized it was time for the colonists "to shake off all connections with a state so unjust and unnatural.

*Letter to Abigail Adams, June 17, 1775

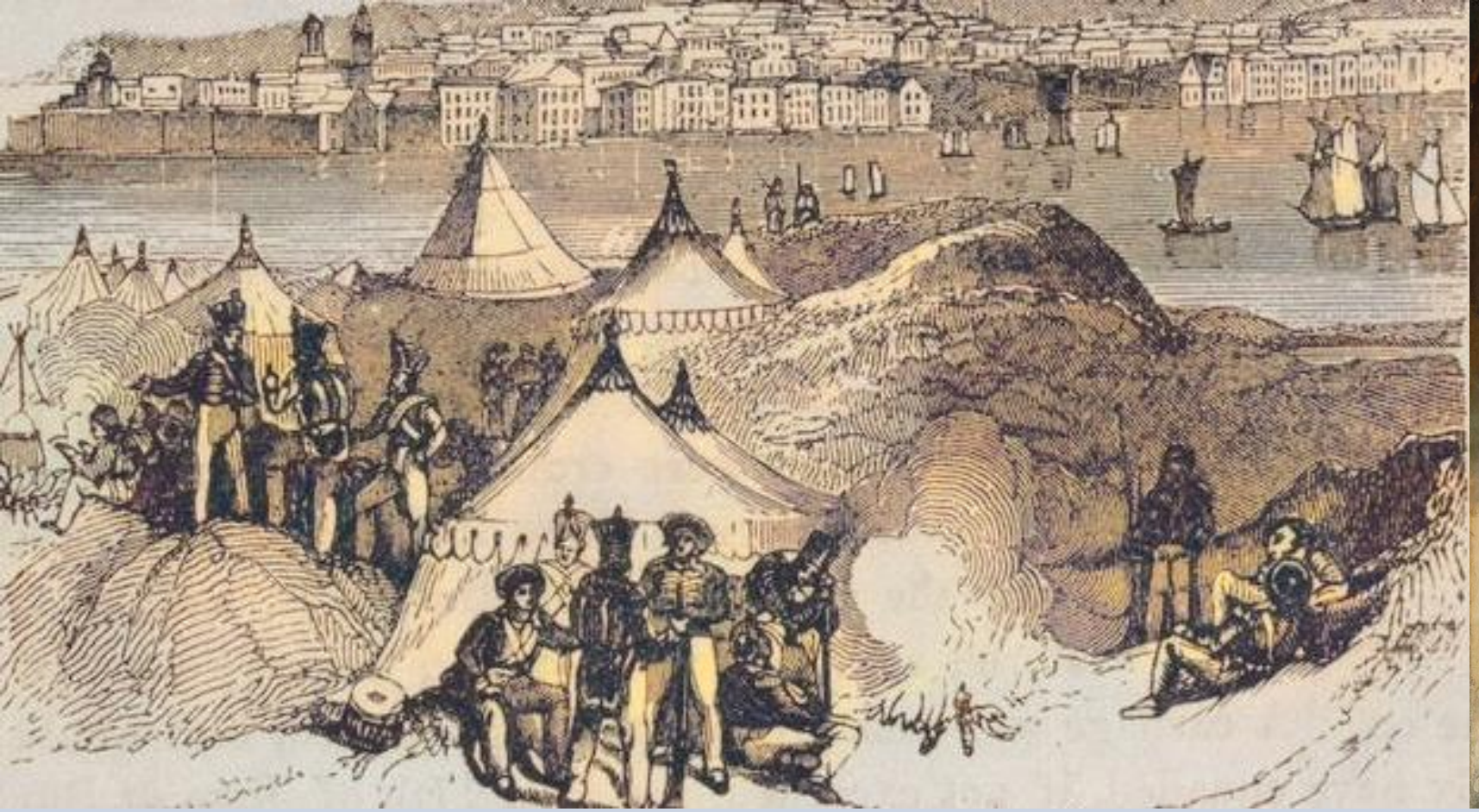


One of the first people Washington met was Henry Knox who had just turned 25.

Knox distinguished himself at Bunker Hill by managing the artillery. A former bookstore owner, Knox had a passion for mathematics, engineering and artillery.

A few months later, as the siege of Boston wore on, Knox suggested to Washington they bring the cannons and armaments from Fort Ticonderoga – 200 miles away - to Boston.

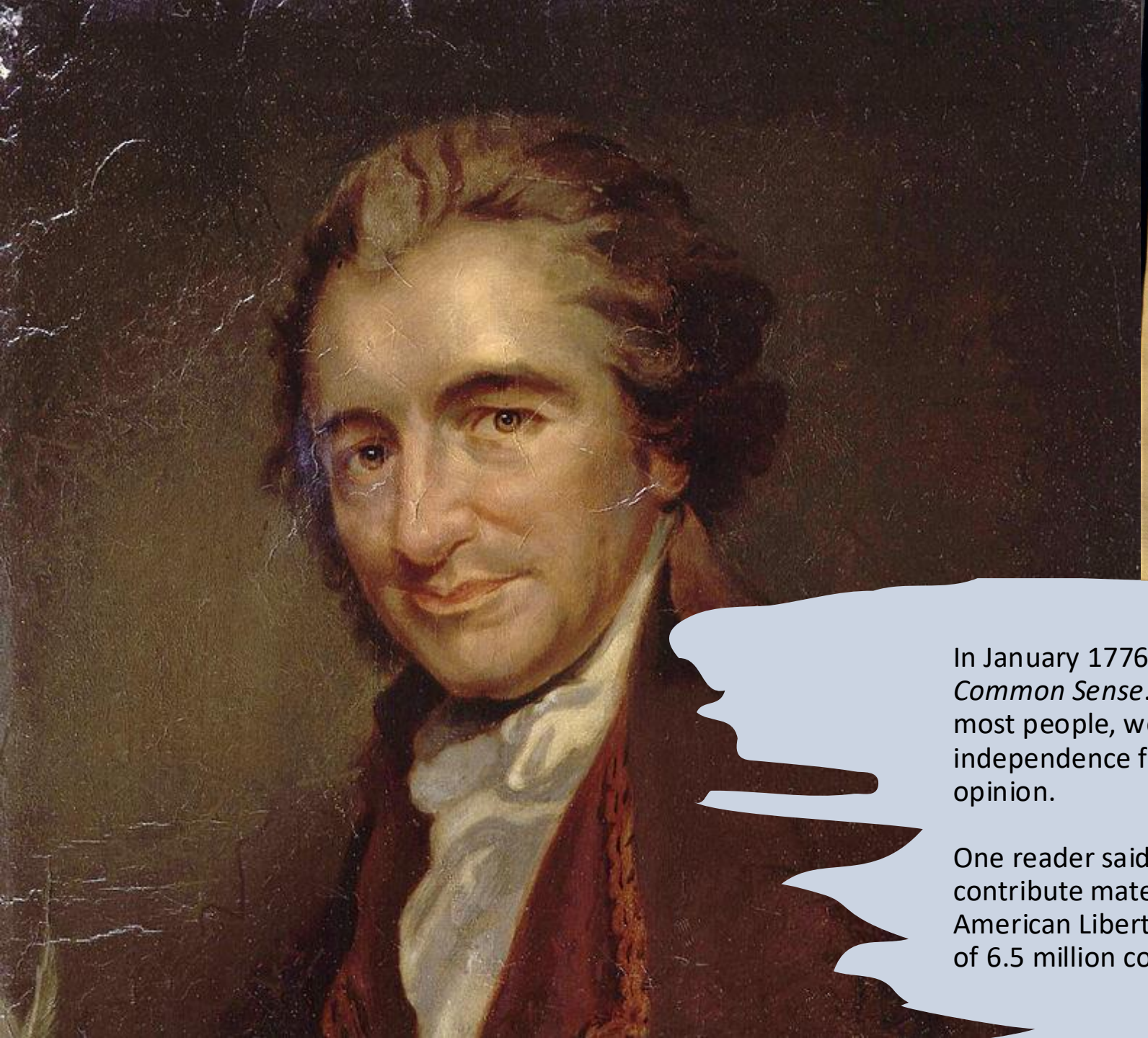
On December 5, 1775, Henry Knox and his team using oxen, began transporting 60 tons of cannons and other weapons across the icy waters and snow-covered mountains of New England. Six weeks later, on January 24, 1776, they arrived in Boston.

