

Olive Branch Petition

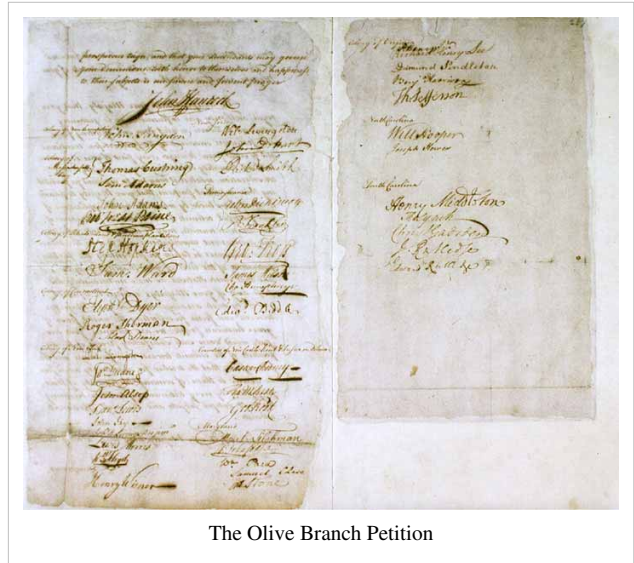
The **Olive Branch Petition** was adopted by the Continental Congress in July 1775 in an attempt to avoid a full-blown war with Great Britain. The petition affirmed American loyalty to Great Britain and entreated the king to prevent further conflict. The petition was rejected, and in August 1775 the colonies were formally declared in rebellion by the Proclamation of Rebellion.^[1]

When the Second Continental Congress convened in May 1775, most delegates followed John Dickinson in his quest to reconcile with George III of Great Britain. However, a smaller group of delegates led by John Adams believed that war was inevitable. During the course of the Second Continental Congress, Adams and his group of colleagues decided the wisest course of action was to remain quiet and wait for the opportune time to rally the people.

This decision allowed John Dickinson and his followers to pursue whatever means of reconciliation they wanted. It was during this time that the idea of the Olive Branch Petition was approved.^[2] The Olive Branch Petition was first drafted by Thomas Jefferson, but John Dickinson found Jefferson's language too offensive. Dickinson rewrote most of the document, although some of the conclusion remained Jefferson's.^[3]^[4] Dickinson claimed that the colonies did not want independence but that they merely wanted to negotiate trade and tax regulations with Great Britain. Dickinson suggested the King draw up a final plan or agreement to settle trade disputes. To help the King with his plan, Dickinson suggested that either the colonists be given free trade and taxes equal to those levied on the people in Great Britain, or no taxes and strict trade regulations. The letter was approved on July 5, but signed and sent to London on July 8, 1775.^[3] Dickinson had hoped that word of the bloodshed at Lexington and Concord combined with the "Humble Petition" would inspire the King to at least negotiate with the colonists.^[2]

However, his petition was undermined due to a confiscated letter of John Adams. John Adams wrote a letter to a friend expressing his discontent with the Olive Branch Petition. He wrote war was inevitable and he thought the Colonies should have already raised a navy and captured British officials. This confiscated letter arrived in Great Britain at about the same time as the Olive Branch petition. The British used Adams' letter to claim that the Olive Branch Petition was insincere.^[3]

Although the King discarded the petition, it still served a very important purpose in American Independence. The King's rejection gave Adams and others who favored revolution the opportunity they needed to push for independence. The rejection of the "olive branch" polarized the issue in the minds of colonists. It suggested that they could either submit unconditionally or seek complete independence by war.



The Olive Branch Petition

References

- [1] Bailey, Thomas, David Kennedy, and Lizabeth Cohen. *The American Pageant*. 11th ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998. 8 Oct 2009.
- [2] Ferling, John E; *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic*; Oxford [England]; New York. Oxford University Press, 2003.
- [3] Brown, Weldon A.; *Empire or independence; A Study in the Failure of Reconciliation, 1774-1783*; Port Washington, N. Y., Kennikat Press; 1966, c1941.
- [4] Christie, Ian R; Labaree, Benjamin W; *Empire or Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution*; New York : Norton, c1976.

External links

- [Full text of the petition](#)

Article Sources and Contributors

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