

# First continental congress essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The First Continental Congress The American dream is built upon a foundation of struggles and gains, along with more struggles. A look back to early American History provides one with a timeline that seems endless and full of surprises. The First Continental Congress serves as one of those timeline markers and is a great example of the American way. Being one of the first meetings ever between the colonists, The First Continental Congress laid one of the first bricks into the foundation of America. The First Continental Congress made its mark in history on September 5, 1774 in Philadelphia's Carpenters Hall.

According to the u-s-history. com website, " The idea of such a meeting was advanced a year earlier by Benjamin Franklin, but failed to gain much support until after the Port of Boston was closed in response to the Boston Tea Party. " Twelve of the thirteen colonies sent representatives to this secret meeting, " Georgia decided against roiling the waters; they were facing attacks from the restive Creek on their borders and desperately needed the support of regular British soldiers. The Intolerable Acts of 1774 greatly fueled the First Continental Congress.

In response to the Boston Tea party, the British Parliament decided that a series of laws were needed to calm the rising resistance in America. " One law closed Boston Harbor until Bostonians paid for the destroyed tea. Another law restricted the activities of the Massachusetts legislature and gave added powers to the post of governor of Massachusetts. " As one can imagine, the American colonist viewed this as the British attempt to curtail their quest for independence. When hearing a discussion of the First Continental Congress, many believe that the members, elected by the

people, by the colonial legislatures, or by the committees of correspondence of the respective colonies , convened to fight for independence.

Independence was not the issue at this meeting, rather the members in Congress sought to “ right the wrongs” that the colonies had endured.

Along with that redemption, the members of the First Continental Congress sought to gain a voice in London, something they were denied of. One cannot truly grasp the magnitude of this Continental Congress until we look at the prominent figures in attendance during this time. There were 55 delegates in Carpenter’s Hall but perhaps the most prominent figures include, “ George Washington, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, John Jay and John Dickinson. ” The delegates were mainly those of high social standing and many made their living in the fields of “ trade, farming and law. ” Communication between the colonies was very minimal, therefore many delegates were meeting for the first time and all would have different opinions and issues.

Members of the First Continental Congress did not suffer from lack of communication, as “ The first few weeks were consumed in discussion and debate. The colonies had always, up to this time, acted as independent entities. ” With that many delegates had to overcome distrust and learn to work as a whole body rather than individuals with different agendas. The agenda at the First Continental Congress was not completely clear in the eyes of the delegates. Leadership, during this time, was crucial and once this issue was resolved, three main objectives became clear.

The congress had three objectives: to compose a statement of colonial rights, to identify British parliaments violation of those rights, and to provide a plan that would convince Britain to restore those rights. " The members of the First Continental Congress, now underway, began conducting affairs with a proposal by Joseph Galloway. Joseph Galloway, a Pennsylvanian conservative, proposed what he called a Plan of Union. The plan became popular to most members " as it proposed a popularly elected Grand Council which would represent the interests of the colonies as a whole, and would be a continental equivalent to the English Parliament. To mimic the English Crown, Galloway proposed the position of the President General; in this position the President General would have the authority to rule in America just like the King of England.

Another important aspect of this Plan of Union was that each body would have a veto over one another in matters relating to the colonies. It is said that debate between the conservatives and radicals reached a peak during this time. Galloway's plan seemed destined to pass through the First Continental Congress until Paul Revere rode into town bearing the Suffolk reserves. The Suffolk Reserves, according to the u-s-history. com website, were " a series of political statements that had been forwarded to Philadelphia by a number of Boston-area communities. " The Suffolk Reserves proclaimed numerous things: " They proclaimed the Coercive Acts to be unconstitutional and void; they urged Massachusetts to establish a separate free state until the Coercive Acts were repealed, called for the creation and enforcement of a boycott of British goods and trade with Britain

and announced that subjects no longer owe loyalty to a king who violates their rights.

The arrival of the Suffolk Resolves shifted focus from Galloway's Plan of Union and, as a result, the plan was defeated by a majority vote on September 17, 1774. With the passage of the Suffolk Resolves, "Massachusetts had unmistakably emerged as the leader of the resistance against British policies...clearly revolutionary steps and exceeded the actions taken previously by the other colonies." After the Suffolk Resolves, the delegates focused their attention on adopting what they called The Association. This occurred in October 20, 1774 and can be called "the ultimate form of non-importation agreement" The objective of the Continental Association (or Association), was to enforce a complete boycott of trade with England, Ireland and the British West Indies. This non-importation agreement was set to begin on December 1, 1774 unless parliament decided to repeal the Intolerable Acts by September.

The delegates adopted a second phase of the Association, if England had not responded by the deadline; a complete boycott of English goods, already being consumed in America, would be encouraged. General compliance within America was great, local committees were set up to monitor behavior and those found not following the Association were humiliated and ostracized. The Association was "generally successful during its short life. Enforcement committees were formed in all but one of the colonies and trade with Britain plummeted.

" The Association dissolved when fighting broke out on American soil in April 1775, which ceased the efforts to change British policies. Perhaps the most important object to come out of the First Continental Congress was the Declaration of Rights and Grievances. The document was composed of American complaints and was addressed to the King, George III, not parliament. The Declaration of Rights and Grievances outlined several given rights that the colonists felt England must honor.

Among them were: " That they are entitled to life, liberty, and property, and they have never ceded to any sovereign power whatever, a right to dispose of either without their consent, That by such emigration they by no means forfeited, surrendered, or lost any of those rights, but that they were, and their descendants now are, entitled to the.... That the foundation of English liberty, and of all free government, is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council: and as the English colonists are not represented, and from their local and other circumstances...etc. " The Declaration of Rights and Grievances laid the foundation for many of other documents; some even argue that it laid the foundation for the Articles of Confederation, as well as the Constitution along with numerous others. The First Continental Congress had now mapped out what many believe to be impossible. The delegates had put aside personal vendettas or opinions in order to establish some sense of unity among the colonists.

They had spent several months discussing course of actions and felt they had enough to get their point across. The members of the First Continental Congress agreed to close the session on October 26, 1774 with plans to reconvene if their demands were not met by England. This meeting would go

<https://assignbuster.com/first-continental-congress-essay/>

on to be called the Second Continental Congress of May 1775. When looking at the First Continental Congress from a history student's perspective, one cannot help but to call it somewhat of a success. The delegates had a purpose and seemed to band together to convey that message to its motherland. Along with this, the colonists had now walked in the shoes of other colonists, before this Congress, the colonists had little to no contact with each other, which helped to strengthen British control.

Their demands may not have been completely met, but the First Continental Congress paved the way for our freedom and greatly influenced the way we view American History.