

IN CONVENTION.

PRESENT 112 MEMBERS.
WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 1776.

FORASMUCH as all the endeavours of the United Colonies, by the most decent representations and petitions to the king and parliament of Great Britain, to restore peace and security to America under the British government, and a reunion with that people upon just and liberal terms, instead of a redress of grievances, have produced, from an imperious and vindictive administration, increased insult, oppression, and a vigorous attempt to effect our total destruction. By a late act, all these colonies are declared to be in rebellion, and out of the protection of the British crown, our properties subjected to confiscation, our people, when captivated, compelled to join in the murder and plunder of their relations and countrymen, and all former rapine and oppression of Americans declared legal and just. Fleets and armies are raised, and the aid of foreign troops engaged to assist these destructive purposes: The king's representative in this colony hath not only withheld all the powers of government from operating for our safety, but, having retired on board an armed ship, is carrying on a piratical and savage war against us, tempting our slaves, by every artifice to resort to him, and training and employing them against their masters. In this state of extreme danger, we have no alternative left but an abject submission to the will of those over-bearing tyrants, or a total separation from the crown and government of Great Britain, uniting and exerting the strength of all America for defence, and forming alliances with foreign powers for commerce and aid in war: Wherefore appealing to the SEARCHER OF HEARTS for the sincerity of former declarations, expressing our desire to preserve the connection with that nation, and that we are driven from that inclination by their wicked councils, and the eternal laws of self-preservation,

Resolved unanimously, that the delegates appointed to represent this colony in General Congress be instructed to propose to that respectable body to declare the United Colonies free and independent states, absolved from all allegiance to, or dependence upon, the crown or parliament of Great Britain; and that they give the assent of this colony to such declaration, and to whatever measures may be thought proper and necessary by the Congress for forming foreign alliances, and a confederation of the colonies, at such time, and in the manner, as to them shall seem best: Provided, that the power of forming government for, and the regulations of the internal concerns of each colony, be left to the respective colonial legislatures.

Resolved unanimously, that a committee ought to be appointed to prepare a DECLARATION of RIGHTS, and such a plan of government as will be most likely to maintain peace and order in this colony, and secure substantial and equal liberty to the people.

EDMUND PENDLETON, president.
(A copy.)

JOHN TAZEWELL, clerk of the Convention.¹⁶

On July 3, the Massachusetts House of Representatives *Ordered*, That Mr. [John] Pitts, Mr [] Watson and Mr. [Samuel] Osgood, be a committee to prepare a letter to the Delegates of this colony, at the Continental Congress, on the subject of independency.

On motion, it was *Voted, unanimously*, That if the Honorable Continental Congress should think proper to declare the Colonies independent of the kingdom of Great-Britain, this House will approve of the measure.¹⁷

No further action is found in the Journal, and the General Court was prorogued on July 13 until August 28.¹⁸

In Continental Congress, June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia (pursuant to the instructions in the above Resolutions) presented the following:

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.

That is it expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances.

That a plan for confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.¹⁹

Consideration was postponed until the 8th, when it was referred to the committee of the whole on the 10th.²⁰

¹⁶Mass. Archives, vol. 138 p. 315½. Evans no. 15200 adds [Williamsburg: Printed by Alexander Purdie, 1779], evidently a misprint for 1776, as it reached Boston on or before June 14, 1776.

¹⁷"Journal," 1776/7, edition of 1777, p. 58.

¹⁸Acknowledgment is here made to Mr. Willard F. DeLue for his kind assistance and suggestions.

¹⁹"Journals," vol. 5, p. 425.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 426, 427.

On June 10, the committee of the whole having reported, it was

Resolved, That the consideration of the first resolution be postponed to this day, three weeks [July 1], and in the mean while, that no time be lost, in case the Congress agree thereto, that a committee be appointed to prepare a declaration to the effect of the said first resolution, which is in these words:

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 connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved," and the committee was discharged.²¹

On June 11, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston were chosen a committee to prepare the Declaration,²² which they brought in on June 28, written in the hand of Jefferson, with occasional changes by Adams and Franklin²³; and it was duly "*Ordered*, To lie on the table."

