

This Day in History... March 23, 1775

Patrick Henry Delivers Famous Speech

On March 23, 1775, Patrick Henry addressed the Second Virginia Convention to convince them to raise a militia. During his rousing speech, he delivered one of his most famous statements...

Virginia native Patrick Henry was a prominent statesman best remembered for his fiery speeches that helped inspire the American Revolution. Henry was born in Hanover County, Virginia, and attended public schools for a short time. Although he was quite capable intellectually, it was generally understood that Henry lacked ambition at an early age. His father assumed responsibility for Henry's education, and eventually set the young man up with a business that he soon bankrupted.

Henry received his license to practice law after just six weeks of study and quickly made a name for himself in a lawsuit known as the "Parson's Cause." The case concerned the question of whether the price of tobacco paid to clergy for their services should be set by the Colonial government or the Crown. In a brilliant oration, Henry cited a basic constitutional principle in English law, which held that only a representative assembly had the power to levy taxes on the people it represents. Because the colonists had no representation in the assembly, Henry argued, the king had no right to tax them. The first seeds of revolution were sown with Henry's courtroom victory over the English Crown.

In 1765, Henry was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses (the legislative body of the Virginia colony). He soon became a leader and advocated the causes of less fortunate individuals against the old aristocracy. Henry also upheld the rights given to the colonies in their charters.

Henry proposed the Virginia Stamp Act Resolutions in 1765, which continued his argument against taxation without representation. He extended the argument to assert that the Colonial assemblies had the exclusive right to tax the colonies and could not assign those rights to the Crown. As accusations of treason rose from the assembly, Henry is said to have proclaimed, "If this be treason, make the most of it."



This stamp was part of the American Credo series, honoring the ideals America was founded upon and the individuals who inspired them.

Henry is best known for his March 23, 1775, speech to the Second Virginia Convention in Richmond. Days earlier Henry presented a number of resolutions supporting his idea that they needed to raise a militia. However, several present opposed his idea, believing they should be cautious and wait until the British crown replied to Congress' most recent petition for peace.

The deeply divided house was close to deciding against committing troops when Henry rose to speak. He ended the profound speech with his most famous words, "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" The speech is credited with convincing Virginians to join the Revolutionary War.

Patrick Henry led a military force from Virginia during the Revolutionary War. Then, in 1776, he was elected to the first of five terms as Virginia's governor. Two years later, Henry voted in opposition of the US Constitution. However, he accepted its ultimate ratification and was instrumental in framing its first 10 amendments, which are known as the Bill of Rights. Henry died at his estate in Brookneal, Virginia, in 1799.



Henry stamp from the Liberty Series

This Day in History... March 23, 1775

Patrick Henry Delivers Famous Speech

On March 23, 1775, Patrick Henry addressed the Second Virginia Convention to convince them to raise a militia. During his rousing speech, he delivered one of his most famous statements...

Virginia native Patrick Henry was a prominent statesman best remembered for his fiery speeches that helped inspire the American Revolution. Henry was born in Hanover County, Virginia, and attended public schools for a short time. Although he was quite capable intellectually, it was generally understood that Henry lacked ambition at an early age. His father assumed responsibility for Henry's education, and eventually set the young man up with a business that he soon bankrupted.

Henry received his license to practice law after just six weeks of study and quickly made a name for himself in a lawsuit known as the "Parson's Cause." The case concerned the question of whether the price of tobacco paid to clergy for their services should be set by the Colonial government or the Crown. In a brilliant oration, Henry cited a basic constitutional principle in English law, which held that only a representative assembly had the power to levy taxes on the people it represents. Because the colonists had no representation in the assembly, Henry argued, the king had no right to tax them. The first seeds of revolution were sown with Henry's courtroom victory over the English Crown.

In 1765, Henry was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses (the legislative body of the Virginia colony). He soon became a leader and advocated the causes of less fortunate individuals against the old aristocracy. Henry also upheld the rights given to the colonies in their charters.

Henry proposed the Virginia Stamp Act Resolutions in 1765, which continued his argument against taxation without representation. He extended the argument to assert that the Colonial assemblies had the exclusive right to tax the colonies and could not assign those rights to the Crown. As accusations of treason rose from the assembly, Henry is said to have proclaimed, "If this be treason, make the most of it."



This stamp was part of the American Credo series, honoring the ideals America was founded upon and the individuals who inspired them.

Henry is best known for his March 23, 1775, speech to the Second Virginia Convention in Richmond. Days earlier Henry presented a number of resolutions supporting his idea that they needed to raise a militia. However, several present opposed his idea, believing they should be cautious and wait until the British crown replied to Congress' most recent petition for peace.

The deeply divided house was close to deciding against committing troops when Henry rose to speak. He ended the profound speech with his most famous words, "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" The speech is credited with convincing Virginians to join the Revolutionary War.

Patrick Henry led a military force from Virginia during the Revolutionary War. Then, in 1776, he was elected to the first of five terms as Virginia's governor. Two years later, Henry voted in opposition of the US Constitution. However, he accepted its ultimate ratification and was instrumental in framing its first 10 amendments, which are known as the Bill of Rights. Henry died at his estate in Brookneal, Virginia, in 1799.



Henry stamp from the Liberty Series