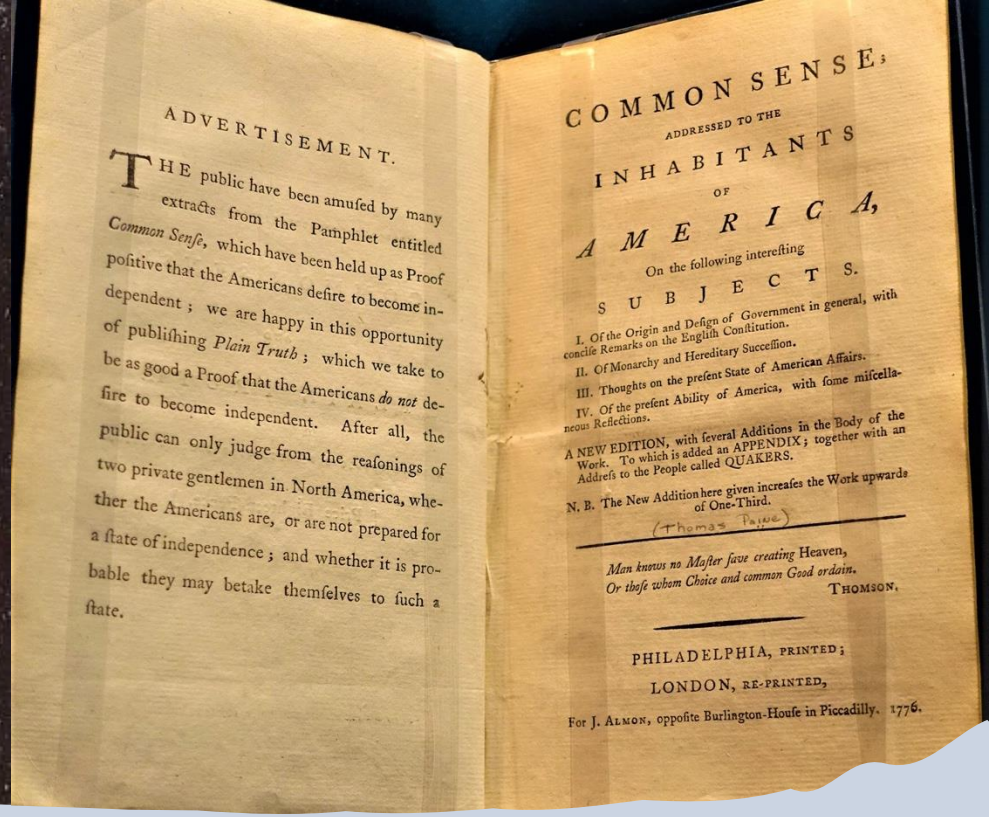


In early March, using a series of distractions and stealth methods, the patriots fortified Dorchester Heights with cannons from Fort Ticonderoga. British ships were no longer safe in Boston Harbor.

A few days later, General Washington received an unsigned letter. If the British were allowed to leave unmolested, they would not burn the city to the ground.

Nine years after the occupation of Boston began, the British evacuated the city on March 17, 1776.





ADVERTISEMENT.

THE public have been amuſed by many extracts from the Pamphlet entitled *Common Senſe*, which have been held up as Proof poſitive that the Americans deſire to become independent; we are happy in this opportunity of publiſhing *Plain Truth*; which we take to be as good a Proof that the Americans *do not* deſire to become independent. After all, the public can only judge from the reaſonings of two private gentlemen in North America, whether the Americans are, or are not prepared for a ſtate of independence; and whether it is probable they may betake themſelves to ſuch a ſtate.

COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

AMERICA,

On the following intereſting

SUBJECTS.

I. Of the Origin and Deſign of Government in general, with concife Remarks on the Engliſh Conſtitution.

II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succeſſion.

III. Thoughts on the preſent State of American Affairs.

IV. Of the preſent Ability of America, with ſome miſcellaneous Reflections.

A NEW EDITION, with ſeveral Additions in the Body of the Work. To which is added an APPENDIX; together with an Addreſs to the People called QUAKERS.

N. B. The New Addition here given increaſes the Work upwards of One-Third.

(Thomas Paine)

Man knows no Maſter ſave creating Heaven,
Or thoſe whom Choice and common Good ordain.
THOMSON.

PHILADELPHIA, PRINTED;

LONDON, RE-PRINTED,

For J. ALMON, oppoſite Burlington-Houſe in Piccadilly. 1776.

In January 1776, Thomas Paine published a 47-page pamphlet, *Common Sense*. Written in the style of a sermon, while many, if not most people, were uncertain about the wisdom of declaring independence from Britain, *Common Sense* galvanized public opinion.