From now on the first *resolution* of June 7, and the *declaration* reported June 28 were considered separately and referred to in the Journals as "*resolution*" and "*declaration*."

On July 1, Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole to consider the *resolution respecting independency* and the *declaration*. After a nine-hour debate Benjamin Harrison for the committee reported to Congress that they had agreed to the *resolution*, and said "*resolution . . . being read*, the determination thereof was postponed, at the request of a colony, [i.e., South Carolina]²⁴ till to-morrow."

On July 2, "Congress resumed the consideration of the *resolution* agreed to by and reported from the committee of the whole; and the same being read, was agreed to as follows:"

Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and, of right, ought to be, Free and Independent States; that they are

²¹"Journals," vol. 5, pp. 428, 429.

²²Ibid., p. 431.

²³Ibid., pp. 491-502.

²⁴Hazleton. The Declaration of Independence, p. 163.

absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connexion between them, and the state of Great Britain, is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.²⁵

Again Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole, took up the *declaration*, and after some time Benjamin Harrison for the committee reported they "had under consideration the *declaration* to them referred; but not having had time to go through the same, desired leave to sit again," which was granted and the consideration was continued through the 3d.

On July 4, after some further consideration, Benjamin Harrison for the committee of the whole reported to Congress (again in session) "that the committee . . . have agreed to a *Declaration*, which he delivered in," and being read again, it was agreed to unanimously by all of the delegates, save those of New York, who had no power to act.²⁶

It was further

Ordered, That the declaration be authenticated and printed. That the committee appointed to prepare the declaration, superintend and correct the press.

That copies of the declaration be sent to the several assemblies, conventions and committees, or councils of safety, and to the several commanding officers of the continental troops; that it be proclaimed in each of the United States, and at the head of the army.²⁷

On July 19, it was

Resolved, That the Declaration passed on the 4th, be fairly engrossed on parchment, with the title and stile of "The unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States of America," and that the same, when engrossed, be signed by every member of Congress.²⁸

and on August 2, "being engrossed and compared at the table, was signed [by the members]."²⁹

Pursuant to the order of July 4, the Declaration was printed officially by John Dunlap of Philadelphia.

²⁵"Journals," vol. 5, pp. 504-507.

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 509-516.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 516.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 590, 591.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 626.

July 5 and 6, and reprinted (for the first time in any newspaper) in the "Pennsylvania Evening Post" of July 6. John Hancock, as President, sent copies of this broadside on July 6 to General Washington³⁰, to the "Hon[oura]ble Assembly of Massachusetts Bay," and to the other Colonies, enclosed in letters reading as follows:

Philad^a July 6th 1776.

Honble Gentlemen,

Altho it is not possible to foresee the Consequences of Human Actions, yet it is nevertheless a Duty we owe ourselves and Posterity in all our public Counsels, to decide in the best Manner we are able, and to trust the Events to that Being, who controuls both Causes and Events, so as to bring about his own Determinations.

Impressed with this Sentiment, & at the same Time fully convinced, that our Affairs may take a more favourable Turn, the Congress have judged it necessary to dissolve all Connection between Great Britain and the American Colonies, and to declare them free and independent States; as you will perceive by the enclosed Declaration, which I am directed by Congress to transmit to you, and to request you will have it proclaimed in your Colony in the Way you shall think most proper.

The important Consequences to the American States from this Declaration of Independence, considered as the Ground and Foundation of a future Government, will naturally suggest the Propriety of proclaiming it in such Manner, that the People may be universally informed of it.

I have the Honour to be

with great Respect,
Gentlemen,
Your most obed^t
& very hble Ser.

John Hancock Presid^t

Honble Assembly of Massachusetts Bay.³¹

In June 1925, the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce issued a fac-simile of the first and second pages of "The Virginia Gazette," published at Williamsburg, July 26, 1776, headed "The Greatest 'Scoop' in History," which was distributed at the meeting of the National Editorial Association at Richmond.

³⁰"Journals," vol. 5, p. 1121.

³¹Mass. Archives, vol. 195, pp. 73, 74.

