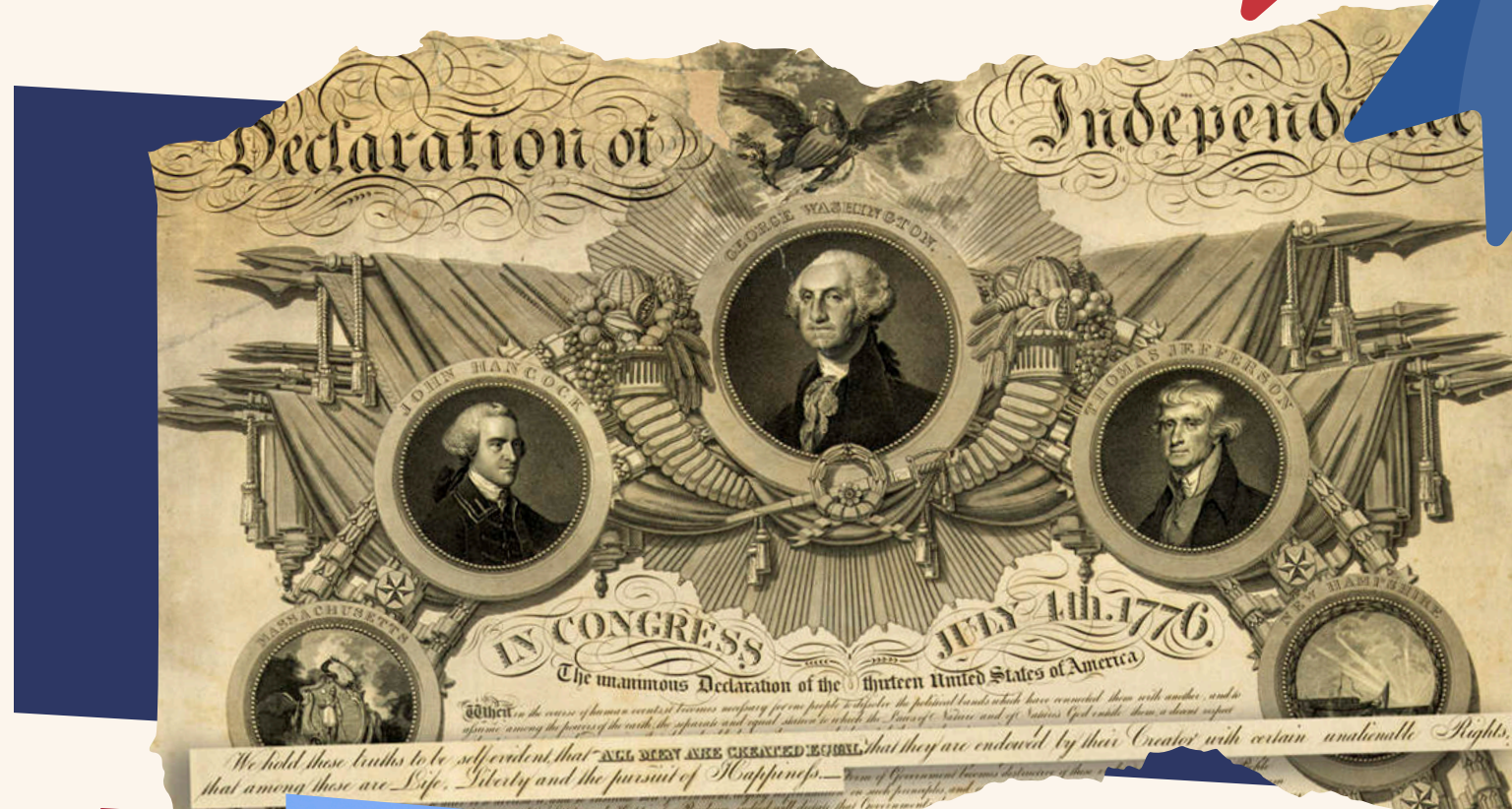




250th Anniversary
of the
DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE

JULY 4, 2026






OVERVIEW



On the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the Vermont Judiciary is pleased to offer this overview of the Declaration of Independence, including a description of:

