

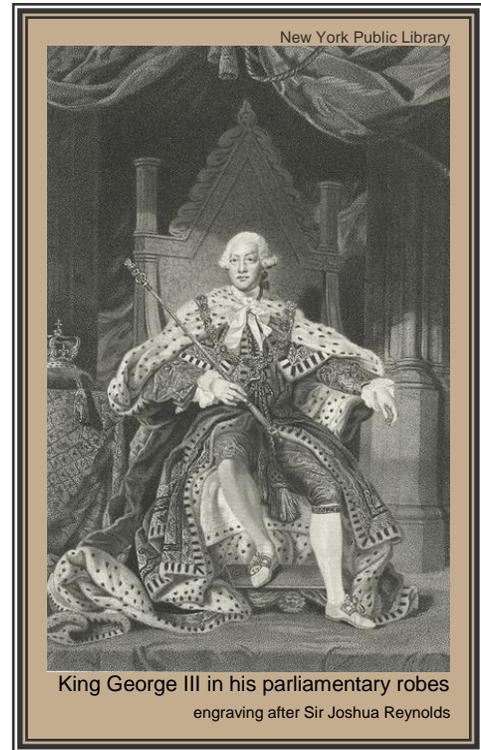
The First Continental Congress
Philadelphia, October 1774

__PETITION TO KING GEORGE III__
EXCERPTS

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

WE your majesty's faithful subjects of the colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the counties of Newcastle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of those colonies, who have deputed us to represent them in general congress, by this our humble petition beg leave to lay our grievances before the throne.

- __ A standing army has been kept in these colonies ever since the conclusion of the late war [French and Indian War] without the consent of our assemblies; and this army, with a considerable naval armament, has been employed to enforce the collection of taxes.
- __ The authority of the commander in chief and, under him, of the brigadiers general, has in time of peace been rendered supreme in all the civil governments in America.
- __ The commander in chief of all your majesty's forces in North America has, in time of peace, been appointed governor of a colony.
- __ The charges of usual officers have been greatly increased, and new, expensive, and oppressive officers have been multiplied.
- __ The judges of admiralty and vice-admiralty courts are empowered to receive their salaries and fees from the effects condemned by themselves.
- __ The officers of the customs are empowered to break open and enter houses without the authority of any civil magistrate founded on legal information.
- __ The judges of courts of common law have been made entirely dependent on one part [of] the legislature for their salaries as well as for the duration of their commissions.
- __ Councilors, holding their commissions during pleasure, exercise legislative authority.
- __ Humble and reasonable petitions from the representatives of the people have been fruitless.
- __ The agents of the people have been discountenanced, and governors have been instructed to prevent the payment of their salaries.
- __ Assemblies have been frequently and injuriously dissolved, and commerce burdened with many useless and oppressive restrictions.
- __ By several acts of Parliament made in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth years of your majesty's reign:
 - duties are imposed on us for the purpose of raising a revenue, and
 - the powers of admiralty and vice-admiralty courts are extended beyond their ancient limits, whereby our property is taken from us without our consent;



- the trial by jury in many civil cases is abolished;
- enormous forfeitures are incurred for slight offenses;
- vexatious informers are exempted from paying damages to which they are justly liable, and
- oppressive security is required from owners before they are allowed to defend their rights.

___ Both houses of Parliament have resolved that the colonists may be tried in England for offenses alleged to have been committed in America, by virtue of a statute passed in the thirty-fifth year of Henry the eighth, and in consequence thereof attempts have been made to enforce that statute.

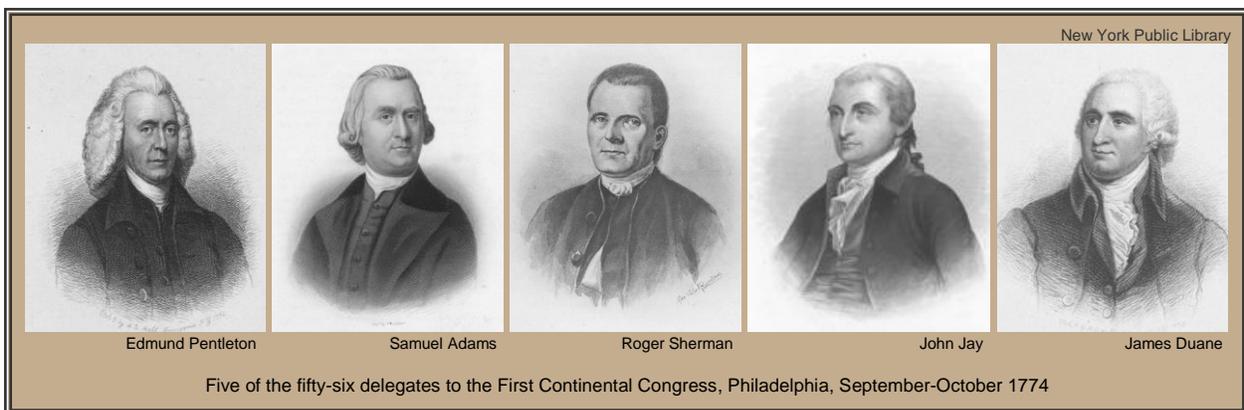
___ A statute was passed in the twelfth year of your majesty’s reign directing that persons charged with committing any offense therein described, in any place out of the realm, may be indicted and tried for the same in any shire or county within the realm, whereby inhabitants of these colonies may, in sundry cases by that statute made capital, be deprived of a trial by their peers of the vicinage.

___ In the last session of Parliament:

- an act was passed for blocking up the harbor of Boston;
- another empowering the governor of the Massachusetts Bay to send persons indicted for murder in that province to another colony, or even to Great Britain, for trial, whereby such offenders may escape legal punishment;
- a third for altering the chartered constitution of government in that province; and
- a fourth for extending the limits of Quebec, abolishing the English and restoring the French laws, whereby great numbers of British freemen are subject to the latter, and establishing an absolute government and the Roman Catholic religion throughout those vast regions that border on the westerly and northerly boundaries of the free Protestant English settlements; and
- a fifth for the better providing suitable quarters for officers and soldiers in his majesty’s service in North America.

To a sovereign, who “*glories in the name of Briton,*” the bare recital of these acts must, we presume, justify the loyal subjects who fly to the foot of his throne and implore his clemency for protection against them. . . .

Had our creator been pleased to give us existence in a land of slavery, the sense of our condition might have been mitigated by ignorance and habit; but, thanks be to his adorable goodness, we were born the heirs of freedom and ever enjoyed our rights under the auspices of your royal ancestors whose family was seated on the British throne to rescue and secure a pious and gallant nation from the popery and despotism of a superstitious and inexorable tyrant.¹ Your majesty, we are confident, justly rejoices that your title to the crown is thus founded on the title of your people to liberty, and therefore we doubt not but your royal wisdom must approve the sensibility that teaches your subjects anxiously to guard the blessing they received from divine providence, and thereby to prove the performance of that compact which elevated the illustrious house of Brunswick to the imperial dignity it now possesses.



¹ King James II, a Roman Catholic, was deposed in 1688 during the Glorious Revolution and replaced by William III of the House of Brunswick (Hanover).