It purports to be a reproduction of "the first publication of the Declaration in newspaper history," and further says: "Papers in New York, Philadelphia and elsewhere commented on the Declaration as noted in news dispatches on the back of this paper but evidently did not consider it of enough importance to produce it in full."

Unfortunately for the "Scoop," newspapers from Philadelphia to Portsmouth had printed the entire Declaration in turn, daily (except Sundays) from July 6 to July 22. The printings in "The Pennsylvania Evening Post" of July 6 and "The Virginia Gazette" of July 26 (except for a few typographical errors) are close copies of the first official broadside printed by Dunlap and sent to all the Colonies by Congress.

Rather curiously, "The Virginia Gazette" printed extracts on July 19 and only printed the Declaration in full on July 26, after the Council of Virginia on July 20 had ordered it to be published.³²

General Washington caused the Declaration to be proclaimed before all the army under his command at New York on July 10, and on the 11th reported the same to John Hancock and that he had transmitted a copy to General Ward at Boston, requesting him to have it proclaimed to the Continental troops in that department, but he said nothing about the copy he had sent to the General Court of Massachusetts, enclosed in the following letter:

New York July the 9th 1776

Gent^l

You will perceive by the Inclosed Declaration, which I have the honor to Transmit to you, that Congress of late have been employed in deliberating on matters of the utmost Importance. Impelled by necessity and a repetition of Injuries unsufferable, without the most distant prospect of releif, they have asserted the claims of the American Colonies to the rights of Humanity and declared them Free and Independent States.

³²Hazelton, "The Declaration of Independence," p. 273.

Judging from a variety of circumstances that the British Arms are meant to be directed this Campaign against the State of New York to effect Its reduction, they have empowered me to order the three fullest Regiments of their Troops in the Massachusetts bay to reinforce our Northern Army, as you will see by a Copy of their resolve which I have Inclosed. I have accordingly by the advice of my General Officers, requested General Ward to detach them with all possible expedition to Join that Army, and prevent the fatal and alarming consequences that would result from the Enemies passing the Lakes and making an Impression on our Frontiers. I am almost morally certain that no Attempts will be made on the Massachusetts bay, and If there should they must prove abortive and ineffectual, the Militia Independent of other Troops being more than competent to all the purposes of defensive War. However should It be deemed expedient by your Hon^{ble} body, Congress have authorized you to embody and take into pay a number of Militia equal to the Regiments to be detached.

I have the honor to be
with great respect

Gent^m
Y^r Most Obed^t & H^{ble} Serv^t
G^o Washington

Hon^{ble} G^l Court of Massachusetts bay.⁸⁸

The express which left Philadelphia, Saturday, July 6, arrived at New York, Tuesday, July 9; Hartford, Thursday, July 11; Worcester, Sunday, July 14; Boston, Monday, July 15; and Exeter, July 16, having gone 30 miles out of its way to Portsmouth; and the Declaration was received everywhere with much jubilation.

According to the Massachusetts Spy of July 5, 1826,

The first time the Declaration of Independence was publicly read in Massachusetts, was in this town [Worcester]. The Express on his way to Boston, furnished Isaiah Thomas, Esq. with a copy for publication in this paper, of which he was at that time the publisher. The news of its receipt soon spread throughout the town, and a large concourse of people collected, all anxious to see or hear so extraordinary a document. To gratify their curiosity, Thomas ascended the portico of the South Meeting House, (then the only one in town,) and read it to those who were assembled. Half a century has since passed away, during which our country has increased in wealth, popu-

⁸⁸Mass. Archives, vol 195, pp. 80, 81.

lation and power, beyond all former precedent. Dr. Thomas still lives to witness the prosperity of the country, and yesterday joined in the celebration of independence in the same house from which he read the declaration fifty years ago.

Just preceding this in the *Spy* is an account of the fiftieth anniversary celebration, which reads as follows:

The 50th anniversary of our National Independence was celebrated in this town yesterday by the municipal authorities, and the citizens generally. The procession was formed at 11 o'clock, and moved to the South Meeting-House, where, after prayer by Dr. Bancroft, the Declaration of Independence was read by William Lincoln, Esq., and a chaste and appropriate Oration was delivered by Maj. Charles Allen. After the exercises were through at the Meeting-House, the procession again formed and retired to the Town Hall, where an entertainment was provided by Daniel P. Haynes, of which about 400 persons partook. Isaiah Thomas Esq. presided at the table.