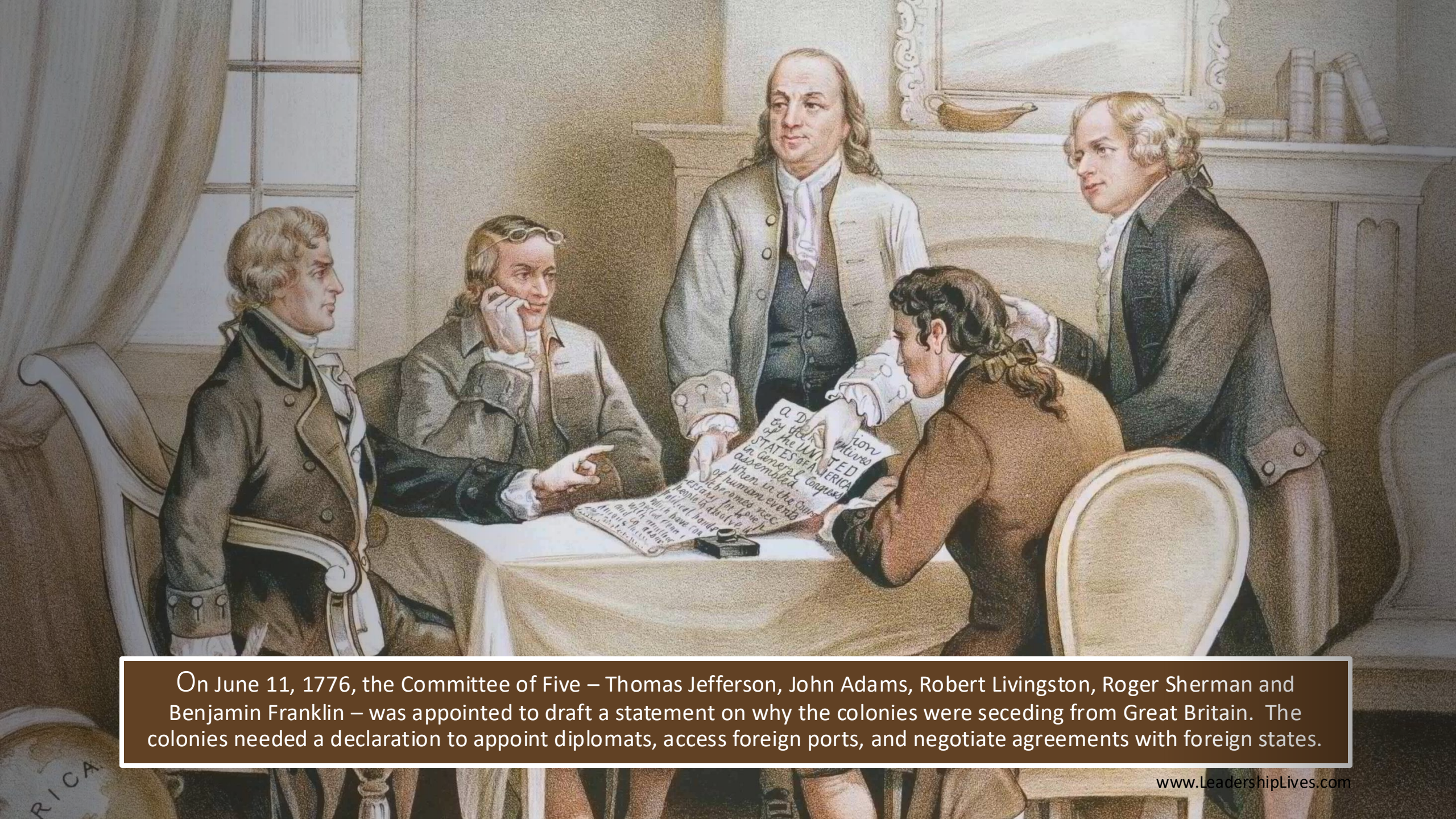
One reader said, the pamphlet gives "liberty to every individual to contribute materials for that great building, the grand charter of American Liberty." Estimates suggest it sold the modern equivalent of 6.5 million copies in three months.

On opening day of the Second Continental Congress, May 10, 1776, the representatives passed a resolution recommending that any colony with a government that was not inclined toward independence should form one that was.

In his 1821 autobiography, Thomas Jefferson noted Virginia took the lead in calling for independence.

On Friday June 7. 1776, at the behest of fellow Virginians, and nudged by his friend John Adams, Richard Henry Lee "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."

Edward Rutledge of South Carolina moved that they postpone a vote for three weeks to give delegates time to write home for instructions.



On June 11, 1776, the Committee of Five – Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Robert Livingston, Roger Sherman and Benjamin Franklin – was appointed to draft a statement on why the colonies were seceding from Great Britain. The colonies needed a declaration to appoint diplomats, access foreign ports, and negotiate agreements with foreign states.

Thomas Jefferson thought John Adams should write the first draft, but Adams knew he was too unpopular – he had been involved in too many controversies - to take the lead on this important task.

Roger Sherman was no writer. Robert Livingston was undecided about declaring independence. Benjamin Franklin was suffering from an attack of gout. The task of writing the first draft of this important document fell to 33-year-old Thomas Jefferson.

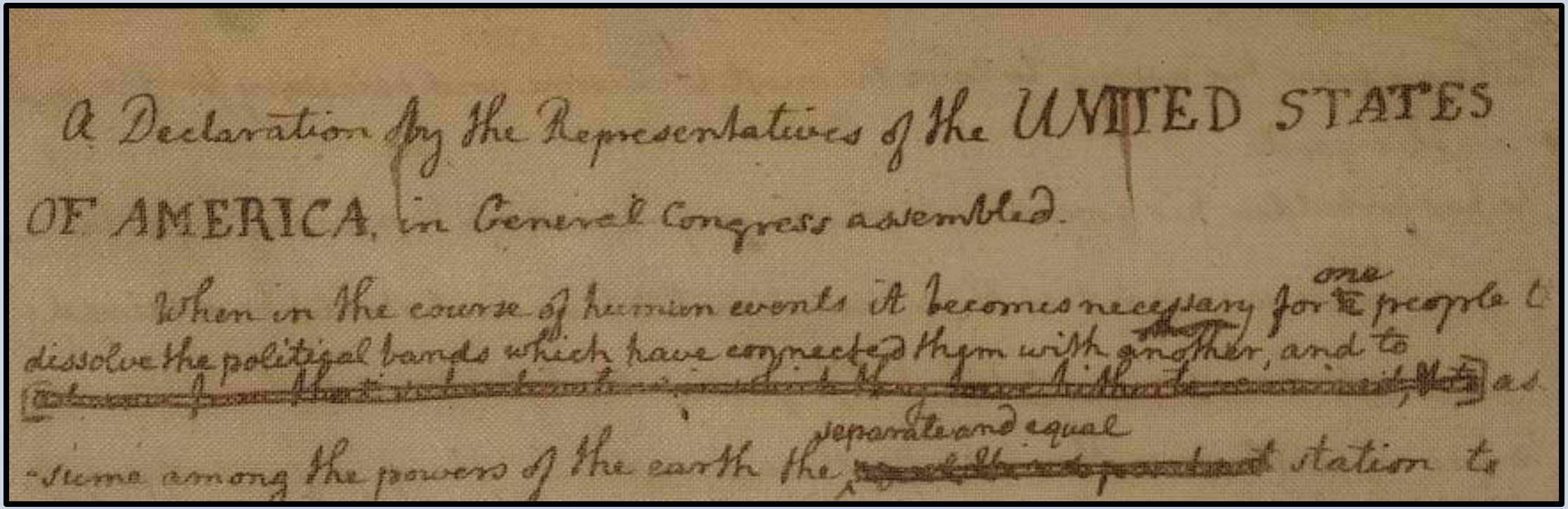
At William & Mary, Jefferson had received a fine education. He had studied the writings of political philosophers John Locke and Montesquieu and had been mentored by some of the best minds in the colonies, George Wythe and Francis Fauquier.

Working mainly from the 2nd floor of the house he was renting at 700 Market Street – a quick 6-minute walk from the State House– Jefferson crafted the first draft of the Declaration of Independence.

Jefferson said later, he did not consult "either book or pamphlet."

Two years earlier, in response to The Intolerable Acts, Jefferson had written *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. Published as a pamphlet, it had established Jefferson's reputation as a thinker and as an author. Now it served as a foundation for the Declaration of Independence.

In one surviving draft of the Declaration, 33% of the words are different from the final edition.
This suggests not only the polishing process but also the invaluable input of Jefferson's co-authors.


