

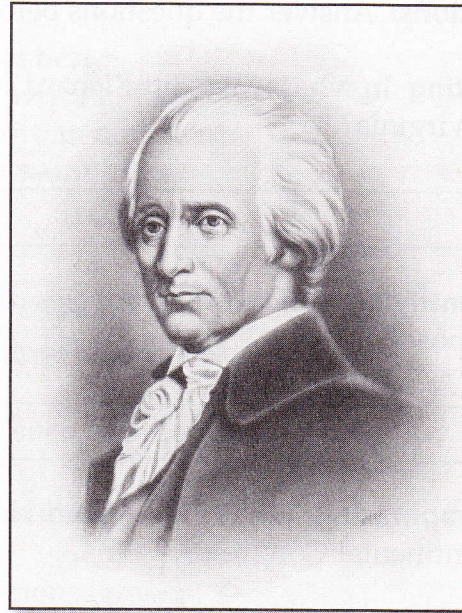
**BIOGRAPHY ACTIVITY 2****Richard Henry Lee (1732–1794)**

Although he is not considered the father of our country, Richard Henry Lee in many respects was a chief architect of it. As a member of the Continental Congress, Lee introduced a resolution stating that “These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.” Lee’s resolution led the Congress to commission the Declaration of Independence and forever shaped U.S. history.

Lee was born to a wealthy family in Virginia and educated at one of the finest schools in England. Following his return to America, Lee served as a justice of the peace for Westmoreland County, Virginia, in 1757. The following year, he entered Virginia’s House of Burgesses. For much of that time, however, Lee was a quiet and almost indifferent member of Virginia’s state legislature. That changed in 1765, when Lee joined Patrick Henry in a spirited debate opposing the Stamp Act. Lee also spoke out against the Townshend Acts and worked to establish committees of correspondence that supported cooperation between American colonies.

An Active Patriot

When tensions with Britain increased, the colonies organized the Continental Congress. Lee and Henry served as delegates from Virginia. Lee took part in many historic decisions in the Congress. For example, he was on the committee that named George Washington as Commander in Chief of the new Continental Army. Lee argued strongly for independence, and on June 7, 1776, he introduced three important resolutions. The first stated that all



Richard Henry Lee

political connections with Britain be “totally dissolved.” The second called for creating ties with foreign countries. The third resolution called for forming a confederation of American colonies. John Adams, a delegate from Massachusetts, seconded Lee’s resolution. A Declaration of Independence was quickly drafted.

Loyalty to Virginia

Despite his support for the colonies’ separation from Britain, Lee cautioned against a strong national government. A supporter of states’ rights, he refused to adopt the new U.S. Constitution. He argued that “to say that a bad government must be established for fear of anarchy is really saying that we should kill ourselves for fear of dying.” Lee’s opposition led to the adoption of the Constitution’s first 10 amendments, known as the Bill of Rights.



BIOGRAPHY ACTIVITY 2 (continued)

Richard Henry Lee

Directions: Answer the questions below in the space provided.

- 1. Listing** In what ways did Richard Henry Lee serve the colony of Virginia?

- 2. Identifying** What British policies did Richard Henry Lee oppose?

- 3. Paraphrasing** What did Richard Henry Lee propose to the Continental Congress?

- 4. Explaining** Why did Richard Henry Lee oppose the U.S. Constitution?

- 5. Critical Thinking: Making Connections** Explain why Richard Henry Lee's opposition to the U.S. Constitution was consistent with his support of American independence.
