The Olive Branch Petition to the King, 1775

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THE OLIVE BRANCH PETITION TO THE KING
1775

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History.
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
Lorna Gayle Cooper
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APPROVAL SHEET

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to trace the development of the text of the Olive Branch Petition, sent by Congress to the king in 1775 in a last attempt to secure the rights of the colonists as Englishmen within the British empire.

The historical background of the petition, from its beginning in the minds of John Dickinson, John Jay and James Duane, until its final rejection by George III is examined in an effort to determine the purpose of the action.

Finally, the transmission of the text is followed through a series of four documents: a hitherto unknown draft of an appeal by John Jay; Dickinson's very rough draft of the beginning of the petition; the full copy reported from committee with last minute changes by Dickinson and Charles Thomson; and the final petition as approved by Congress.

The study indicates that the petition was a sincere effort to reconcile the colonies with their parent state. Even though there was a fight over sending the petition, it was approved by a congressional majority who were sympathetic with this purpose.
CHAPTER I

"You will see a strange oscillation between love and hatred, between War and Peace—Preparations for War and Negotiations for Peace." So John Adams described the proceedings of the Second Continental Congress which convened in Philadelphia scarcely three weeks after the battles of Lexington and Concord. Feelings ran high, but there was no agreement as to what should be done. Ironically, two of the most important documents drawn up by Congress in 1775, written primarily by the same person and approved on successive days in July, were the Declaration of Causes for Taking up Arms and the Second Petition to the King. After a hundred and seventy years of loving attachment to England’s crown, laws, customs and people, it was not easy to decide that complete separation was the only way to preserve the rights of the colonists. Under these conditions, it is not strange that while events forced Congress to make defensive preparations, five of its members were busy preparing a final appeal to George III, asking for reconciliation or negotiation. The

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Olive Branch Petition, as this appeal came to be known, caused more controversy than any other action taken in Congress in 1775. The history of the journey of the petition, from its initial drafting in congressional committee until its rejection by George III, as well as the influence of this rejection on Congress, is an important chapter in the move toward independence.

The Olive Branch Petition was the second direct appeal to George III from the colonies in general Congress assembled. A series of papers, including a petition to the King and an address to the people of Great Britain, had been sent across the Atlantic in October, 1774. News of the reception accorded these documents was officially presented to Congress on May 11, the second day of their new session. The colonial agents reported that the petition had been presented to Parliament, buried in a batch of more than a hundred "American Papers," and so received little notice. The same letter noted that the ministry had announced its intention of enforcing the laws in America, and troops had been deployed to the colonies for that purpose. Consequently, it seemed to many that their sincere request for reconciliation had been answered by the gunfire and bloodshed at Lexington and Concord.

2 For the full story of the First Petition, see Edwin Wolf 2nd, "The Authorship of the 1774 Address to the King Re-studied," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Series, XXII (April 1965), 189-224.

This feeling was the major obstacle in the path of the supporters of a second petition. John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, and John Jay and James Duane of New York spearheaded the move for another appeal. Jay proposed the action and Dickinson seconded his motion as early as May 15, when New York requested advice on how to receive the British troops soon to arrive there and was told by Congress to do nothing that would provoke attack or make reconciliation impossible.  

For almost two weeks, the question was before Congress. Dickinson and Duane collaborated in drawing up a program supporting their proposal for a final attempt for peace. Both addressed Congress on the subject sometime before May 26. Their plan called for military preparations, a petition and, hopefully, eventual negotiation. Although Dickinson sincerely hoped for reconciliation, his speech showed his awareness of secondary benefits that might result from sending a petition. England's anticipation of the document, he argued, would

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4 George Bancroft, History of the United States of America. From the Discovery of the Continent, The Author's Last Revision (New York, 1892), IV, 192; According to Frank Monaghan, John Jay (New York, 1935), 70, Jay made the proposal on June 3. A committee to draft the petition was appointed that day and the original proposal must at least have preceded the notions adopted by Congress on May 26.

delay any harsh action on her part, and thus give the colonies more needed time to make adequate military preparations. Dickinson further stated that their appeal, even if rejected, would act as a unifying measure by convincing the many reluctant rebels that Congress had tried every possible means to avert war. A supporting speech, given by Duane, argued that the situation should "be ever considered as a family quarrel, disgraceful and ruinous into which we are innocently plunged by intolerable oppression, and which we are sincerely disposed to appease and reconcile, whenever the good providence of God shall put it in our power, consistent with the preservation of our just rights." The role played by John Jay after he made the introductory motion is not certain. There is no record of any other speech made by him, although his biographers credit him with convincing Congress of the "propriety" of sending the petition.

Though independence was a hard idea to accept, it was equally hard for some delegates to continue to "humble" themselves when all their past efforts at reconciliation had been treated with contempt. It was only after long intense debates that the delegates, whether convinced of the propriety of the action or fearful that further debate would deadlock Congress and prevent their accomplishing anything,

6 William Jay, The Life of John Jay, With Selections from his Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers (New York, 1833), 1, 36; George Folwer, John Jay (New York, 1870), 45; Monaghan, John Jay, 70.
accepted the arguments of Dickinson and Duane. On May 26, Congress approved a series of four resolutions. The first two recognized the "dangerous and critical situation" and the necessity of putting the colonies in a state of defence. The third stated that

as we most ardently wish for a restoration of the harmony formerly subsisting between our Mother Country and these colonies, the interruption of which must, at all events, be exceedingly injurious to both countries, Resolved, that with a sincere design of contributing by all the means in our power, not incompatible with a just regard for the undoubted rights and true interests of those colonies, to the promotion of this most desirable reconciliation, an humble and dutiful petition be presented to his Majesty.

