

Georgia and the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence was a document drafted heavily by the ideas of Thomas Jefferson. The document stated that the colonies would be totally independent from the rule of Great Britain. The colonies were frustrated and tired at the unfair treatment by the British government. The Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776. Three Georgians would sign the document to approve it.

The **Declaration of Independence** was divided into three different parts. The first part is the **preamble**. It outlines and states how all people should have basic rights and freedoms in the United States. The second part was a detailed and direct list of grievances and problems against the king of Britain. A **grievance** is a formal, stated complaint. The third and final part, the actual Declaration of Independence, officially told Britain that the colonies are now independent and separated from Great Britain.

Like most wars, there were two sides to the Revolutionary War inside the colonies: the patriots and the loyalists. The **patriots** supported the Declaration of Independence and freedom from Great Britain. The **loyalists** supported and aligned with Britain and the king. It was dangerous and potentially lethal for the patriots to create the Declaration of Independence. If Britain had won the war, they would have punished heavily and made examples of it. They probably would have been swiftly executed for going against the King of Britain. However, Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, and Georgia Walton signed the Declaration of Independence. They signed on behalf of Georgia.

Button Gwinnett purchased all of St. Catherine's Island when he arrived in the colony of Georgia. He was a strong supporter of absolute and total independence from Britain. He was involved in all aspects and levels of government in Georgia. He would later be involved in the Continental Congress and sign the Declaration of Independence. Lachlan McIntosh had a bitter rivalry with Gwinnett. They both agreed to a duel. Gwinnett's wounds were fatal, and he died in 1777. Gwinnett County in north Georgia is named in his honor.

Lyman Hall moved to the colony of Georgia in 1760. He had born in Connecticut, attended Yale University, and became a minister. He then relocated to Georgia to be a doctor. Hall would be the only person from Georgia participating at times in the Continental Congress. Because of this, he would attend but refrain from voting. **Refrain** means to resist. He could not vote because there were not any other representatives from other sections of Georgia. When more representatives joined him, he voted quickly for independence from Britain. When he returned to Georgia after signing the declaration, he became governor. Hall also helped establish the University of Georgia and had Hall County named after him in his remembrance.

George Walton was born in the colony of Virginia in 1749. When he was 20 years old, he moved to Georgia, where he became a well-known lawyer. He was later appointed to the Continental Congress and signed the Declaration of Independence. While fighting against the British, he was captured. He was eventually able to return to Georgia through a prisoner exchange with the British. He would go on to have a successful political career in many different areas. He would be governor of Georgia, elected to Congress, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, another term as governor, and a superior court judge.

While Georgia did have people who signed the Declaration of Independence, it differed from other colonies. Georgia was seen as a small, poor colony with no major industry. Many viewed it as unhelpful in the cause of independence. Because of this, the signers from Georgia felt isolated and distant from the rest of the colonies. Their signatures are in the far left section of the declaration, separated from the other signatures.