

## Patrick Henry, the Eloquent Patriot



### Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry was born in 1736 in Hanover County. His father was a lawyer of much intelligence, and his mother belonged to a fine old Welsh family. When he was fifteen years old, his father put him into a country store where he tried his hand at storekeeping, which failed.

When finally he decided to practice law, after only studying for six months, he applied for admission to the bar. The new occupation of an lawyer served him well and in 1765, after the passage of the Stamp Act by the English Parliament, he went to Williamsburg to attend the session of the Virginia House of Burgesses, where he was elected a member. The countryside was stirred up by the news of the new Stamp Act.

Most of the members of the House of Burgesses were wealthy planters, men of dignity and influence and spoke kindly of England as the "mother" of the colonies. But Patrick Henry was prepared and had written a series of resolutions upon the blank leaf taken from a law-book. He arose and offered them to the assembly. One of these resolutions declared that the

General Assembly of the colony had the sole right and power of laying taxes in the colony.

A hot debate followed, in the course of which Patrick Henry, ablaze with indignation, arose and addressed the body. His speech closed with these thrilling words: "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third... " Before he could finish the assembly shouted "Treason! Treason!" Pausing a moment in a fearless attitude, the young orator calmly continued, "...may profit from their example.

If this be treason make the most of it." Henry was so persuasive that the resolutions were passed! Henry became popular for his orations and the challenge of defiance vibrated throughout America. The rhetoric encouraged the colonists to unite against the oppressive taxation of King George.

As a whole, the English people did not support the King and some of its wisest statesmen believed he was making a great mistake in trying to tax the Americans without their consent. Said William Pitt, in a stirring speech in the House of Commons: "Sir, I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of all the rest." Night Watchman Announced the Capture of Cornwallis How to Revolutionary War Affected those at Home This is the time for War! 1776.

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