These three resolutions were reportedly approved unanimously but there was not such general agreement on the fourth, which, in accord with Duane's speech, said the petition should indicate the colonists' readiness to negotiate the disputes.7

On June 3, a committee to draft the petition was appointed.8 In an effort to convince the sincerity of their intentions, the task was assigned to five known conservatives, John Dickinson, John Jay, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Johnson and John Rutledge. Dickinson, Johnson and Rutledge had all been on the committee which drew up the address sent by Congress in

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8 *Journal*, II, 79-80. Arrangements were made the same day for the drafting of letters to the inhabitants of Great Britain, Ireland and Jamaica.
1774, and Franklin had been a key figure in its formal presentation to Lord Dartmouth.\textsuperscript{9} With this experience, the committee knew what pitfalls to avoid.

The composition of the address took only two weeks. It was reported from committee on June 19, but virtually ignored until its approval on July 5.\textsuperscript{10} The petition contained fervent protestations of loyalty to the sovereign and placed the blame for the unhappy state of affairs on the "irksome variety of artifices practised by many of your Majesty's ministers, the delusive pretences, fruitless terrors, and unavailing severities that have from time to time been dealt out by them..." These "artifices" were not listed in detail as they had been in 1774. Nor did the new petition speak specifically of colonial "rights." Instead, it asked for relief because a continuation of the present system would endanger the "commerce and prosperity" of both colonies and Mother Country.

In a paper written sometime in 1776, Dickinson recalled the great trouble he had taken to make the wording and tone of the petition acceptable.\textsuperscript{11} Since Congress had been informed

\textsuperscript{9} Wolf, "Authorship of the 1774 Address," 189ff.

\textsuperscript{10} Journals, II, 100, 127.

\textsuperscript{11} John Dickinson, "Draft of a paper to the Colonies "in order to prevent people inclining to a total separation," 1776." In the Robert R. Logan Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
that former pleas had been rejected because "they insisted on Claims said to be derogatory of the Dignity and authority of the British Crown & Parliament," Dickinson "avoided every expression" that might inflame official tempers. The drafters of the petition carried their "reverence for the royal Character so far, that sufficiently declaring our Meaning, yet we forbore using the word Treaty, lest the term should appear too harsh, when offered by subjects to their sovereign"; instead they decided to rely on the "wisdom" of George III to find a solution. The British view that Congress was not a legally constituted body caused Dickinson little concern. He thought that having the petition signed by individuals, even Hancock signing as an individual and not President of Congress, would offset the fact that it was drawn up in general congress. This situation is the basis for the incident recalled by Thomas Jefferson in his autobiography. Following the approval of the petition, Dickinson commented that "congress" was the only objectionable word in it; Benjamin Harrison of Virginia retorted that "congress" was the only acceptable word.12

Even though the petition requested, in accord with the fourth resolution of May 26, that arrangements be made for negotiations, it gave no indication that the colonists were ready to abandon any of their claims. Only after the removal

of "the apprehensions that now oppress our hearts with un-
spokable grief" would they again be willing to "assert and
maintain the rights and interests of your majesty and of our
Mother country." The petition further requested that "such
statutes as more immediately distress any of your Majesty's
colonies be repealed." The Olive Branch, although humble in
tone, was hardly submissive.

Although every delegate signed the petition, congressional
support for it was far from unanimous; therefore, it was
probably voted on by colonies rather than by persons. This
procedure would explain why St. John's Parish, Georgia,
appears in the list of petitioners in every draft until Charles
Thomson deleted it from Timothy Matlack's copy which was re-
ported from committee. It had previously been decided that
since Lyman Hall did not officially represent the colony of
Georgia, he could vote "in all cases except when the senti-
ments of the Congress were taken by colonies."13 Thomas
Jefferson believed the colonial representatives looked upon
the address with disgust and "Mr. Dickinson's delight at its
passage was the only circumstance which reconciled them to
it."14

Of all the congressmen, John Adams was by far the most
vocal in his objections. He was responsible for giving the

address its present day appellation when he wrote to Moses Gill that public opinion favored holding "the sword in one hand and the olive Branch in the other." The day after Congress approved the petition, Adams expressed his reservations in a long letter to James Warren.

These opinions of Some Colonies which are founded I think in their Wishes and passions, their Hopes and Fears, rather than in Reason and Evidence will give a whimsical Cast to the Proceedings of this Congress. You will see a strange Oscillation between love and hatred, between War and Peace—Preparations for War and Negotiations for Peace. We must have a Petition to the King and a delicate Proposal of Negotiation, etc. This Negotiation I dread like Death; But it must be proposed. We cant avoid it. Discord and total Disunion would be the certain Effect of a resolute Refusal to petition and negotiate. My Hopes are that Ministry will be afraid of Negotiation as well as We and therefore refuse it. If they agree to it, We shall have Occasion for all our Wit Vigilance and Virtue to avoid being deceived, wheedled, threatened or bribed out of our Freedom. If we S trenuously insist upon our Liberties, as I hope and am pretty sure We shall however, a Negotiation, if agreed to, will terminate in Nothing. it will effect nothing. We may possibly gain Time and Powder and Arms.

