

## THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Thomas Jefferson was a Virginia delegate to the Second Continental Congress. He was younger than most representatives in the congress and also better educated. When he was nominated to write the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson reluctantly agreed.

Jefferson spent many late nights in a rented room in Philadelphia. He wrote the document by candlelight. The document was divided into four parts:

- the Preamble, which was an introduction stating that the colonies should be independent of Great Britain,
- a Declaration of Rights, which basically stated that “all men are created equal,”
- a Bill of Indictment, which listed the ways that King George III had mistreated the colonies, and
- a Statement of Independence, which declared the colonies independent, with all ties to Great Britain ended.

The congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The document was signed by John Hancock as the president of the Second Continental Congress and by Charles Thomson, the congress’s secretary. It was delivered to King George immediately. Copies of it were nailed to trees and hung in store windows throughout the colonies. George Washington ordered it to be read to all Continental troops.

Later in July, the Declaration was written in stylish script on parchment and signed by all 56 members of the congress. Today, the original parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence is displayed in the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C.

