

The early colonists came to America to find freedom but faced many dangers. They became very independent and self-sufficient. At first, England paid little attention to the colonists in America, and the colonists were not strictly controlled by English law and government.

However, after the colonies grew and became essential trade centers, the British imposed restrictions and trade regulations on them. Some of these restrictions put England in a favorable position concerning trade with the colonies. The colonies objected vigorously.

The colonists also objected to the quartering of soldiers, taxation without representation in Parliament, and lack of true self-government, among other issues.

People soon banded together and, at the urging of patriotic groups like the *Sons of Liberty*, refused to buy English goods.

Incidents like the Boston Tea Party in 1773 added fuel to the revolution. The Boston Tea Party occurred when patriots, disguised as Indians, threw tons of tea into Boston Harbor because the colonists did not like the tax policies of the British. When the British punished the Bostonians, all the colonists were inflamed. Conditions grew worse, and a year after the Boston Tea Party, Patrick Henry shouted:



Patrick Henry

"The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

Henry's speech became one of the best-known pre-revolutionary speeches.

First Continental Congress

Colonial leaders decided to call a meeting to discuss how to win their rights. They were more interested in fair treatment than in independence. The *First Continental Congress* met at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1774, with delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies. Georgia did not send representatives but agreed to support any plans made at the meeting. The delegates

complained to the king, but British colonial policy did not change. Although they wanted their rights, delegates did not dream they would soon be responsible for conducting a war. The colonial leaders also imposed an *embargo* (agreement prohibiting trade) on British trade and goods.



Carpenters' Hall

Congress

The First Continental Congress adjourned in late October 1774 but agreed to convene the following May. By then the *American Revolution* had begun. In the spring of 1775, British soldiers were sent to Lexington, Massachusetts, to seize the guns and ammunition of the colonists and arrest colonial leaders Samuel Adams and John Hancock. It was Paul Revere who warned the Minutemen to meet British soldiers at Lexington, where an unidentified shot started the war.

The *Second Continental Congress* met a few weeks later in May 1775, again in Philadelphia. Many of the same 56 delegates who attended the first meeting were in attendance, including one from each of the 13 colonies. These delegates had first come hoping for peace, but soon, more and more leaders called for complete separation from Great Britain.

Many critical actions were discussed and decided. The Second Continental Congress assumed the powers of a central government. An army and a navy were organized, and money was issued. General George Washington was chosen to lead the army. The *Second Continental Congress* became the nation's first government and continued to meet until the *Articles of Confederation* took effect in 1781.

Six years after the fighting began in Lexington, the British surrendered to General Washington at Yorktown, Virginia. The Americans had won their fight for independence.

QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a **T** or **F** in the space provided.

1. The only objection the colonists had toward British rule concerned trade regulations.
2. When the First Continental Congress met, the members wanted to declare war against England.
3. The Sons of Liberty supported the colonists' cause.
4. The English colonists were closely governed from the time of the earliest settlements.
5. The Boston Tea Party occurred because of a tax dispute.
6. The First Continental Congress met in 1774.
7. Each of the 13 colonies had a representative at the Second Continental Congress.
8. The British won the American Revolution.

MATCH THE PERSON. Write the letter from **Section B** in the space that matches the person in **Section A**.

A

B

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------|--|
| 1. John Hancock | _____ | a. Colonial leader |
| 2. Patrick Henry | _____ | b. Warned the Minutemen |
| 3. Samuel Adams | _____ | c. Led the army |
| 4. George Washington | _____ | d. Leader with unique signature |
| 5. Paul Revere | _____ | e. "Give me liberty, or give me death" |