Benjamin Franklin, who had just returned from London and was therefore more aware of the political climate, was equally pessimistic about the outcome. In a letter to Joseph Priestley he stated that Congress had with difficulty passed


a petition to give Britain a final chance to keep the colonies, "which, however, I think she has not sense enough to embrace, and so I conclude she has lost them for ever." 17 Even Dickinson considered the possibility of the rejection of the petition, but he continued to take comfort in the fact that such treatment would "confirm the minds of [our] Countrymen, to endure all the disfames [that] may attend the contest." 18

Such were the hopes and fears expressed by the delegates in July as another committee was preparing a letter to accompany the petition and other congressional documents to England. The colonial agents in London were informed that "we have again appealed to the justice of our sovereign for protection against the destruction which his Ministers meditate for his American subjects." They were asked to present the appeal as soon as possible, to have the other documents printed in newspapers, and to keep Congress informed of their actions. 19 The portfolio of papers was entrusted to Richard Penn, who was returning to England with his family, for safe delivery to Arthur Lee in London. Dickinson thought it especially provident that the "Petition would be delivered to his

17 Benjamin Franklin to Joseph Priestley, July 7, 1775, in Benjamin Franklin, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, Albert Henry Smyth, ed. (New York, 1906), VI, 408.


19 Journals, II, 171-172. The letter was drafted by Richard Henry Lee, Robert R. Livingston and Edmund Pendleton.
Majesty by so respectable a Gentleman as the honorable Richard Penn Esquire late governor of Pennsylvania, who had taken no Part in the present unhappy dispute.\textsuperscript{20}

John Adams wrote that Penn left Philadelphia on July 9 and that a duplicate of the petition was sent on another vessel the following day.\textsuperscript{21} On the 12th, three ships cleared the port of Philadelphia for Bristol.\textsuperscript{22} Penn was on the Barbadoes-jacket, W. Kennedy, captain; perhaps the second copy of the address was on the Commerce or the Prosperity. The London \textit{Chronicle} for August 15, 1775, reported Penn's arrival in Bristol, after a journey of twenty-eight days, with "an humble petition from the Congress to be presented to his Majesty, and also some proposals for putting a stop to the further effusion of blood."\textsuperscript{23} The following issue of the newspaper carried the texts of the other papers Penn had brought, the "Declaration of Causes" and a first installment of the "Letter to the People of Great Britain."\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{22} Pennsylvania \textit{Gazette}, July 12, 1775, 3.

\textsuperscript{23} London \textit{Chronicle}, Saturday, August 12, to Tuesday, August 15, 1775, 160.

\textsuperscript{24} London \textit{Chronicle}, Tuesday, August 15, to Thursday, August 17, 1775, 161-162, 167.
Arthur Lee and Richard Penn presented a copy of the petition to the office staff of the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs on August 21. Then, they awaited notification to appear for a formal presentation. During this waiting period, the agents asked Edmund Burke, colonial agent for New York, to accompany them. Burke refused. He approved "all dutiful applications from the Gentlemen of the Congress to his Majesty," he told them, but his position was uncertain. He had been chosen agent for the colony of New York by their general assembly, which had refused to send delegates to the Congress, and so had no authority to act in this matter.

Other letters of Burke written at this time present an interesting contrast. For the benefit of Lee, Burke stated his belief in the sincerity of the sentiments of the "decent and manly petition from the Congress" to George III, noting that nothing seemed further from the desires of the colonies "than to separate themselves from their allegiance to him, or from their subordinate connexion with their mother Country."  


27 Edmund Burke to the Marquess of Rockingham, August 22, 1775, in Burke, Correspondence, XII, 195.

28 Edmund Burke to Arthur Lee, August 22, 1775, in Burke, Correspondence, XIII, 188-189.
Two days later, Burke wrote to William Baker, a cousin of
Richard Penn who had also urged Burke to join in presenting
the petition. At that time, he held forth little hope for
the success of the appeal. Now it was presented in a
manner little. "It will be rejected," he stated, "with scorn like all
the rest. When they did not receive the New York address
from the ordinary legal channel, and after their own solicita-
tion of it, and from those too who reproached the Congress,
how can it be expected they will attend to one from the Con-
gress itself, signed by Handcock when they have declared a
Rebel out of hope of pardon? Surely the Americans send it to
acquit themselves and not out of any hope whatsoever of suc-
cess. If they have any such hopes, they are still more igno-
rant of this Country, than I thought them."29

A second incident during this waiting period fore-
shadowed the outcome of the petition. On August 23, King
George III issued a proclamation declaring that the colonies
were in a state of rebellion. At this time, Lord Dartmouth
was still out of town; he did not see the copy of the peti-
tion left for him until August 26. When Lee acknowledged
receipt of the documents from Congress, he wrote that several
conferences had been held, but nothing had been decided. "I
am inclined to think," he reported, "the Petition will not be

29 Edmund Burke to William Baker, August 23, 1775, in
Burke, Correspondence, XIII, 197–198.
referred to the King & Council. They are too much ashamed of what has happened to submit it to a public discussion.\footnote{Arthur Lee to Congress, August 28, 1775, in \textit{The Olive Branch Petition}, 25.}

Still another week of waiting went by before Lee and Penn were summoned for the formal presentation. When they pressed Lord Dartmouth to obtain an answer, they were told that, as George III had not received the petition on the throne, no answer would be given.\footnote{Arthur Lee to Congress, September 2, 1775, in \textit{The Olive Branch Petition}, 30.} After this rejection, the agents released the text of the document to the London newspapers with the heading:

The following is a true copy of the petition from the general congress in America to his majesty, which we delivered to Lord Dartmouth the 1st of this month and to which his lordship said no answer would be given,

Arthur Lee
Richard Penn\footnote{Richard Henry Lee, \textit{Life of Arthur Lee...with his political and literary correspondence} (Boston, 1829), I, 47-48.}

The document, under this head, was printed in the London \textit{Chronicle} of September 5. Ironically, the same issue of the paper carried an article on the "Declaration from the Twelve United Colonies of America," in which the author stated that "After the foregoing declarations, I believe but little credit will be given to their denying any designs of
dissolving that union which has so long subsisted..."33

The news of the reception given to their petition reached Congress on November 9, when "A letter from the Agents Mr. Penn and Mr. A. Lee respecting the delivery of the petition and the reception it met with, was read."34. The substance of the letter was ordered to be printed and subsequently appeared: 35Pennsylvania Evening Post, November 9, 1775, 516; a letter Pennsylvania Packet, Postscript, November 10, 1775, 2; Pennsylvania Gazette, November 15, 1775, 4; Pennsylvania Journal, November 15, 1775, 3. As early as November 1, it contained the first report of the event.