- key historical events that led to the drafting of the Declaration,
 - the content of the Declaration, and
 - the Declaration's enduring legacy through present day.
- 

THAMES R

KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS



1 Lord N...th
 2 Lord B...te
 3 An East India Director
 4 The infamous K...y
 5 Belzebub, the Prince of Devils whispering to K...y

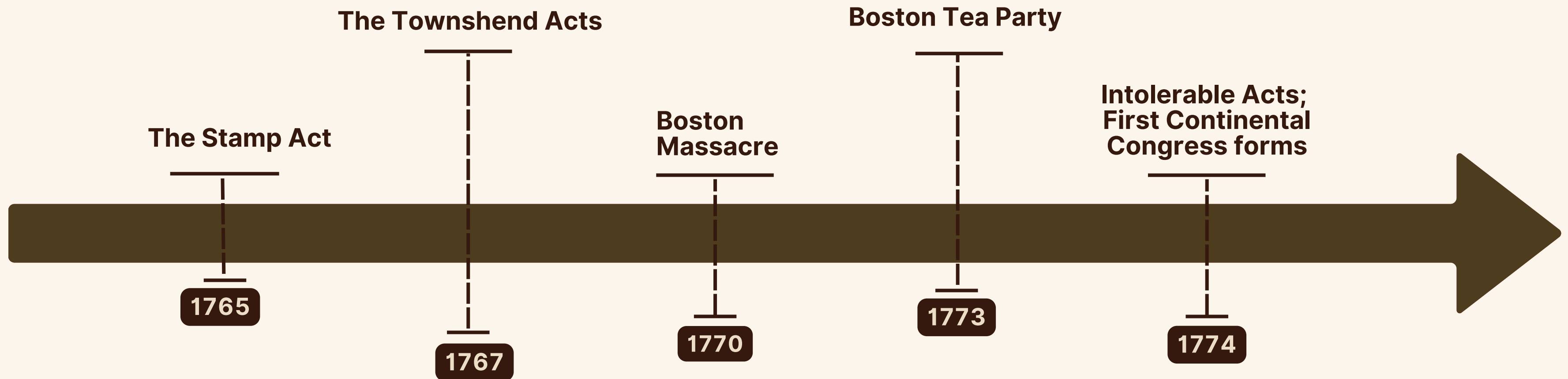
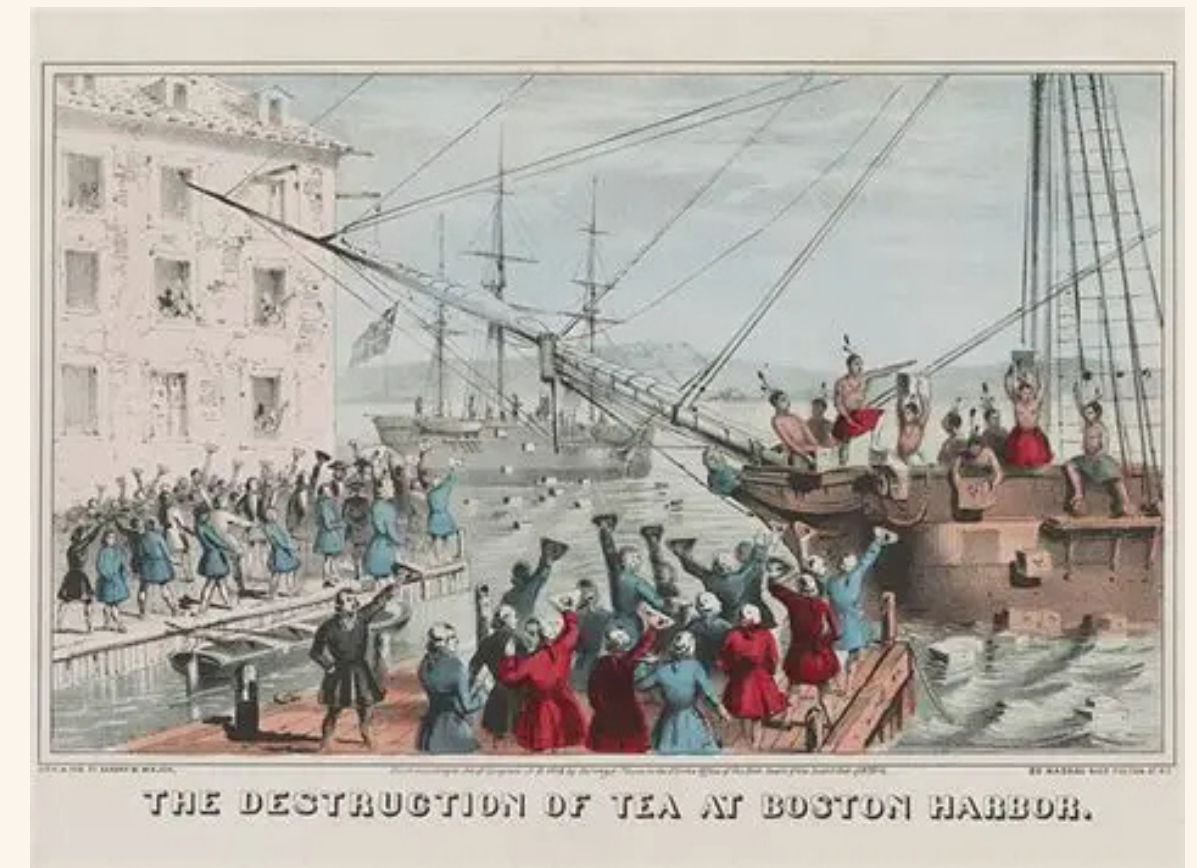
6 The writer of the Papers (signed Poplicola) in favour of the Tea
 7 The Chairman of the India Company
 8 A Group of India Directors
 9 The Patriotic Duke of Richmond
 10 The Genius of Britain
 11 Britannia

