



The American Revolution

A Historical Series Sponsored by William Hightower Chapter #35
Sons of the American Revolution

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The Second Continental Congress: Article 1 of 1

Shots heard around the World had been fired in anger at both Lexington and Concord, and men from both sides had died. On 10 May 1775, The Second Continental Congress was called to order in Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Many of the same 56 delegates attending the First Continental Congress were present at this latter meeting. Payton Randolph and Charles Thompson would serve as President and Secretary respectively. New arrivals were Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, and John Hancock of Massachusetts. After about two weeks of meetings, the following changes took place: Randolph Payton returned to Virginia to preside over the House of Burgesses, John Hancock eventually took Randolph's place as President of the convention, and new delegate, Thomas Jefferson, replaced Randolph as Virginia's Representative.

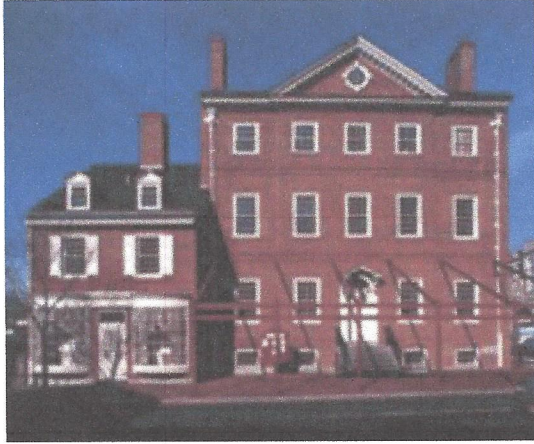
Twelve of the thirteen colonies had representatives at this second meeting, Georgia once again being the lone abstainer. On 13 May 1775, Lyman Hall was admitted as a delegate from the Parish of St. John's in the colony of Georgia, but Georgia was still considered as having no delegate. On 4 July 1775, Georgia held a Provincial Congress, which voted on 8 July, to send delegates to the 2nd Congress; they arrived at the Congress on 20 July 1775.

The Second Continental Congress expeditiously took charge of America's war effort, adding some degree of order and organization to the post Lexington and Concord disarray. After the contest in Massachusetts, the Patriots carried on the struggle in an independent, but disorganized manner. They seized arsenals, drove Royalist officials from office, and set up the siege of Boston. This Congress acted on 14 June 1775, to create out of the militias encircling Boston, a Continental Line Army. They quickly followed that action by appointing Congressman George Washington as Commander-in-Chief. Next, they produced a Declaration of Causes, which explained the rationale and necessity for the hostile actions of the thirteen colonies. This declaration was approved on 6 July 1775. Two days later, 8 July 1775, Congress submitted to the British Crown a petition known as the "Olive Branch Petition." This body appointed Silas Deane as Ambassador to France and reopened all American ports in defiance of the British Navigation Acts.

As the reader can easily surmise, this Congress was busy appointing ambassadors, signing treaties, raising armies, appointing generals, obtaining loans and issuing paper money and all without one dot of authority to do so. They had no authority to levy taxes, and



Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, site of the 1st & 2nd Continental Congresses



*Henry Fite's Tavern, Baltimore Maryland,
second home to the Continental Congress*

therefore had to request funds for supplies and troops be provided by each colony. On 2 July 1776 Congress would finally take up the issue of a resolution of independence, and on 4 July 1776, The United States Declaration of Independence would be approved and published.

The Second Continental Congress would continue to meet until 1 March 1781, but would change locations several times during the war. The first change would be made 20 December 1776, when the British Army would be threatening Philadelphia. During that winter, Congress would meet at Henry Fite's Tavern in the city of Baltimore. It was a comfortable location of sufficient size and situated on the western edge of town beyond the reach of His Majesty's ships, should they decide to sail up the Patapsco River and shell the town.