The manner in which the last dutiful petition to his Majesty was received and the subsequent proclamation are considered by Congress as further proofs of those malignant councils, that surround the sovereign and distress the British Empire....

...It grieves us exceedingly to see the British arms employed in such a manner and for such purposes; but we hope the spirit and virtue of a sensible nation will soon be

33London Chronicle, Saturday, September 2, to Tuesday—September 5, 1775, 231-232.
34London Chronicle, Saturday, September 2, to Tuesday September 5, 1775, 231-232.

35Pennsylvania Evening Post, November 9, 1775, 516; Pennsylvania Packet, Postscript, November 10, 1775, 2; Pennsylvania Gazette, November 15, 1775, 4; Pennsylvania Journal, November 15, 1775, 3. As early as November 1, the Pennsylvania Gazette received this intelligence in a letter from London, and printed it that day along with the King's proclamation which arrived on the same vessel, Postscript, November 9, 1775, 1.
asserted to procure justice for the innocent oppressed colonies, and to restore harmony and peace to the British Empire. There is nothing more ardently desired by North America than a lasting union with Great Britain on terms of just and equal liberty. ... 36

With this letter, still voicing their hopes for reconciliation, the books of Congress were officially closed on the Olive Branch Petition. Even though it was rejected, it had given the unruly colonists time to prepare for their defence. During the five months' waiting period, while English newspapers reported that the Americans were playing a waiting game until the petition was answered, 37 Congress had been hard at work. The members made plans to secure and preserve the friendship of the Indians, excepted vessels carrying military stores from the non-importation agreements, arranged for the formation of militia units, consisting of all able-bodied men between sixteen and fifty, in all colonies, and taken other essential actions. 36

At least one of Dickinson's secondary purposes, time for preparation, was fulfilled, and, if accounts can be believed,


37 London Chronicle, Saturday, August 12, to Tuesday, August 25, 1775, 100.

38 Journal, II, 174, 194-195, 188,
so was another. David Ramsay, a participant in and early historian of the Revolution, wrote that the rejection of the petition "contributed not a little to the union and perseverence of the colonists.\n
When pressed by the calamities of war, a doubt would sometimes arise in the minds of scrupulous persons, that they had been too hasty in their opposition to their protecting Parent State. To such it was usual to present the second petition of Congress to the King, observing therein, that all the blood and all the guilt of the war, must be charged on British, and not on American counsels.\n
William Jay remembered that his father frequently remarked on the "suspicious influence" of the petition whose rejection left no alternative between submission and resistance,\n
and Jay himself wrote that he never heard anyone of any description speak of independance before George III refused to accept the second petition of Congress.\n
According to Charles Thomson, this aspect was especially important in Pennsylvania where it would have been impossible to persuade the inhabitants of the colony to join the revolutionary cause had not a second

\n


petition been sent that avoided all the errors made in the first. 42

In view of these statements, it is easy to forget that the primary and sincere purpose of the petition was to devise some means by which the colonists could retain their rights and yet remain a part of the British Empire. Even Stillé, Dickinson's sole biographer, felt it necessary to apologize for the latter's support of the petition on the grounds that his voice was, after all, "only the echo of the opinion of the majority of Congress at that time." 43 David Jacobson based his view that the petition was a political gesture on Dickinson's letter of July 7 to Arthur Lee, and on a statement by Thomas Johnson that he favored the petition because it would tend to "unite America and divide Britain." 44 Another historian described the Olive Branch as a "deliberately calculated risk"—"one of the boldest maneuvers in American politics," which the independence men agreed to only to keep their hands free to attend to other business. 45


43 Stillé, Life and Times, 157.

44 Jacobson, John Dickinson, 99; The Johnson letter is printed in full in Letters, Burnett, ed., I, 190-191.

45 Gilbert V. Montague, "How much of an Olive Branch was the Olive Branch Petition?" in The Olive Branch Petition, 39, 33.
The assignment of motives is always difficult, especially at the distance of two centuries. For every statement supporting the idea that the petition was a political expedient, there is a contradictory one indicating the higher motives of the Congress. Dickinson wrote in 1776, that "so passionate was our Desire to stop the Effusion of British Blood by British Hands, and to bind up the Wounds of this unnatural War, that we resolved once more to lay his American People in all Humility at his Majesty's Feet." The tendency to belittle the motives of the colonists was especially irritating to John Jay, even after forty years. If the colonial protestations of loyalty were deceptive, he wrote, "they present to the world an unprecedented Instance of long-continued, concurrent, and detestable Duplicity in the colonies. Our country does not deserve this odious and disgusting Imputation." The second petition to the King, although sent with little hope of success, expressed the sincere desire of its supporters, still a congressional majority, for a happy and permanent reconciliation with England. The Olive Branch was an overture for peace on the terms of the colonists, suggesting negotiations, but offering no concessions. The fact that its failure spurred the independence movement by unifying the colonists was a secondary consideration to the drafters' primary concern.