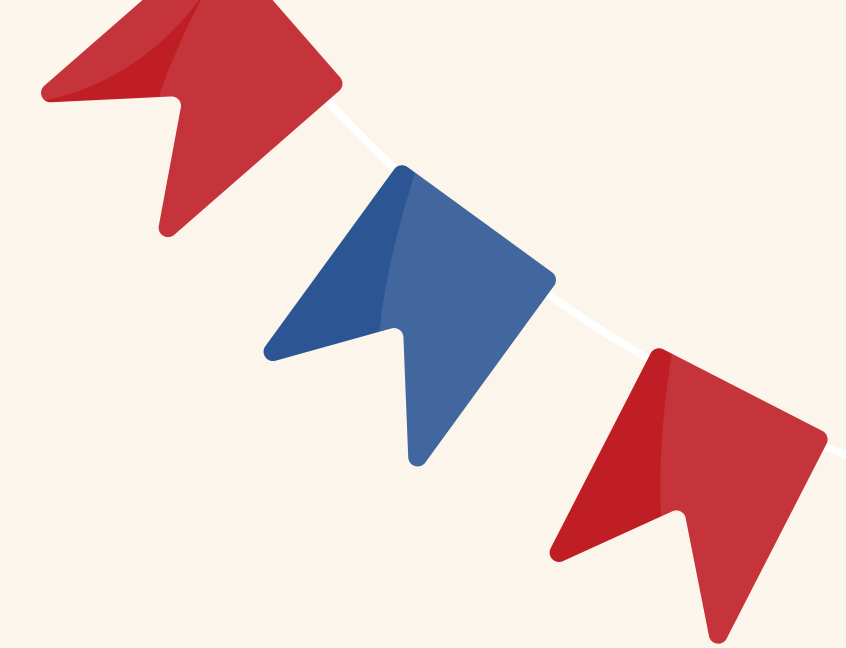
12 America represented by a Woman
 13 The Sons of Liberty represented by the Natives of America, in their savage garb
 14 The Goddess of Liberty, addressing herself to Fame and pointing to her Sons
 15 Fame