The Massachusetts House of Representatives having been prorogued on July 13 (Saturday), the Council (in executive session) on the 15th (Monday)

On Motion Ordered, that John Winthrop, William Phillips & Francis Dana Esq^{rs} be a Committee to take into Consideration what Way manner & form the Declaration of y^e Hon^{ble} Continental Congress should be made Publick.³⁴

It is interesting to note that on the very next day the word "State" was introduced in an order relating to Inoculating Hospitals and that on the 17th the words "State House" and "State Street" appear in the Report given below, although the Town did not change the name of the street officially until July 4, 1788.

On July 17,

The Committee to whom was refer'd, to take under Consideration what way manner & form, the Declaration of the Continental Congress shou'd be made Publick—Report that the said Declaration be proclaim'd by the Sherrif of the County of Suffolk, from the Balcony of the State House in Boston, on Thursday Next at One OClock P M—in Presence of & under Direction of a Committee of Council to be appoint'd for that purpose, that the Representatives, Magistrates, Ministers &

³⁴Executive Records of Council of Massachusetts, vol. 19, p. 78.

Selectmen of the said Town, & Other Gentlemen, the Comission Officers of the Continen^tl Army, statione^d in Boston, Also of the Militia of Boston & of the Colonial Regiments there, be desired to meet at y^e Council Chamber at that time, and that the Militia of the Town of Boston, & such of the Contint^l Army, & of the Colonial Regiments as can be spared from Duty, be drawn Up in, State Street at y^e same time— And that the s^d Declaration be printed & a Copsy sent to the Ministers of every Parish, of every Denomination within this State, and that they severally be required to read the same to their respective Congregations, as soon as divine Service is Concluded in the Afternoon, of the first Lords Day, after they shall have receiv^d it, and after such Publication thereof to deliver the said Declaration to the Clerks of their respective Towns or Districts, who are hereby required to record the same in their respective Town or District Books, thereto remain as a perpetual Memorial thereof.—That the Comittee of Council who shall be Appointed for the Abovementioned Purpose, be Impower^d to direct the Other proceedings relative to said Proclamation, in such manner as they shall Judge proper—By Order of y^e Council.

Richard Derby Jun^r Presid^t.

On Motion Ordered that James Bowdoin, Artemas Ward, Richard Derby, Thomas Cushing, John Winthrop, Moses Gill, Will^m Phillips, Benj^a Austin & Francis Dana Esq^{rs} be a Committee to Repair to Boston, to direct the Manner relative to the Proclaiming the Declaration of Congress.³⁵

On Motion Ordered that Dan^l Hopkins Esq^r be directed to Print the Declaration of the Continental Congress, at Salem & bring them to Watertown.³⁶

On July 18,

On Motion Ordered that y^e Declaration be Publickly read by the Secretary [John Avery, Jr., Deputy Secretary] in y^e Council Chamber [at Watertown] and that the Representatives of this and the other Towns who are present, be invited to attend the said Publication.³⁷

On August 5,

Ordered, that the Secretary be directed to write to the Sheriff of y^e County of Suffolk to Acquaint him that the Printed Declaration of Independency, were on this Table— And y^e Board expected he wou^d take proper care that they be distributed thro^u this State as soon as may be—That every

³⁵Executive Records of the Council of Massachusetts, vol. 19, p. 82.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 88.

Town may have them publickly read, in each religious Assembly,³⁸

which was attended to by the Deputy Secretary, in a letter to Sheriff [William] Greenleaf of even date.³⁹

The broadsides so distributed bear the imprint, "Salem, Massachusetts-Bay: Printed by E. Russell, by Order of Authority."⁴⁰ The copy at the Massachusetts Historical Society is endorsed:

On August 11th, 1776, after the Conclusion of Divine Service, I read this Declaration, conformable to the Order of the Council of State; and spake in Favour of a Compliance with the Continental Declaration. As witnesseth my Hand, Samuel Mather, [who was then pastor of an independent congregation in North Bennet St., Boston.]