CHAPTER II

The paucity of records of the Continental Congress, especially of committee meetings, makes accurate reconstruction of the proceedings difficult, if not impossible. John Dickinson has long been recognized as the author of the approved Olive Branch Petition; it was included in the 1801 edition of his writings.¹ The contributions of the four other committee members, however, have been lost in obscurity. Franklin mentioned no personal contribution to the text of the petition; he wrote only of his belief that the action was useless. John Jay's biographers, including his son, gave him credit for persuading Congress to send the petition, but hailed Dickinson as its sole author.² The biographer of Johnson said little more than that he sat on the committee,³ while Richard Barry made no mention of

¹John Dickinson, The Political Writings of John Dickinson Esquire, Late President of the State of Delaware, and of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Wilmington, 1801), II, 45-52.


³Edward S. Delaplaine, The Life of Thomas Johnson; Member of the Continental Congress, First Governor of the State of Maryland, and Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court (New York, 1927), 106-107.
Rutledge's participation. There are a number of surviving documents however, which, when seen together, shed new light on the transmission of the text of the Olive Branch Petition.

A draft of the petition in the hand of John Jay was recently discovered in the Dickinson Papers of the Library Company of Philadelphia. The document is roughly written, with several deletions and changes, on four quarto pages. After this early attempt, the task of composition fell upon the shoulders of Dickinson, who did not find it an easy job. There survives in the Robert R. Logan Papers of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania a heavily interlineated, three-page folio draft of what eventually became the first five paragraphs of the address. Dickinson wrote, crossed out, and interlined, but was still dissatisfied. So he collected his thoughts on a third page, then inserted them between the lines of the first. Discovering this to be completely illegible, he marked through the two most difficult paragraphs and re-wrote them in the left margin.

It is possible that Jay's draft was never presented to

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6 John Dickinson, Partial draft of a "petition to George III, 1775." In the Robert R. Logan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
the committee, but turned over privately to Dickinson. At any rate, its presence in Dickinson's papers indicates that the latter had access to Jay's thoughts while penning his own, but there is no evidence of a direct transferral of ideas. The sentiments expressed by Jay are similar in tone only, and not in wording, to the views expressed by Dickinson in the final part of the petition. The major difference in the two letters is that Jay proposed that George III "commission some good & great Men to enquire into the Grievances of her faithful subjects...", while Dickinson asked only that "your Majesty be pleased to direct some mode by which the united applications of your faithful colonists to the throne...be improved into a happy & permanent Reconciliation..." If the remainder of the first draft by Dickinson were extant, there might be more evidence of Jay's influence.

The third piece in the sequence is a copy of the petition in the hand of Timothy Matlack, who had been appointed clerk of Congress on May 15. This draft, signed and docketed on the back, by Dickinson, "Petition to the King," is written on eight unnumbered folio pages. It contains deletions and revisions in the hands of Dickinson and Charles Thomson. On the final page, otherwise blank, Thomson wrote the names of the delegates, with the omission only of John Adams, following

7John Dickinson, "Petition to George III, 1775," largely in the hand of Timothy Matlack with corrections by Dickinson and Charles Thomson. In the Robert R. Logan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It is this draft that David L. Jacobson mistakenly described as "a manuscript draft of the petition in his [Dickinson's] hand." John Dickinson and the Revolution, 94.
the order of the formal signed document. This was undoubtedly
the fair copy reported from committee and used by Secretary
Thosson when the petition was read before Congress.

As mentioned above, two engrossed and signed copies of
the petition were sent to England. The one carried by Penn
and presented to Lord Dartmouth is now in the Public Record
Office in London, and was reproduced in facsimile by Benjamin
Franklin Stevens in 1891.8 Nothing was known of the second
copy from the time it was signed until it was found near Milton,
England, among the papers of George Wentworth-Fitzwilliam.
Lord Fitzwilliam probably acquired it from Edmund Burke, whose
papers he edited. Although there is no record of the docu-
ment being given to Burke, he did write that he had seen a
copy. Perhaps Lee and Penn left it with him when they were
trying to persuade him to join them in presenting the appeal.
The manuscript, which was reproduced photographically in 1954,
is presently in the New York Public Library.9 Both these docu-
ments are written on seven folio pages in the hand of Timothy
Hatfield. The Public Record Office copy is docketed on the
blank page at the end, "Petition of the Congress to The King
Sept. 1st, 1775 — Delivered to the Earl of Dartmouth by
Maccara, Penn & Lee."

8Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-1783, Benjamin Franklin Stevens, ed. (London,
1888-1898), no. 454.
9The Olive Branch Petition of the American Congress to
There remains to be considered the story of the printing of the petition. In 1774, to observe strict protocol, the address was withheld from publication until it was delivered to the king; this procedure was abandoned in 1775. Philadelphia newspapers printed the document during the week of August 16-23. At approximately the same time William and Thomas Bradford, official printers for Congress, issued it in pamphlet form as The / Humble Petition / of the / Twelve United Colonies, / by the / Delegates / in / Congress, / to the / King. It is certain that it was printed before August 30. The Pennsylvania Journal of that date contained a list of errors that had appeared in the newspaper's previous printing of the petition. These same errors, such as "awful

10 Pennsylvania Journal, August 16, 1775, 2-3; Pennsylvania Evening Post, August 17, 1775, 361-362; Pennsylvania Packet, Postscript, August 21, 1775, 2-3; Pennsylvania Gazette, August 23, 1775, 4.