16 A view of the Tea Ships in the Harbour of Boston
 17 Capt Loring's Vessel with Tea, Shipwreck'd on Cape Cod
 18 A Group of Disappointed Americans, who were for landing the Tea, in hopes of sharing in the Plunder of their Country



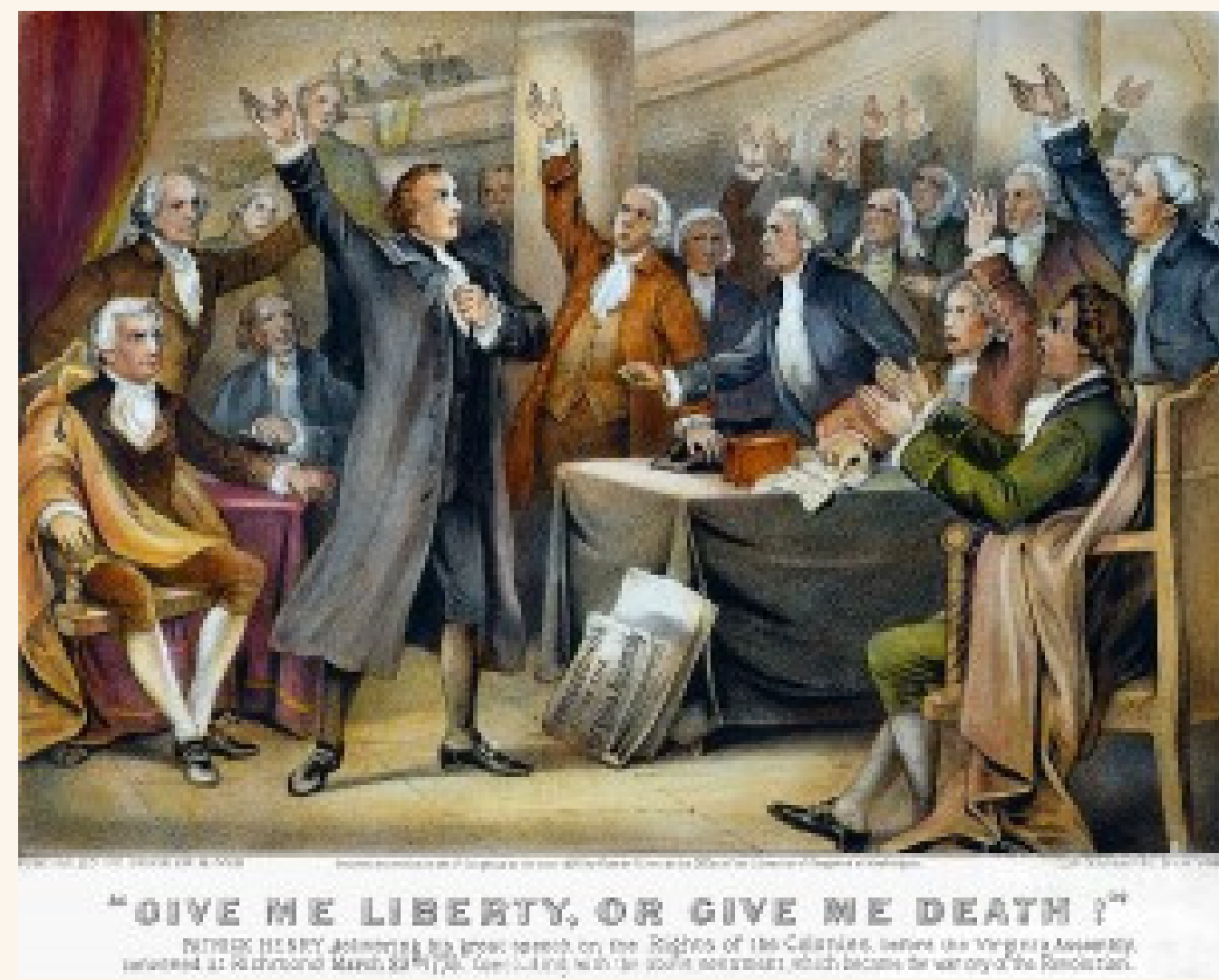
KEY EVENTS PRE-1775 THAT LED TO THE DECLARATION