At the time of the arrival of the Declaration at Watertown, the Council were about concluding a treaty with the St. Johns and Micmac Indians, and on Tuesday, July 16, they were informed by the President [James Bowdoin] that the

Colonies have lately by their great Council at Philadelphia, declared themselves free and Independent States, by the Name of the United States of America. the Certain News of it and the Declaration itself are just come to Us and we are glad of this Opportunity to Inform you our Brothers of it. The said Great Council the Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress Assembled Appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the rectitude of their Intentions do in the Name & by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies Solemnly Publish and declare, that these United Colonies, are & of right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the Brittish Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britian is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and independent States, they have full Power to levy Warr, Conclude Peace Contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and things, which Independent States may of right do, and for the Support of this Declaration with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, they mutually pledge to each other, their Lives, their Fortunes, and their Sacred Honor.⁴¹

³⁸Executive Records of the Council of Massachusetts, vol. 19, p. 147.

³⁹Mass. Archives, vol. 195; p. 437.

⁴⁰Ford, no. 1955.

⁴¹Executive Records of the Council of Massachusetts, vol. 19, pp. 105, 106.

Then "the printed Declaration at large was produced to the Indians and the Interpreter M^r. Prince fully explained it to them," and Ambrose (or Ombrius) Var of St. Johns River, answering for the Indians, said: "We like it well." The President then said:

This is the Declaration of the United States of America you and we therefore have now nothing to do with Great Britain, we are wholly Separated from her, and all the former Friendship and Connection with her are now dissolved. The United States now form a long and Strong Chain, and it is made longer and stronger by our Brethren of the S^t. Johns and Micmack Tribes joining with us; and may Almighty God never suffer this Chain to be broken In pursuance and in full Confirmation of what has in these Conferences been agreed upon between us we now lay before you certain Articles of Alliance and Friendship, which if you approve of them we propose shall be mutually signed, Viz.^t, by you in behalf of the St. Johns & Micmack Tribes on the one part; and by us in behalf of the United States of America on the other part.⁴²

The Treaty commencing

Whereas the United States of America in General Congress Assembled, have in the Name, and by the Authority of the Good People of these Colonies Solemnly published and declared 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 dissolved, and that as Free and Independent States they have full Power to Levy War, Conclude Peace, Contract Alliances, establish Commerce and to do all other Acts and things which Independent States may of right do We the Governors of the State of Massachusetts Bay do by Virtue thereof, and by the Powers vested in us enter into and conclude the Following Treaty of Friendship and Alliance.⁴³

was duly signed on July 19, the very day that the Continental Congress voted to have the Declaration engrossed on parchment and signed by every member. On Monday, July 15, General Ward received the copy of the Declaration sent him by General Washington at his headquarters in Boston, on Tuesday, the 16th gave

⁴²Executive Records of the Council of Massachusetts, vol. 19, p. 106.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 107.

“America” as parole and “Independence” as counter-sign, and on the morning of Wednesday the 17th had it read at the head of the regiments. A curious coincidence is that it was published in the “American Gazette” of Salem on July 16th (the first newspaper publication in Massachusetts) and in the “Massachusetts Spy” of Worcester on July 17th. On July 18th it was published in the “Continental Journal” and the “New England Chronicle” (both printed at Boston) and on July 22 in the “Boston Gazette” (the administration organ; printed by Benjamin Edes in Watertown).