A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

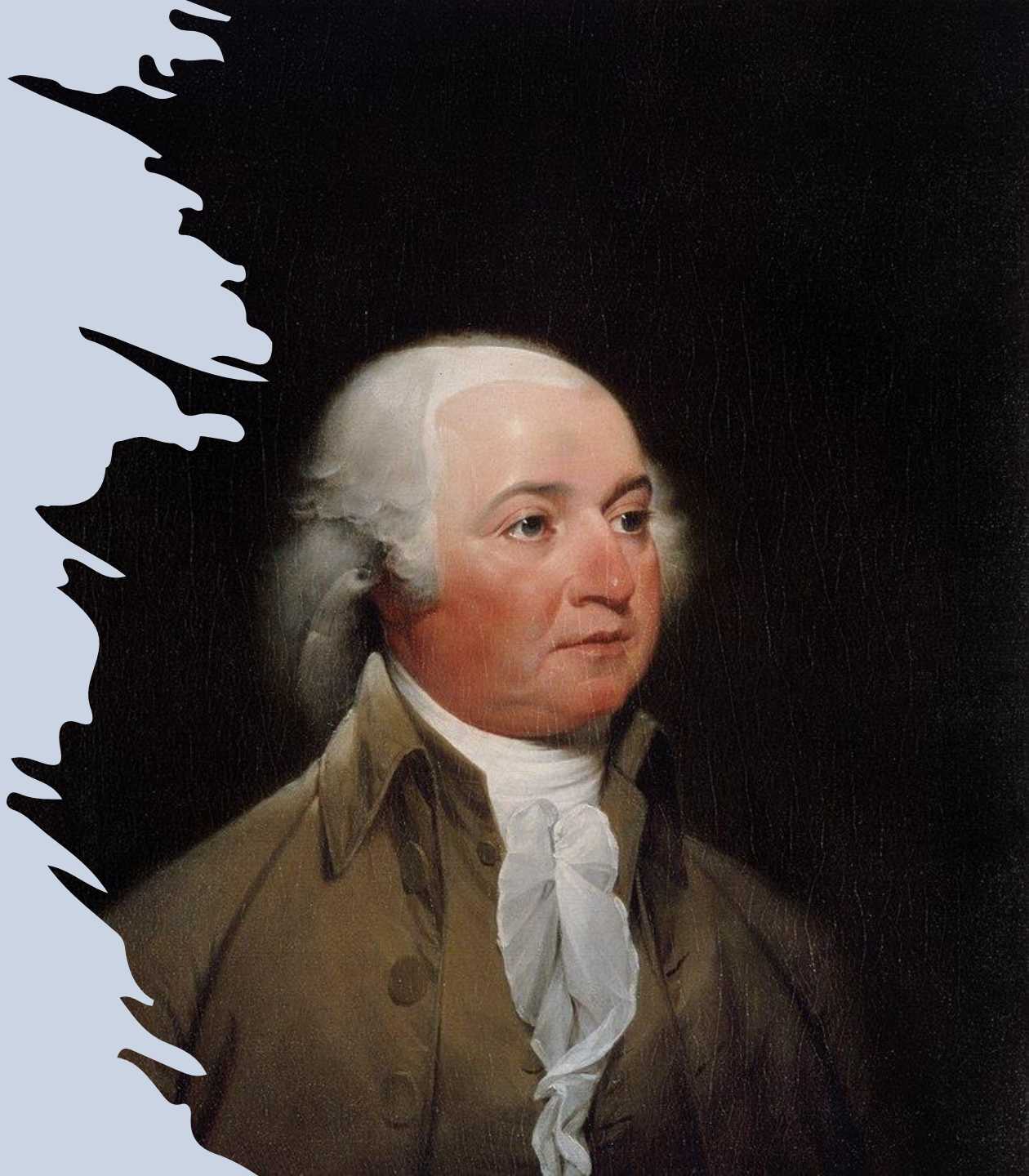
When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to
dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to
assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to

John Adams got involved in politics two years after he graduated from Harvard Law School when local businessmen mounted a legal challenge to British searches of homes without notice or reason. When the court ruled against the colonists, in Adams words, "Then and there the child Independence was born."

Yet, when no lawyers would defend the British soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre, Adams took the case despite the risk to his reputation and livelihood. Toward the end of the soldiers' trial, Adams made his famous statement, "Facts are stubborn things."

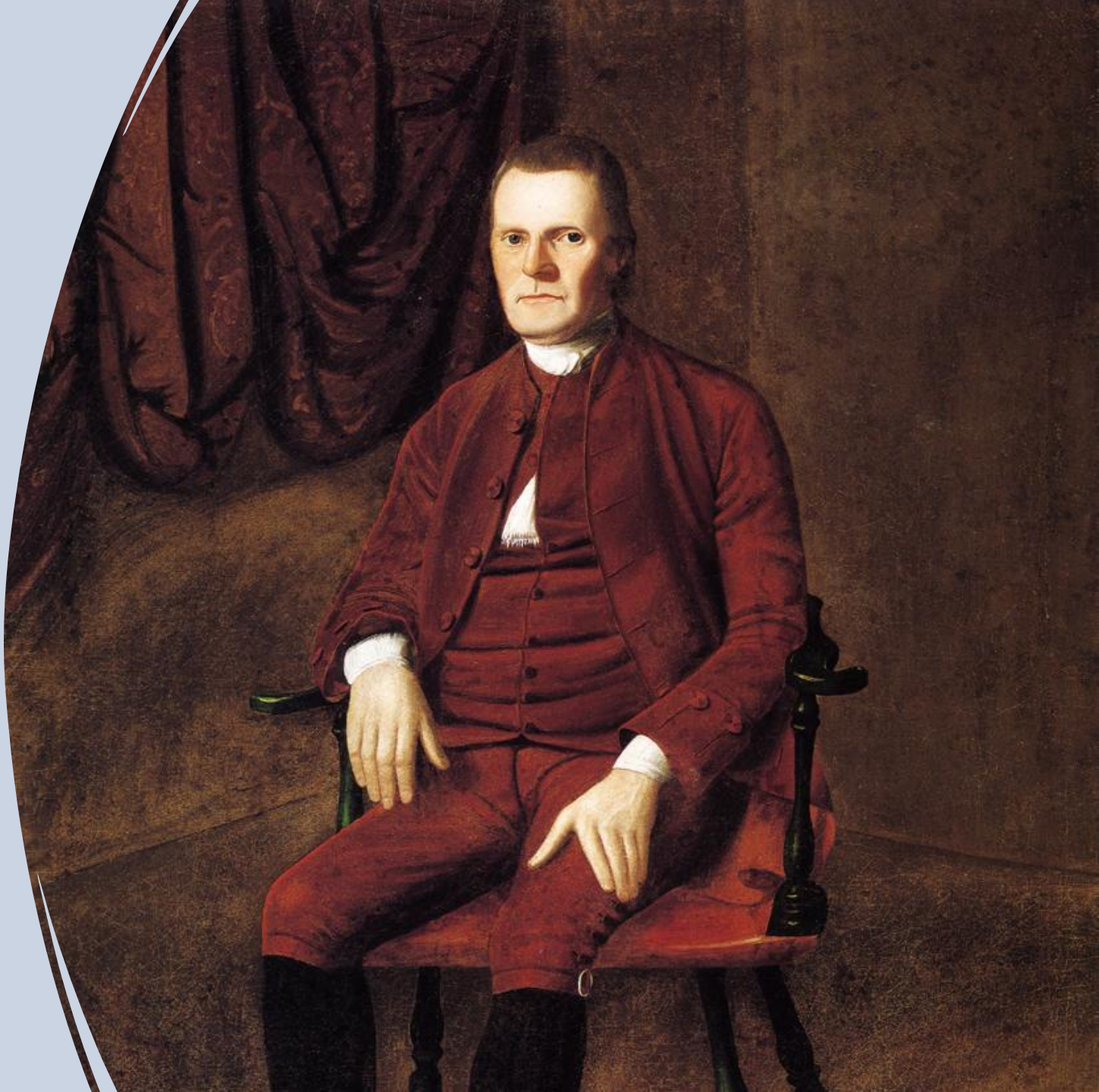
Adams, now leader of the Massachusetts delegation at the Second Continental Congress, recognized that in the gathering there were loyalists, some were undecided, and some were for independence.