1775

- Patrick Henry declares, "Give me liberty or give me death!"
- Paul Revere's ride, "The British are coming."
- Battle of Lexington, "The shot heard round the world."
- Colonel Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold seize Fort Ticonderoga and its cannons.



1775 (cont.)

- Second Continental Congress forms.
- George Washington named Commander of the Continental Army.
- Battle of Bunker Hill is first major fight of the war.



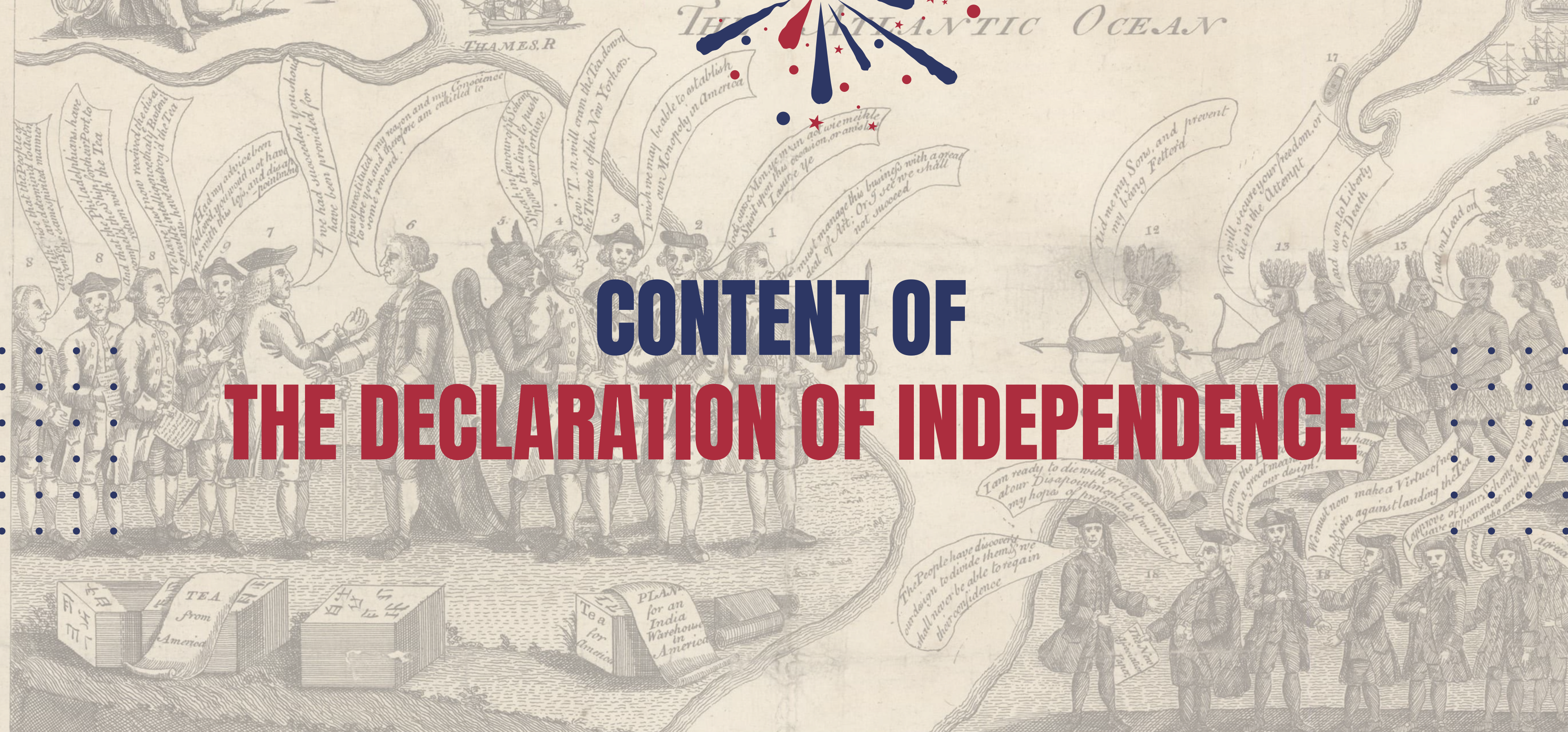
1776

- Thomas Paine published Common Sense on why colonies should secede.
- Thomas Jefferson tasked with writing the first draft of the Declaration.
- The Committee of Five refined the draft.
