

The DECLARATION *of* INDEPENDENCE *in*
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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*American State Papers, Petitions, Proclamations,
& Letters of the Delegates to the First National Congresses*

Compiled, Edited, and Introduced by

BARRY ALAN SHAIN



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The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo is the earliest-known appearance of the word "freedom" (*amagi*), or "liberty." It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

Published with assistance from the foundation established in memory of Amasa Stone Mather of the Class of 1907, Yale College.

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*To my wife,
Carolyn Nagase Shain,
whose support,
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DOCUMENT CHRONOLOGY

Metropolitan British documents listed below are bolded to assist readers in getting a sense of the tit-for-tat nature of the persistent, even tragic pattern of the deteriorating imperial relationship between the colonies and Great Britain. Displaying this graphically helps, in part, to dispel the too-common assumption that the congressional delegates consistently directed events toward an outcome they uniformly sought and understood, guided by an agreed-upon philosophy that would support the emergence of republican polities outside the British Empire. Instead, the reactive nature of the colonists' developing positions is readily mapped out in their responses to misguided British policies. Only the most significant British documents have been included in this volume; many more could have been added.

- 1754: July 9, the Albany Plan of Union
- 1764: October 18, New York Petitions to the King and House of Commons
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December 18, Virginia Petitions to the King and Parliament
- 1765: June–December, Resolves of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts, South Carolina, New Jersey, and New York
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early June, 1775)
May 30, Grey Cooper’s Letter Written for Lord North
June–July(?), Benjamin Franklin’s Vindication
June 2, 3, and 9, Response to Massachusetts Bay’s Request for
Instructions on Forming a New Government
June 12, First Proclamation for a Day of Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer
July ?, John Dickinson to Arthur Lee

DOCUMENT CHRONOLOGY

- July 6, Declaration on Taking Arms
July 8, Olive Branch Petition to the King
July 8, The Twelve United Colonies to the Inhabitants of Great-Britain
July 8, Congress to the Lord Mayor of London and to the Colonial Agents
July 13, A Speech to the Six Confederate Nations
July 21, Benjamin Franklin, Articles of Confederation
July 28, An Address of the Twelve United Colonies to the People of Ireland
July 31, Report on Lord North's Peace Proposal
August 23, George III, Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition (received in the colonies on October 31, 1775)
October 18, John Adams, Autobiography
October 26, George III, Speech to Parliament (received in the colonies on January 8, 1776)
November 2, Samuel Ward to Henry Ward
November 3 and 4, and December 4, Congress, Response to
 New Hampshire's Request for Instructions on Forming a
 New Government; Instructions for South Carolina and Virginia
 Concerning Forming New Governments
November 25, John Adams to Joseph Hawley
November 29, Congress to Colonial Agents
December 6, Congress, Answer to the King's Proclamation for
 Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition
December 8, Edward Rutledge to Ralph Izard
December 9, Benjamin Franklin to Charles William Frederic Dumas
December 9, Robert Morris to an Unknown Correspondent
December 22, American Prohibitory Act (received in the colonies on
 February 26, 1776)
1776: January (?), John Jay, "Essay on Congress and Independence"
 January 2, "The Origin, Nature, and Extent of the Present Controversy"
 January 9–24(?), John Dickinson, Proposed Resolutions on a
 Petition to the King
 January 13, Josiah Bartlett to John Langdon
 January 17, John Hancock to Thomas Cushing
 February 13, Address to the Inhabitants of the Colonies
 February 13, Richard Smith, Diary Entry
 February 16, Richard Smith, Diary Entry
 March 5, Josiah Bartlett to John Langdon
 March 16, Second Proclamation for a Day of Humiliation,
 Fasting, and Prayer
 March 18, Richard Smith, Diary Entry
 March 20, Joseph Hewes to Samuel Johnston