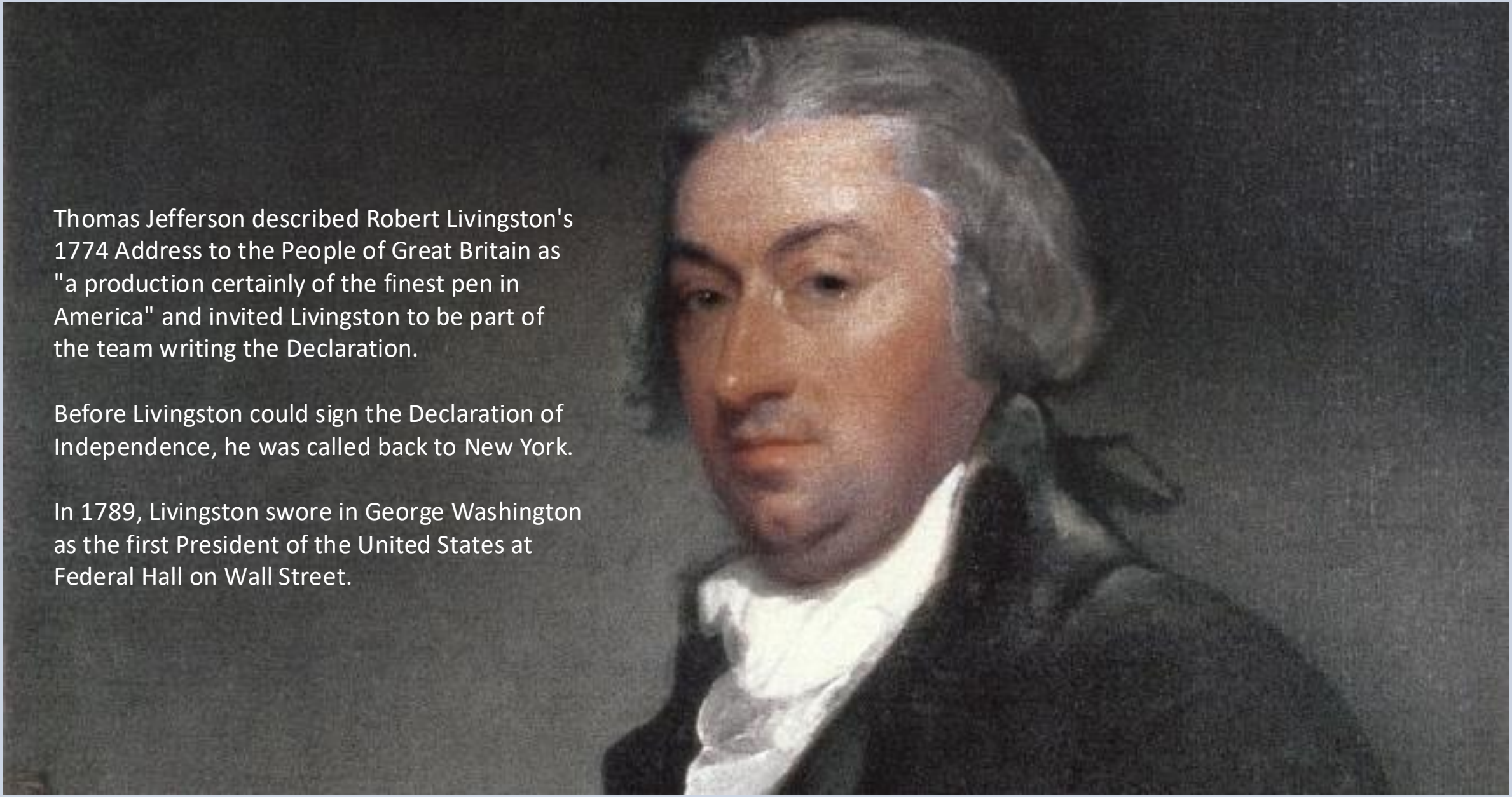
Adams and Franklin agreed that independence was inevitable.



A "terse, ineloquent speaker" statesman, Roger Sherman from Connecticut was the only person who signed all four of the United States' foundational documents – the 1774 Continental Association, an agreement among the colonies to ban trade with British merchants, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution. He also signed the 1774 Petition to the King and the 1775 Olive Branch Petition.

A strong voice for less populated states, Sherman's fine legal mind was an asset in designing a new nation.