- Approval and signing of the Declaration were considered acts of treason
 - “We must all hang together or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.”



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CONTENT OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



1 Lord N...th
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PREAMBLE

“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 instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”



PREAMBLE (cont.)

“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and Happiness.”





GRIEVANCES

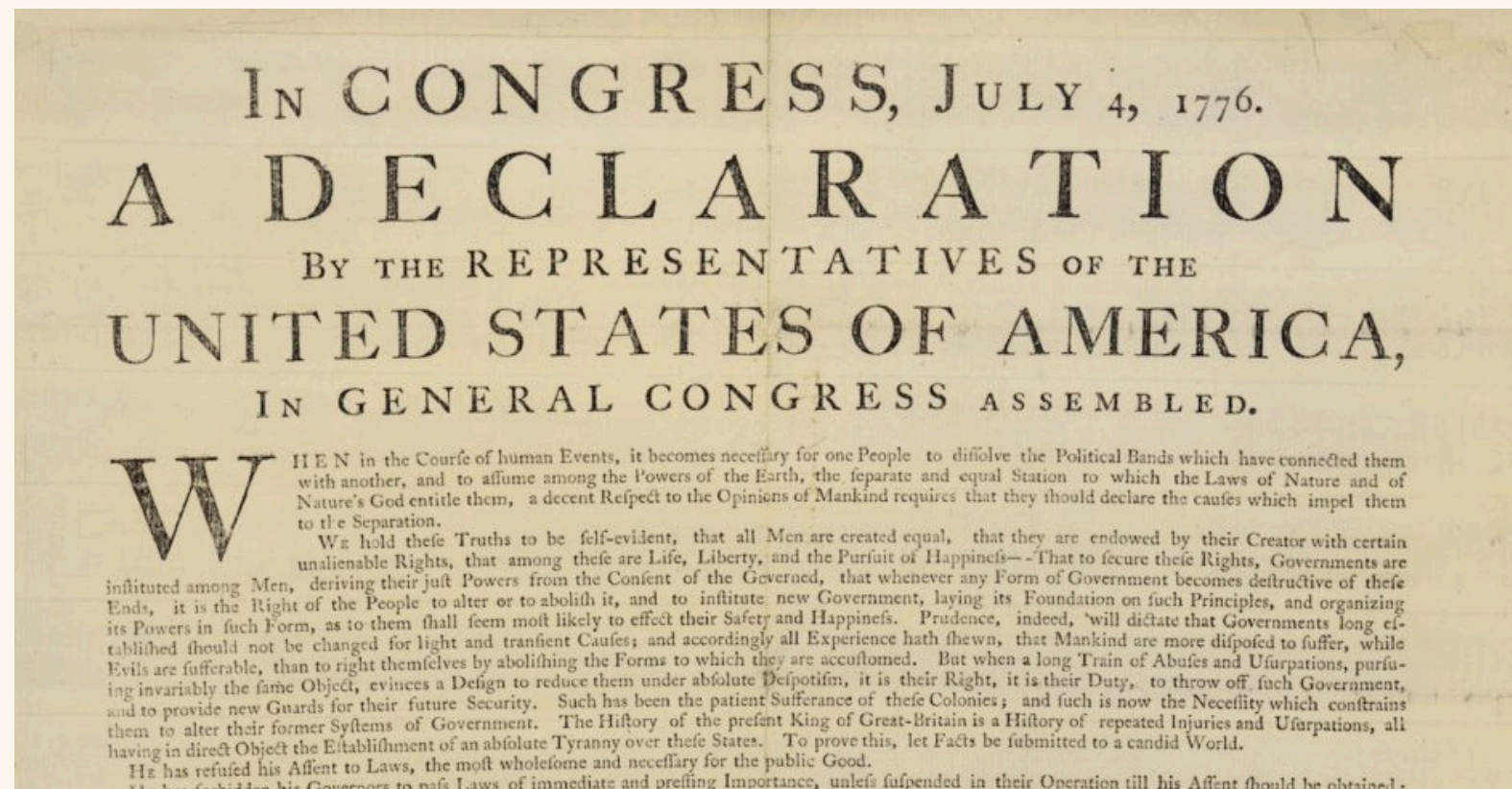
“The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.”