According to the “Boston Gazette” of July 22,

Thursday last [July 18], pursuant to the Orders of the honorable Council, was proclaimed, from the Balcony of the State House in Boston, the DECLARATION of the AMERICAN CONGRESS, absolving the United Colonies from their Allegiance to the British Crown, and declaring them FREE and INDEPENDENT STATES. There were present on the Occasion, in the Council-Chamber, the Committee of Council, a Number of the honorable House of Representatives, the Magistrates, Ministers, Selectmen, and other Gentlemen of Boston and the neighbouring Towns; also the Commission Officers of the Continental Regiments stationed in Boston, and other Officers. Two of those Regiments were under Arms in Kingstreet, formed into three Lines on the North Side of the Street, and in thirteen Divisions; and a Detachment from the Massachusetts Regiment of Artillery, with two Pieces of Cannon was on their Right Wing. At One o’Clock the Declaration was proclaimed by the Sheriff of the County of Suffolk, which was received with great Joy, expressed by three Huzzas from a great Concource of People assembled on the Occasion. After which, on a Signal given, Thirteen Pieces of Cannon were fired at the Fort on Fort-Hill, the Forts at Dorchester Neck, the Castle, Nantasket, and Point Alderton, likewise discharged their Cannon; Then the Detachment of Artillery fired their Cannon thirteen Times, which was followed by the two Regiments giving their Fire from the thirteen Divisions in Succession. These Firings corresponded to the Number of the American States United. The Ceremony was closed with a proper Collation to the Gentlemen in the Council Chamber; during which the following Toasts were given by the President of the Council, and heartily pledged by the Company viz.

Prosperity and Perpetuity to the United States of America.
The American Congress.

The General Court of the State of Massachusetts Bay.

General WASHINGTON, and Success to the Arms of the United States.

The downfall of Tyrants and Tyranny.

The universal Prevalence of Civil and Religious Liberty.

The Friends of the United States in all Quarters of the Globe.

The Bells of the Town were rung on the Occasion; and undismembered Festivity cheer'd and brighten'd every Face.

On the same Day a Number of the Members of the Council (who were prevented attending the Ceremony at Boston, on account of the Small Pox being there) together, with those of the Hon. House of Representatives who were in Town, [Watertown] and a Number of other Gentlemen assembled at the Council Chamber in this Town, where the said Declaration was also Proclaimed by the Secretary [Deputy Secretary Avery] from one of the Windows; after which, the Gentlemen present partook of a decent Collation prepared on the Occasion, and drank a Number of constitutional Toasts, and then retired.

We hear that on Thursday last every King's Arms in Boston, and every Sign with any Resemblance of it whether Lion & Crown, Pestle and Mortar & Crown, Heart & Crown, &c. together with every Sign that belonged to a Tory, was taken down, and made a general Conflagration of in King Street.

Some difference of opinion exists as to the actual reading at Boston. "The Boston Gazette" of July 22, printed at Watertown, says that on,

Thursday last [July 18], pursuant to the Orders of the honorable Council, was proclaimed, from the Balcony of the State House in Boston, the DECLARATION OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS . . . at One o'Clock . . . by the Sheriff of the County of Suffolk, [i. e., William Greenleaf] which was received with great Joy, expressed by three Huzzas from a great Concource of People assembled on the Occasion.

"The Continental Journal" of July 25, printed in Boston, follows the Gazette closely, giving "the Sheriff of the County of Suffolk" as the reader.

"The New England Chronicle" of July 25, printed in Boston, follows the Gazette closely, save that "Colonel Thomas Crafts" is given as the reader.

"The Massachusetts Spy" of July 31, printed in

Worcester, follows the "New England Chronicle," giving "Colonel Thomas Crafts" as the reader.

A British officer (prisoner of war) who was present in the Council Chamber tells in the "United Service Journal" that

Exactly as the clock struck one, Colonel Crafts, who occupied the chair, rose and read aloud the Declaration. This being finished, the gentlemen stood up, and each, repeating the words as they were spoken by an officer, swore to uphold the rights of the country. Meanwhile the town clerk [William Cooper] read from a balcony the Declaration to the crowd.⁴⁴

Mrs. Abigail Adams, in a letter July 21, says to her husband:

Last Thursday, after hearing a very good sermon, I went with the multitude into King Street to hear the Proclamation for Independence read and proclaimed. . . . The troops under arms and all the inhabitants assembled there (the small-pox preventing many thousands from the country) when Colonel Crafts read from the balcony of the State House the proclamation. Great attention was given to every word. As soon as he ended, the cry from the balcony was "God save our American States" and then three cheers which rent the air.⁴⁵

The practise in Massachusetts during the eighteenth century was for the Secretary to read proclamations in the Council Chamber or from the Balcony and for the Sheriff of the County of Suffolk to repeat them from the Balcony or the Street.

