



Declaring Independence:

Drafting the Documents

Chronology Of Events:

June 7, 1776 to January 18, 1777 1776

June 7 -- Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, receives Richard Henry Lee's resolution urging Congress to declare independence.

June 11 -- Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston appointed to a committee to draft a declaration of independence. American army retreats to Lake Champlain from Canada.

June 12 - 27 -- Jefferson, at the request of the committee, drafts a declaration, of which only a fragment exists. Jefferson's clean, or "fair" copy, the "original Rough draught," is reviewed by the committee. Both documents are in the manuscript collections of the Library of Congress.

June 28 -- A fair copy of the committee draft of the Declaration of Independence is read in Congress.

July 1 - 4 -- Congress debates and revises the Declaration of Independence.

July 2 -- Congress declares independence as the British fleet and army arrive at New York.

July 4 -- Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence in the morning of a bright, sunny, but cool Philadelphia day. John Dunlap prints the Declaration of Independence. These prints are now called "Dunlap Broad sides." Twenty-four copies are known to exist, two of which are in the Library of Congress. One of these was Washington's personal copy.

July 5 -- John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, dispatches the first of Dunlap's broadsides of the Declaration of Independence to the legislatures of New Jersey and Delaware.

July 6 -- *Pennsylvania Evening Post* of July 6 prints the first newspaper rendition of the Declaration of Independence.

July 8 -- The first public reading of the Declaration is in Philadelphia.

July 9 -- Washington orders that the Declaration of Independence be read before the American army in New York -- from his personal copy of the "Dunlap Broadside."

July 19 -- Congress orders the Declaration of Independence engrossed (officially inscribed) and signed by members.

August 2 -- Delegates begin to sign engrossed copy of the Declaration of Independence. A large British reinforcement arrives at New York after being repelled at Charleston, S.C.

1777

January 18 -- Congress, now sitting in Baltimore, Maryland, orders that signed copies of the Declaration of Independence printed by Mary Katherine Goddard of Baltimore be sent to the states.