- **For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent**
- **For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world**
- **For abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Government**
- **For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us**
- **For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury**
- **For obstructing the administration of justice by refusing Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers**
- **For making Judges dependent on the King’s Will alone for the tenure of their offices and payment of their salaries**





- “Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.”
- “They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.”





“We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America [the first time this phrase appears in history] in General Congress Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That the United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved of 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 . . .”



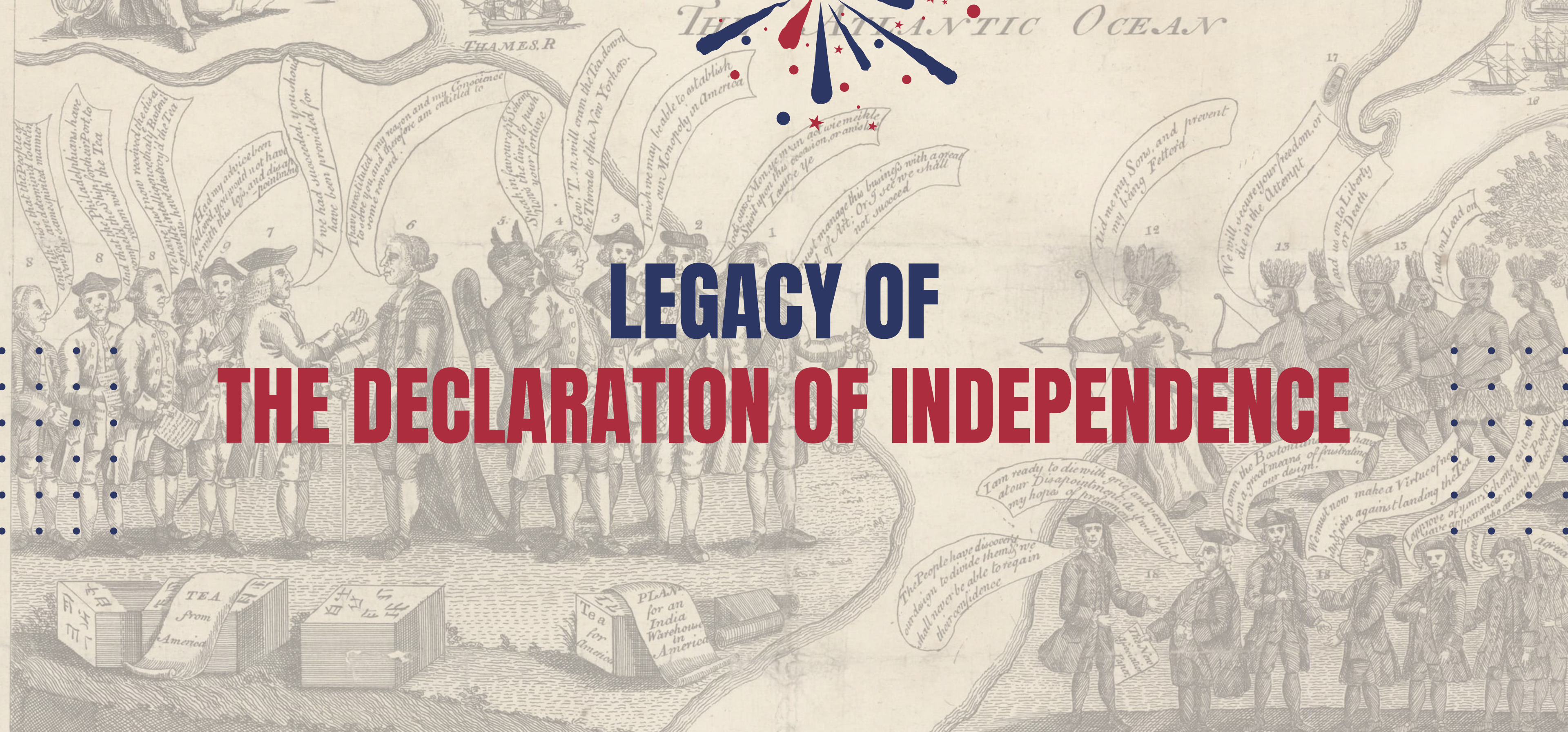
The signers of the Declaration of Independence did so at great personal peril – the act of signing the Declaration was considered to be treason, punishable by death. Each signer pledged:

“And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred honor.”



THAMES R

LEGACY OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



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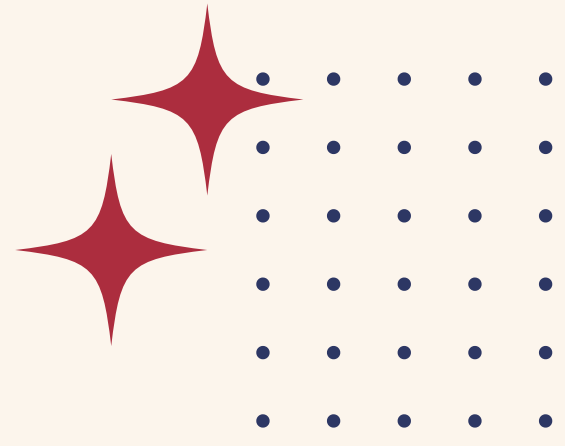


The Declaration of Independence not only declared the colonies' independence from Great Britain, but it laid the groundwork for our government's framework based on principles of liberty and equality.

- **Every individual possesses inherent worth regardless of background.**
- **Every individual has an unalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.**
- **The purpose of government is to secure these rights.**



The Declaration of Independence confirmed that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed and that legitimate authority comes from the people. It laid the foundation for the people's right to vote. Constitutional amendments have clarified voting rights.



- **15th Amendment - voting rights can't be abridged based on race, color or previous condition of servitude.**
- **19th Amendment - women's right to vote made clear**
- **26th Amendment - voting age lowered to 18**



The U.S. Constitution provides the institutions and framework needed to realize the aims of the Declaration of Independence.

- **Establishment of a representative form of government**
- **Principle of separation of powers, with three co-equal branches of government**
- **Power distributed between a central government and state governments**



The background features a field of American flags waving in the wind. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent light beige filter. At the top center, there is a graphic of a firework exploding in blue and red. At the bottom corners, there are stylized firework graphics in red and blue. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

**Thank you for your interest in the
Declaration of Independence!**