The Secretary, Samuel Adams, was in Philadelphia; the Deputy Secretary, John Avery, Jr., (commonly referred to in the records of the Council and House of Representatives as the Secretary,) was reading the Declaration from the window of the Meeting House in Watertown. The Order of the Council on July 17 directed that it should "be proclaim'd by the Sherrif of the County of Suffolk, from the Balcony of the State House in Boston, on Thursday Next at One O Clock P M in Presence of & under Direction of a Comitee of Council to be appoint^d for that purpose," . . .

⁴⁴Winsor, *Memorial History*, vol. 3, p. 183.

⁴⁵Hazleton, "The Declaration of Independence," p. 266.

consisting of "James Bowdoin, Artemas Ward, Richard Derby, Thomas Cushing, John Winthrop, Moses Gill, Will^m Phillips, Benj^a Austin & Francis Dana, Esq^{rs}." and at least Bowdoin, Ward, Winthrop, Phillips, and Dana were present.

Family tradition has it that because Sheriff Greenleaf was not of imposing personality and had a weak voice, his place was taken by Colonel Crafts. The most plausible explanation is that either James Bowdoin, President of the Council and Chairman of its Committee or Sheriff Greenleaf read it before the Committee and assembled guests in the Council Chamber, (as the Secretary would have done) and Colonel Crafts read it from the Balcony as the "New England Chronicle," the "Massachusetts Spy" and Mistress Abigail Adams agree. The British officer, only a short time in Boston could easily have mixed his characters as James Bowdoin would have occupied the Chair instead of Colonel Crafts.

"The Massachusetts Spy" of July 24, had a brief account of the Boston proclamation and the following account of the Worcester reading:

On Monday last [July 22] a number of patriotic gentlemen of this town, animated with a love of their country, and to shew their approbation of the measures lately taken by the Grand Council of America, assembled on the green near the liberty pole, where after having displayed the colours of the Thirteen Confederate Colonies of America, the bells were set a ringing and the drums a beating: After which, the Declaration of Independency of the United States was read to a large and respectable body (among whom were the Select-men and Committee of Correspondence) assembled on the occasion, who testified their approbation by repeated huzzas, firing of musquetry and cannon, bonfires, and other demonstrations of joy,—When the arms of that Tyrant in Britain, George the III. of execrable memory, which in former reigns decorated, but of late disgraced the Court-House in this town, were committed to the flames and consumes to ashes; after which a select company of the Sons of Freedom, repaired to the Tavern, lately known by the sign of the King's Arms, which odious signature of despotism was taken down by order of the people, which was chearfully compiled with by the Innkeeper, where

the following toasts were drank—and the Evening spent with joy, on the commencement of the happy æra.

1. Prosperity and perpetuity to the United States of America.
 2. The President of the Grand Council of America.
 3. The Grand Council of America.
 4. His Excellency General Washington.
 5. All the Generals in the American Army.
 6. Commodore Hopkins.
 7. The Officers and Soldiers in the American Army.
 8. The Officers and Seamen in the American Navy.
 9. The Patriots of America.
 10. Every Friend of America.
 11. George rejected and Liberty protected.
 12. Success to the American Arms.
 13. Sore Eyes to all Tories, and a Chestnut Burr for an Eye Stone.
 14. Perpetual itching without the benefit of scratching to the Enemies of America.
 15. The Council and Representatives of the State of Massachusetts-Bay.
 16. The Officers and Soldiers in the Massachusetts service.
 17. The Memory of the brave General Warren.
 18. The memory of the magnanimous General Montgomery.
 19. Speedy redemption to all the Officers and Soldiers who are now Prisoners of war among our Enemies.
 20. The State of Massachusetts-Bay.
 21. The town of Boston.
 22. The Select-men and Committees of Correspondence for the town of Worcester.
 23. May the Enemies of America be laid at her feet.
 24. May the Freedom and Independency of America endure till the sun grows dim with age, and this earth returns to Chaos.
- The greatest decency and good order, was observed, and at a suitable time each man returned to his respective home.