11 John Harvey Powell, in The Books of a New Nation: United States Government Publications, 1774-1814 (Philadelphia, 1957), 41-42, states that there was no official printing other than the one contained in the Journals. The only separate printing he found was one done by "certain timid New Yorkers of Tory inclination." The copy described by Paul Leicester Ford in the appendix to the Journals, III, 509, was printed with the "addition of a preliminary address, the address of the Mayor of London "To the Electors" and a portion of Chatham's speech, by the New York Committee of Safety to correct the assertion that the Continental Congress had made no advances." Although the Bradford printing is previously unrecorded, Roger Bristol, in his additions to Evans' Bibliography, locates copies at Huntington Library, John Carter Brown and the Library Company of Philadelphia.
and cruel enemies" instead of "artful and cruel," appear in the pamphlet. It is highly unlikely that these misprints would not have been corrected in the pamphlet had they been discovered earlier.

The texts of four of these documents, the drafts of Jay and Dickinson, the fair copy by Matlack, and the official Public Record Office copy, are included below. The originals were followed as closely as possible, although they have not been transcribed line for line. Superscripts have been lowered. Deleted matter is underlined within angle brackets. A special problem was presented by the Matlack draft; additions made by persons other than he have been underlined in red. The Public Record Office copy has been collated with the other engrossed copy and with the Bradford printing and all differences, other than capitalization and punctuation, noted,
To the most excellent Majesty

The Petition of the freemen of the colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pensyl-

vania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and the people of the colony of Georgia, by their representatives in general Congress assembled in the city of Philadelphia, the day of

Most humbly sheweth

That your Majesty's American subjects bound to your Majesty by the strongest ties of allegiance and affection and attached to their native country by every bond that can unite societies, illness with the deepest concern the continuance of a system of colonial administration which for twelve years had been the subject of the most anxious and critical thought. The people have been filled with the idea of royal authority and the royal authority of the British nation with the most alarming nature that opposing the utmost confidence in the utmost care of their Prince and the Prince of the British nation they were constantly urged by the petulant solicitation of their liberties voided by the late lamented Majesty, attention by their late

DRAFT BY JOHN JAY
DRAFT BY JOHN JAY

To the Kings most excellent Majesty

The (Petit) (Hum) Petition of the Freeholders & Free-
men of the Colonies of New Hampshire [sic] Bay
Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania,
the (government of) on Delaware, Maryland
Virginia North Carolina South Carolina & the Parish of St.
Johns in the Colony of Georgia, by their Representatives
convened in general Congress at the City of Philadelphia the
Day of 1775

Most humbly sheweth

That your Majestys American subjects bound to your
Majesty by the strongest Ties of Allegiance & Affection
and attached to their Parent Country by every Bond that
can unite Societies, deplore with the deepest Concern the
continuance of that System of colonial administration which
(for twelve Years past has been drawing the Strength the
Glory) for twelve Years past has (been drawing the British
Empire to the Brink) (verge) (of Destruction) (given so
much) (has given Alarm and Disquiet to) has filled the minds
of the Loyal Inhabitants of North America with (the most
alarmed) apprehensions of the most alarming Nature.

That reposing the utmost Confidence in the (Justice of) paternal care of their Prince and the Justice of the British Nation they were (compelled to by) urged by the perilous Situation of their Liberties to sollicit (by their late Peti) his Majesty's Attention by their late [page 2] Petition to their real & unmerited Groivances, and to request his royal Interposition in their Behalf.

That (deceived) tho disappointed in their Expectations of Relief they still remember their Duty to their Sovereign, & imputing the Rigour of their Treatment to (evil) insidious Councells & wicked misrepresentations, they again beg Leave to entreat for Justice & to request only that Portion of Liberty to which God and the Constitution have given them (a) Right.

(They) That nothing but the overruling Laws of self Preservation could ever have induced them to pursue any Measures which might (seen) be deemed offensive to their King or disrespectful to the British Nation, and that they ardently desire an opportunity of manifesting their Fidelity to the one and (th) evincing their affection for the other.

That neither repeated oppression nor all the Miseries of which attend the sword or are threatened by Famine have yet weaned them from their Parent Country, and that they cannot yet cease to seek by every dutiful & peaceable Means
in their Power to obtain a Restoration of that Harmony
which [page 3] formerly gave union Wealth & Power to the
Empire.

That they most earnestly beseech his Majesty to (an)
commission some good & great Men to enquire into the
Grievances & (examining the) of his faithful subjects, & be
pleased to devise some Means of accommodating these unhappy
Dissentions which unless amicably terminated must endanger
the safety of the whole Empire.\footnote{12} And that she, his
Majesty not be disposed to hear the Complaints [of] his Ameri-
can subjects from their Representatives in Congress [they?]
most humbly beseech his Majesty to direct (that) Come from
their different Assemblies (should assemble) to convene for
the Purpose.

That altho the People of North America are determined
to be free they wish not to be independent and beg Leave
again to assure his Majesty that they mean not to question
the Right of the British Parliament to regulate the Com-
mercial Concerns of the Empire in the manner they have be-
fore (ex) declared as their Enemies have unkindly insinuated
and to remove all Doubts upon this Head are ready to confirm
these Declarations by Acts of their Legislatures in the
different Colonies.