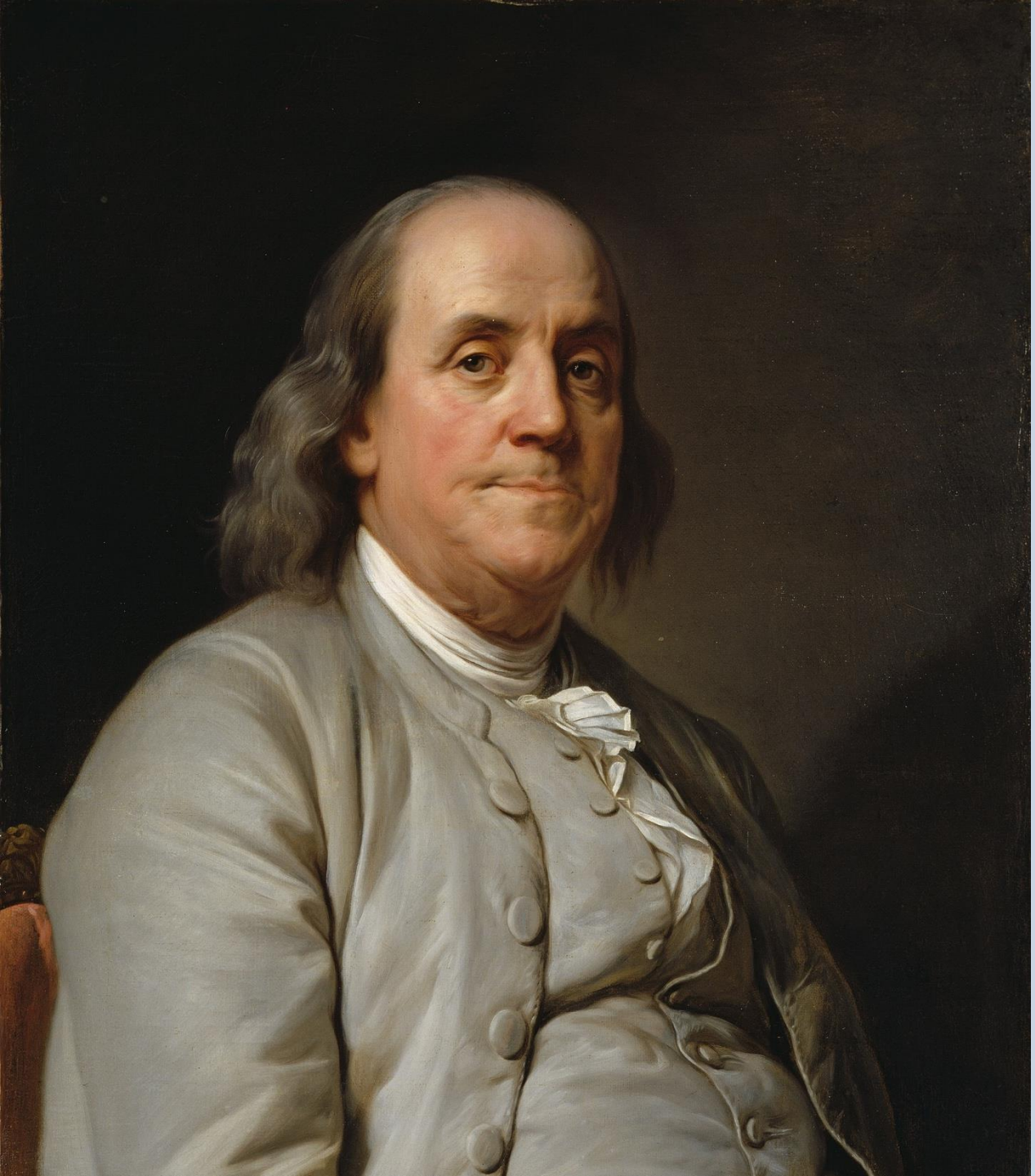




Thomas Jefferson described Robert Livingston's 1774 Address to the People of Great Britain as "a production certainly of the finest pen in America" and invited Livingston to be part of the team writing the Declaration.

Before Livingston could sign the Declaration of Independence, he was called back to New York.

In 1789, Livingston swore in George Washington as the first President of the United States at Federal Hall on Wall Street.

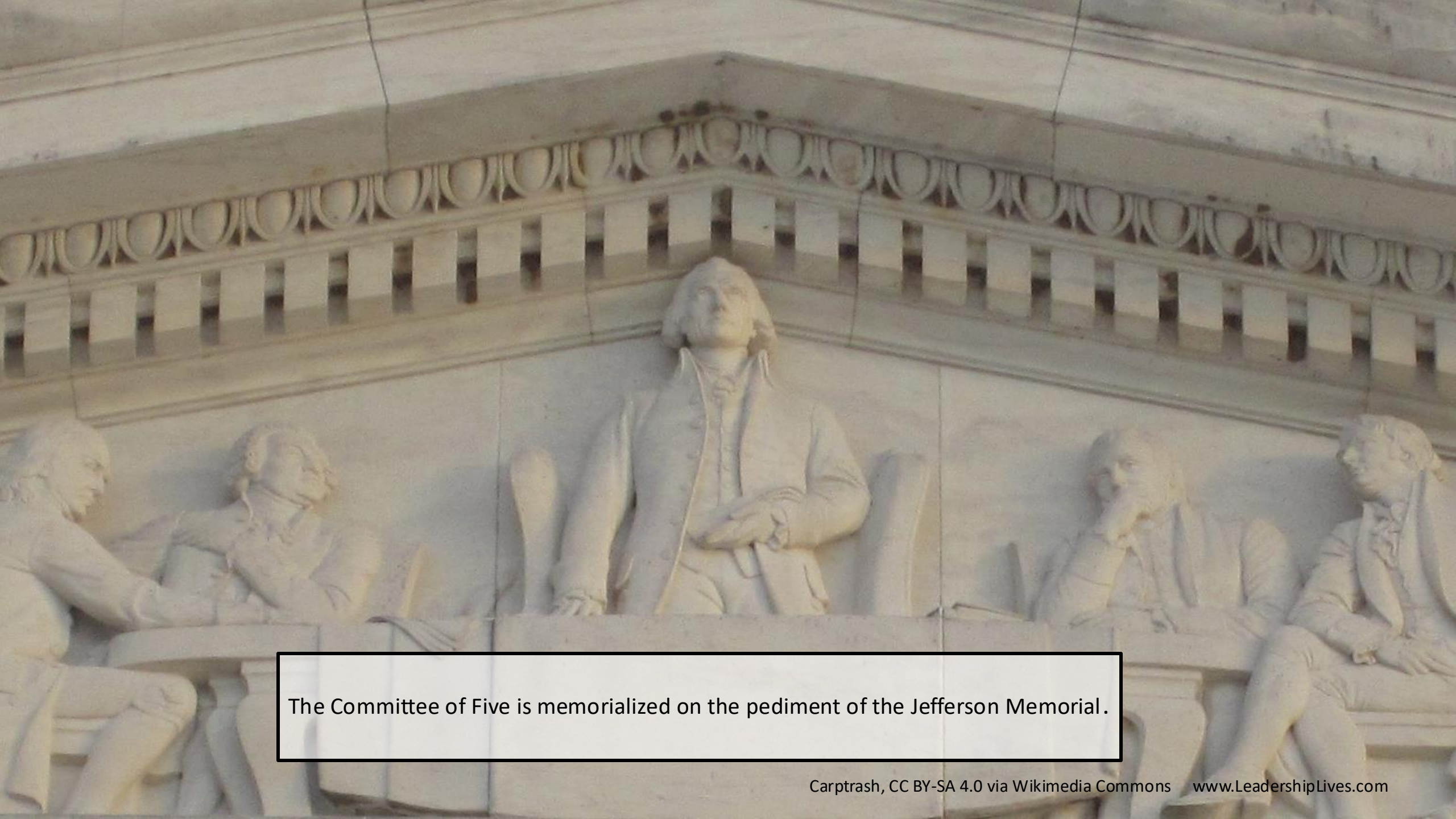


Scientist, author, publisher, postmaster, inventor, ambassador, Franklin has been called "The First American" in recognition of his tireless campaign for colonial unity. Widely recognized for his brilliance, in 1753 both Harvard and Yale awarded him honorary degrees.

In 1757, the Pennsylvania Assembly sent Franklin to London to represent their interests in a dispute with the heirs of William Penn. For the next twenty years, Franklin traveled back and forth.

The passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, thrust Franklin into representing colonial interests in London.