On August 29, the Massachusetts House of Representatives (having assembled again on the 28th at Watertown) received a message from the Council, reading in part as follows:

The important period has at length arrived! The Honorable Congress have declared the United American Colonies, *Free and Independent States*. This declaration we have ordered to be made public, agreeable to the request of Congress, through every part of *Massachusetts-Bay*; and we shall readily concur with you, in expressing our approbation of the measure, and

readiness to *risque our lives and fortunes* in defence and support of it.⁴⁶

On September 4, the House, after various postponements, made answer to the Council:

The House of Representatives have given all due attention to the message from your Honors, of the 28th ultimo, and are desirous of expressing, with a manly fortitude, their entire satisfaction in the *Declaration of Independence*, made by the Honorable Congress, and published, by your Honours order, in this State. They, with great cheerfulness, congratulate your Honours on the very general approbation that measure has met with, through all ranks of people, in this and the other United States of America; and are ready to pledge their fortunes, lives and sacred honour, to support it.⁴⁷

On January 19, 1777, the Continental Congress then sitting at Baltimore

Ordered, That an authenticated copy of the Declaration of Independency, with the names of the members of Congress subscribing the same, be sent to each of the United States, and that they be desired to have the same put upon record.⁴⁸

This Declaration, with the names of the signers, bears the imprint, "Baltimore, in Maryland: Printed by Mary Katherine Goddard." It is of interest to note that this broadside, authenticated in autograph, "Attest Cha^s Thomson Sec^{ry} A True Copy John Hancock Presid^t", was printed by a woman.

On January 31 the following letter, with the authenticated declaration, was sent by John Hancock to the "Hon^{ble} Assembly of the State of Massachusetts Bay":

(Circular)
Gentlemen,

Baltimore Jan^y 31^t 1777.

As there is not a more distinguished Event in the History of America, than the Declaration of her Independence—nor any, that, in all Probability will so much excite the Attention of future [Ages]⁴⁹ it is highly proper, that the Memory of that Transaction, together with the Causes that gave Rise to it, should be preserved in the most careful Manner that can be devised.

⁴⁶"Journal," 1776/7, edition of 1777, p. 74.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴⁸"Journals," vol. 7, p. 48

⁴⁹Burnett, Letters of Members, II, p. 228.

I am therefore commanded by Congress to transmit you the enclosed Copy of the Act of Independence, with the List of the several Members of Congress subscribed thereto—and to request, that you will cause the same to be put upon Record, that it may henceforth form a Part of the Archives of your State, and remain a lasting Testimony of your Approbation of that necessary & important Measure.

I have the Honour to be,

Gentlemen,
your most obed. &
very hble Serv^t.

John Hancock Presid^t

I hope the publick
dispatches of 28 & 30th
Dec^r were safely deliver'd
the Express is return'd, but
bro't no Letter—
Honble Assembly of the State
of Massachusetts Bay⁶⁰

On its receipt the following action was taken:

In Council March 6 1777

Read & thereupon Resolved—That the Secretary be and he hereby is directed to put upon Record the Declaration of Independence referred to in the foregoing Letter—that it may henceforth form a Part of the Archives of this State—

Sent down for Concurrence

Jn^o Avery Dp^y Sec^y

In the House of Represent^s March 7 1777

Read and Concurred

Sam^l Freeman Speak^r P^t

Consented to—

Jer: Powell

A Ward

B Greenleaf

W Spooner

J Winthrop

T Cushing

S Holten

Jabez Fisher

Moses Gill

B White

John Whetcomb

W^m Phillips

Benj Austin

E Thayer j^r

D Hopkins

⁶⁰Mass. Archives, vol. 142, pp. 21, 22.

The Declaration was recorded by Deputy Secretary Avery and filed on March 6 in the Secretary's office, where the original may be found today as "part of the Archives of this State."⁵¹

⁵¹In-letters, 1775-1777, pp. 63-71, and Mass. Archives, vol. 142, p. 23. Another printing (Journals of Congress, vol. 2, pp. 241-246) was recorded in Treaties, Contracts, etc., vol. 1, pp. 41-45, at a later date.

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