\footnote{12}{The rest of this paragraph was written as a note at
the bottom of the page.}
[page 4] That (to facilitate the Restoration of Union & Harmony) they (beg leave to) most humbly submit it to his Majesty's Wisdom, if (all) it would not tend to facilitate the Restoration of Union & Harmony th[ere] the further Effusion of Blood should (not) be prevented & (that) every irritating (and) Honours (be) suspended. And should his Majesty be graciously pleased by his royal Interposition, to relieve his Faithful Subjects from the Unreality & Anxiety they feel from the several Acts of the British Parliament (of) by which they think themselves so greatly aggrieved, they will with the utmost Gratitude & Cheerfulness return to & resume that former Intercourse with (Great Britain) their parent State which nothing but the most pressing necessities (of) could ever induce them to interrupt.

They also (be) take the Liberty of suggesting that then Concord & mutual Confidence (of good will) shall thus be re-established between his Majesty's British & American Subjects, their several Claims may be (addu) examined with (Candor) (rig) Temper, adjusted with Precision and the present unnatural Contest end in a Compact that may place the Union of the Republic on a firm & permanent Basis.
To the King's most excellent Majesty,

Most gracious Sovereign,

We your Majesty's greatest subjects, being the inhabitants of the thirteen United States of America, viz. Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and New Hampshire, do humbly apprehend your majesty, your Majesty's gracious attention, after our humble petition:

The rights of government by which our mother country confirmed our liberties, and the generous protection she has given us, have disposed us to a union between them, producing a stability in our councils, unanimity in our actions, and prosperity in our industry. This is the evidence of our loyalty and submission, and we do earnestly implore you, as the parent power of America, to give us your consent to this union of the thirteen United States of America, and to make it to your own satisfaction, that in the name of humanity, you may secure the means of preserving us and all mankind in the enjoyment of rights and happiness. This petition is signed by the inhabitants of the thirteen United States of America.

DRAFT BY JOHN DICKINSON
JOHN DICKINSON'S DRAFT
OF THE
FIRST FIVE PARAGRAPHS

to the King's most excellent Majesty
Most gracious Sovereign,

We your Majesty's faithful subjects of the Colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island & Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, The Counties of New Castle Kent & Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, {and} South Carolina, & the Parish of Saint Johns in Georgia, in Behalf of ourselves and {all} the Inhabitants of the said Colonies and Parish, entreat your Majesty's gracious Attention to this our humble Petition.

The mild Principles of Government by which our Mother Country formerly ruled these Colonies, {& their dutiful Behaviour under her parental Direction,} form'd an Union between them, producing innumerable tive of Benefits {both} so remarkably important, and affording {a} such an assurance of their Permanency {Independ}13 & Increase {by} {from}14

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13 The word "Independ" is in the left margin.
14 "from" is in the left margin.
by an Adherence to the same equitable Maxims of \textit{(sound)} Policy, \textit{(the salutary Energy of which)} \textit{(the)} \textit{(a long)} \textit{(Experience of Ages had demonstrated and)} \textit{(that has excited)} that the Wonder & Envy of other \textit{(Nations, while they observ'd)} Nations were excited while they beheld Great Britain peaceably establishing on just \textit{(firm)} solid Foundations a Power likely to become the most extraordinary in all its Circumstances, \textit{(that ever was recorded in the Annals of Mankind.)} that the World had ever \textit{(beheld)} \textit{(seen)} known.

\textit{(This Union carefully cultivated by every great successive Statesman, and)} \textit{(alway)} \textit{(revered by every true Patriot continued undisturbed from its first Commencement, till an [page 2]} Event took place, that rais'd the most rational Hopes \& Expectations in every true Patriot of beholding \textit{(a new and instant)} \textit{(an additional and instant)} \textit{(Force \& Extension)} \textit{(Force Energy \& Extension)} \textit{(added to its)} \textit{(being given to the)} \textit{(usual operations)} \textit{(union)} \textit{(usual operations of the)} \textit{(Energy operating)} \textit{(by the Enlargement)} \textit{(by the)} \textit{(by an Enlargement of the British)} \textit{(Br)} \textit{(British Dominions)} \textit{(of the Crown)} \textit{(Dominions of the Crown)} \textit{(and the Removal of antient)} \textit{(and the Removal of antient \& war-like Enemies to a greater Distance.)}^15 Her Rivals observing

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\textsuperscript{15}At this point, Dickinson decided to revise the entire paragraph. He collected his thoughts on a separate sheet of paper (see below) then inserted his revision between the lines of this already much corrected paragraph. Apparently he himself could not be too sure of what he had written when, so he eventually crossed through everything and rewrote the paragraphs in the margin of his first page.
that this Connection was cultivated with such Vigilance

(Care) and Industry (from Age to Age by) (by successive
Statesmen that there was no probability of its being broken
by any intestine Comotions, and dreading its future
Effects, resolv'd to divert the Stream that was unceasingly
flowing into her Ports with fresh Accessions of Wealth and
Strength by vigorously attacking her in the Territor(y)ies
where it arose. [page 2]. Events so opposite to this Design
took place, that every wise & true Patriot entertained the
most rational & pleasing Expectations of an (add) (new and
instant Force and Extension being added to the usual opera-
tions of the union already experienced.) (see margin)\(^16\) from
Age to Age by successive Statesmen, that there was no proba-
bility of its being disturbed by intestine comotions, and
wisely apprehending its future Effects, resolv'd to prevent
her receiving such continual and formidable accessions of
Wealth and Strength by checking the Growth of those Settle-
ments from which they were derived.