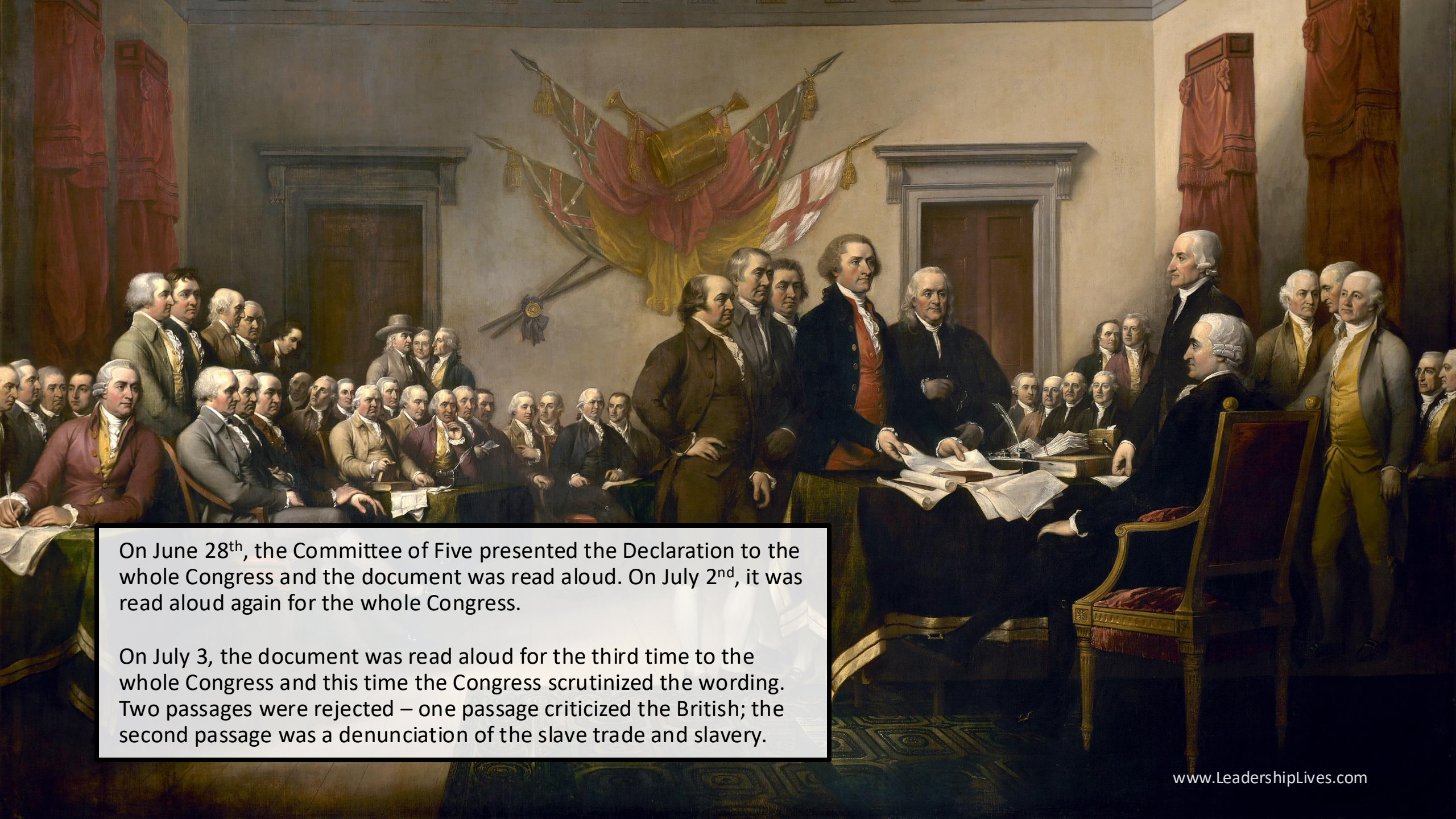
Handicapped by gout in June 1776, Franklin's participation in drafting the Declaration was minimal but he must have served as a resource and sounding board for Jefferson.



The Committee of Five is memorialized on the pediment of the Jefferson Memorial.

As the committee worked on the Declaration, five states, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and especially New York were hesitant about breaking free from Britain.

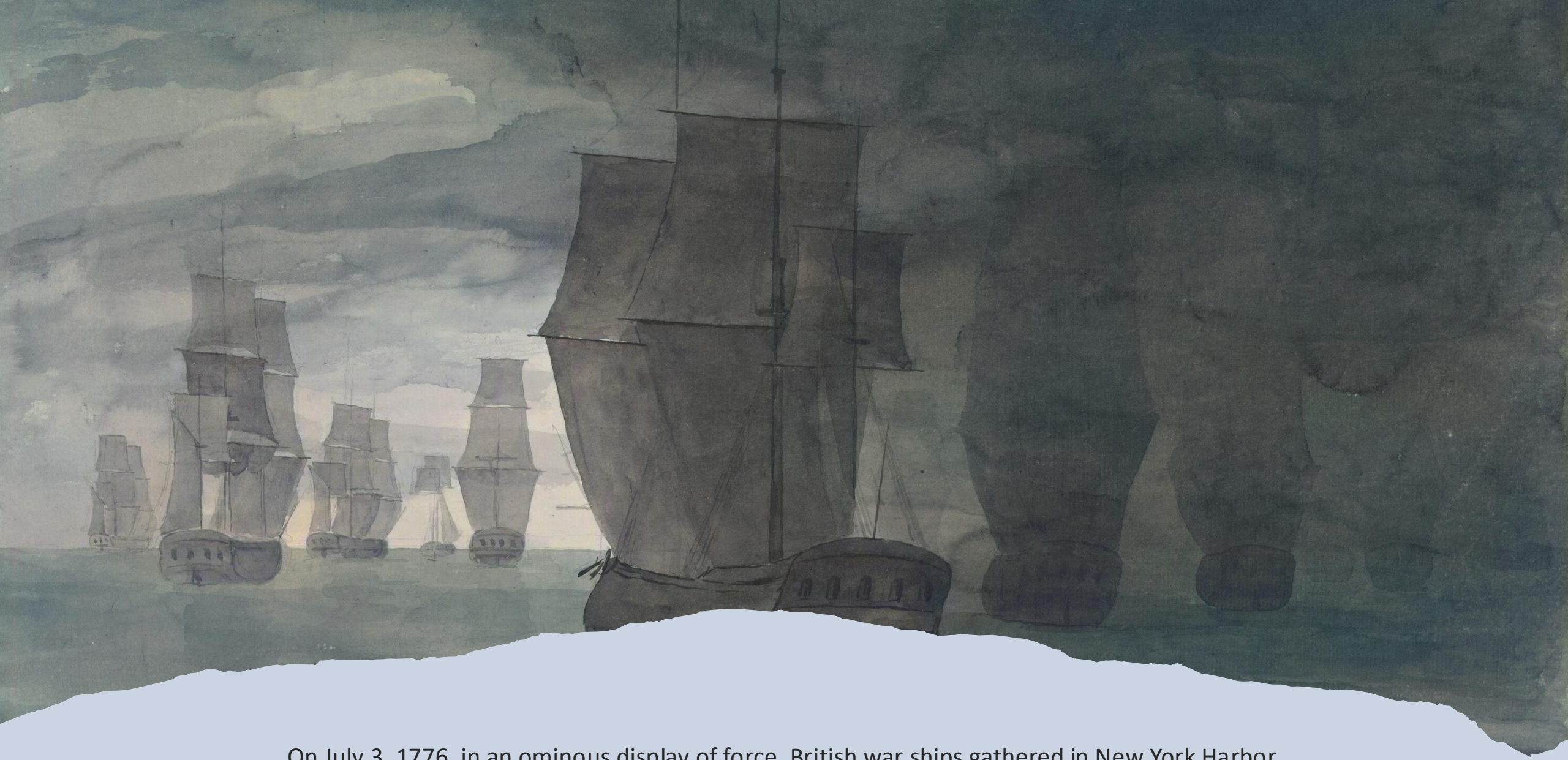
The four southern colonies – Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia - and the four northern colonies – Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire – were in full agreement about declaring independence.



On June 28th, the Committee of Five presented the Declaration to the whole Congress and the document was read aloud. On July 2nd, it was read aloud again for the whole Congress.

On July 3, the document was read aloud for the third time to the whole Congress and this time the Congress scrutinized the wording. Two passages were rejected – one passage criticized the British; the second passage was a denunciation of the slave trade and slavery.

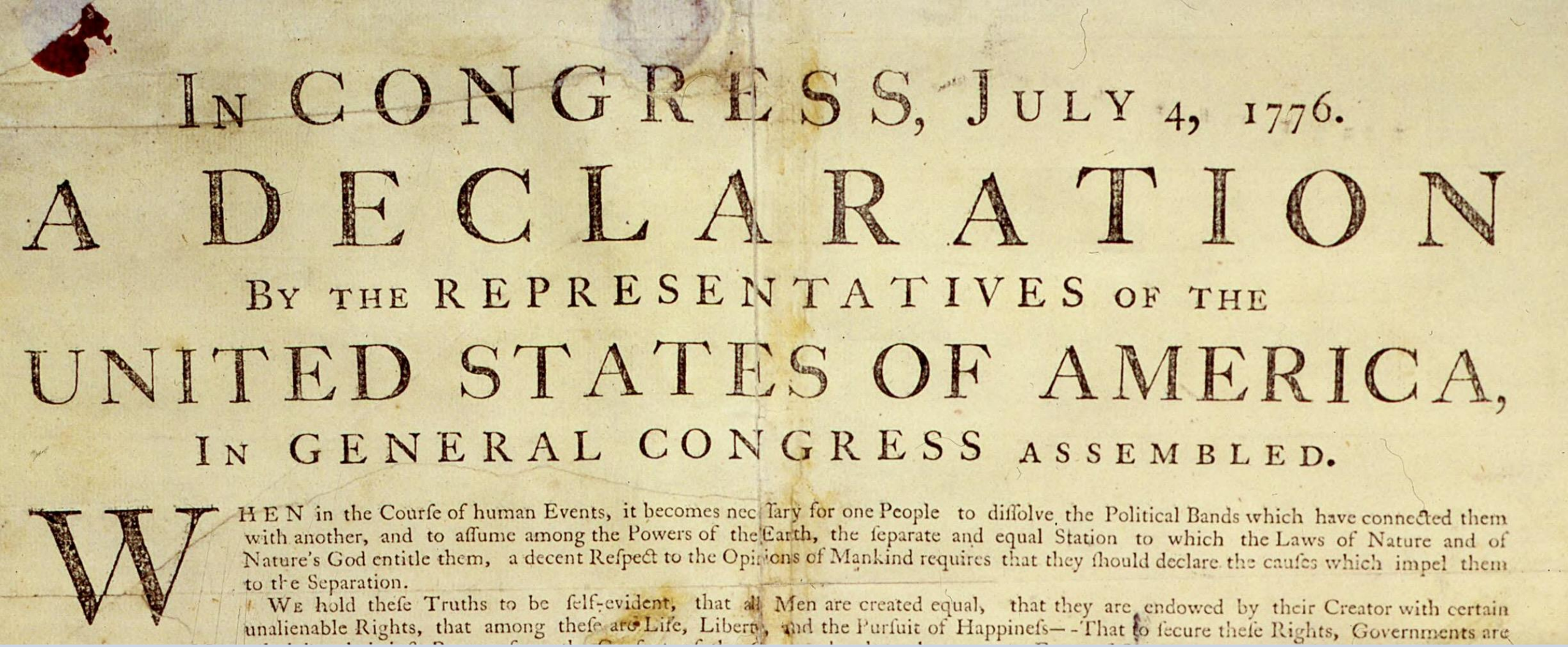
On July 2, 1776, the Second Continental Congress enacted a resolution declaring independence from the British Empire.



On July 3, 1776, in an ominous display of force, British war ships gathered in New York Harbor.

At the risk of their lives and property, late in the morning of July 4, 1776, fifty-six members of the Continental Congress – everyone present except John Dickinson - approved and signed the "United States Declaration of Independence."

As Franklin signed the document, John Hancock joked that they must all hang together. Franklin responded, "Yes, we must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE

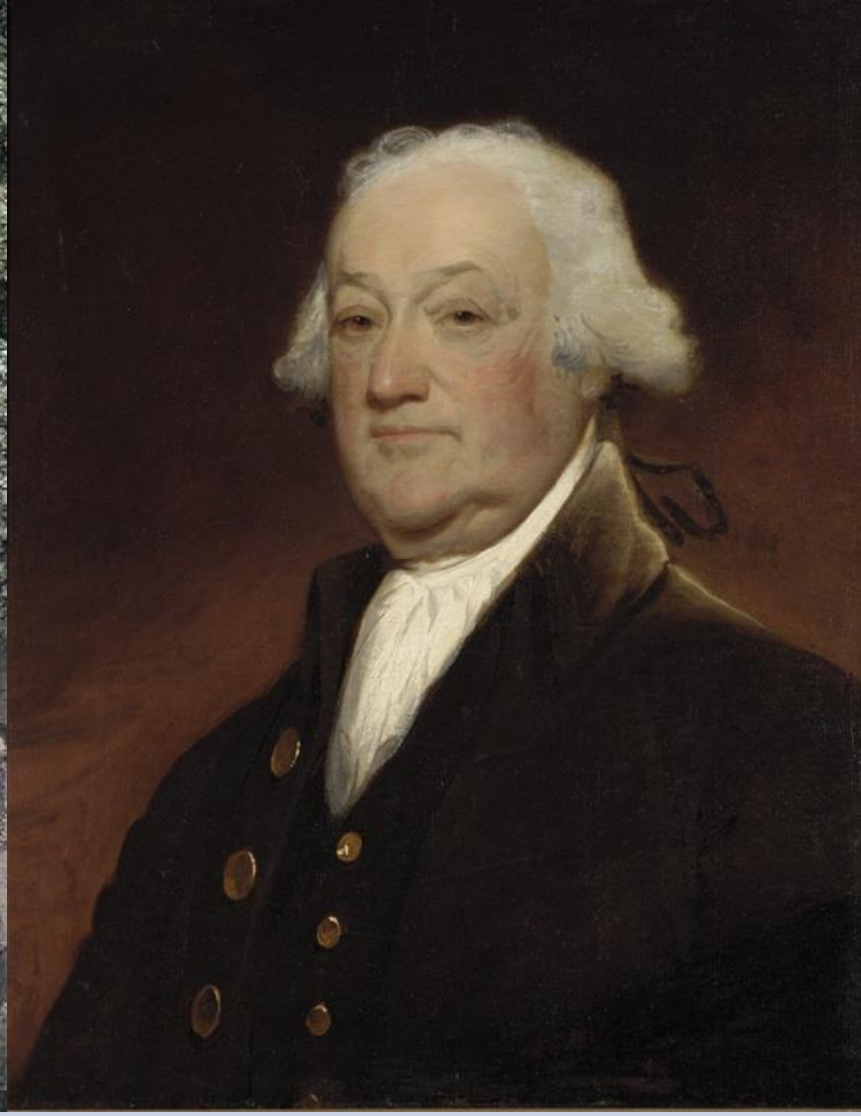
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

WHEN in the Course of human Events, it becomes nec ſary for one People to diſſolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to aſſume among the Powers of the Earth, the ſeparate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Reſpect to the Opi ions of Mankind requires that they ſhould declare the cauſes which impel them to the Separation.

WE hold theſe Truths to be ſelf-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among theſe are Life, Liberty, and the Purſuit of Happineſs--That to ſecure theſe Rights, Governments are

On the night of July 4, 1776, Philadelphia printer, John Dunlap, published a draft copy of America's newly-adopted Declaration of Independence. Twenty-five copies still exist.



Four days later, on July 8th, John Nixon, a prominent Philadelphian, read the Declaration of Independence from the steps of the Philadelphia State House. Today this building is known as Independence Hall.

Points to Ponder

How might history have been different if George III had listened to the colonists' complaints and had negotiated with them?

Do you have a favorite Founding Father?

Which of the many stories within the Declaration of Independence story did you find most interesting?

If the Revolutionary War - or the years leading up to it - were happening today, how would you want to participate?

At the Second Continental Congress, would you have been a Loyalist? On the fence about declaring independence? Or all in with the patriots?

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