In the prosecution of this Attempt, tho' (visibly)
vigorously conducted, Events so unfavorable to the Design
took Place, that every British Patriot entertained pleasing
& reasonable ( & pleasing) Expectations of seeing an additio-

\(^16\)The note to "see margin" is placed here, even though it
appears on the first page after "and Industry" because it was
not added until the preceding paragraph was marked out. The
rest of this paragraph and the one following were written in
the left margin of the first page.
nal Force & Extension given to the operations of the Union hitherto experienced, by an Enlargement of the Dominions of the Crown, and

At the Conclusion therefore of the late War, the most glorious and advantageous that ever had been carried on by British Arms, advantageous, in which Britons had ever been engaged, your (faithful) loyal Colonists, having contributed to its Success by such repeated and strenuous Exertions as (frequently obtain'd) frequently procur'd them the distinguished approbation of your Majesty, of the late King, and of Parliament, doubted not, but (after) that the tedious expensive & bloody struggle being (now fortunately) happily ended, they should be permitted with the rest of the Empire, (to enjoy) to share in the Blessings of Peace, & the (Emoluments) (illegible) Emoluments of Victory, and Conquest.

To their (unspeakable) inexpressible Disappointment & astonishment, they perceived the Dangers of a foreign Quarrel quickly succeeded by Domestic Dangers, in their Judgment, of a more dreadful (kind. While unoffending and unsuspecting they repos'd an unlimited confidence in their Parent State.) (kind & while clear of offence and incapable of suspicion) (kind. While they looked up with unlimited Confidence in her) (the) kind, While with unlimited confidence in the

17 In the petition, this paragraph ends with the phrase "the removal of ancient and warlike enemies to a greater distance." The text here continues from the second page.
Wisdom & Dignity of their Parent State, they look'd up to
her (for such) for such (Institutions as might be [illeg.] later formed for) (to) (improving the advantages lately ob-
tained; for the Commonweal,) Institutions as (she) might be proper to improve for the Commonweal, the advantages lately obtained; (While they were not only clear from every imputa-
tion of offence, but their merits recently and honorably acknowledged, they were) (& while their recent, frequent and honorable) While the recent and honorable acknowledg-
ments of their merits, remained (undecayed by the Im) upon record amongst the proceedings of the most august Legislature upon Earth, unde[d by the] Imputation, or even the
(frequently) Suspicion of any Offence, (or Intention) they were alarmed by a (new) new system of Statutes & Regulations.
J ohn Dickinson's Revisions
Of
Paragraphs Three and Four

(Her Enemies) Her Rivals (seeing) (finding) observing (that this Union) that this Connection (was so) was (so industriously cultivated) cultivated with such care and Industry from Age to Age by successive Statesmen, (and) that there was no probability of its being broken by intestine Commotions, and (apprehending its future Effects from) (dreading the Effects of its future Growth) dreading its future Effects, resolv'd (by the most vigorous, harsh Exertions, to divert the Stream) to divert the stream (of wealth and strength unceasingly flowing) that was (continu) unceasingly flowing into her Ports with (Streams) fresh accessions of Wealth & Strength, by (a) vigorously attacking (her) (that Country) (Part of the) (B) (Empire where it arose,) her in that Territory where it arose.

(Failing) (This Attempt failing, an Event) Events so opposite to this Design took Place that the most rational & pleasing Expectations were raised in every wise & true patriot, of an additional

resolv'd to prevent her (from) receiving such continual &
formidable (continued) Accessions of Wealth & Strength by checking the (rapid) Growth of those (Colonies) Settlements from which they were (manifestly) derived.

In the prosecution of this Attempt, (Effects) Events so unfavorable to the Design took Place, that every British Patriot entertained reasonable & pleasing Expectations of an additional Force & Extension being immediately given to the salutary operations (already) of the Union hitherto experienced, by an Enlargement of the Dominions of the Crown, & the Removal of Antient & warlike Enemies to a greater Distance.
To the King's most excellent majesty

Most gracious sovereign, the

faithful subjects of the colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the counties of New Castle, Kent, Sussex, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and the

achieved, on behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of the colonies, who had, in the name of those present, in general Congress, for

request your majesty's gracious attention to this our humble petition.

The union between so many nations and such

colonies, and the energy of mild and just governments, produced benefits remarkably important, and afforded such an assurance of their permanency, and encouraged the sons

and envy of other nations that existed, while they beheld

Great Britain rising to power, the most extraordinary

that the world had ever known.

Her rivals observing that there was no probability of this happy combination being broken by civil disputes, and apprehending its future effects, if left any longer undisturbed, resolved to prevent her receiving such enviable and formidable accessions of wealth and strength, by checking the growth of her settlements from which they were to be
derived.

In the prosecution of this attempt, events so

unfavorable to the design took place that every friend to

interest
To the King's most excellent Majesty

Most gracious Sovereign,

We your majesty's (most) faithful subjects of the colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts bay, (Connecticut,) Rhode island and Providence plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the counties of New Castle, Kent & Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina & South Carolina, (and of the parish of Saint Johns in Georgia,) in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of (the said colonies, and parish, who have deputed us to represent them) these colonies, who have deputed us to represent them in general Congress 19 entreat your Majesty's gracious attention to this our humble petition.

The union between our mother country and these colonies, and the energy of mild and just government(s) produced benefits so remarkably important, and afforded such an assurance

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18 Words and phrases underlined in red were inserted by someone other than Timothy Matlack. Dickinson changed the position of Connecticut in the role of petitioners.

19 Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, rewrote this phrase after the decision to take the vote by colonies was made.
of their permanency and increase, that the wonder and envy
of other nations were excited, while they beheld Great Britain
rising to a power of\textsuperscript{20} the most extraordinary that the world
had ever known.

Her rivals observing, that there was no probability of
this happy connection being broken by civil dissensions, and
apprehending its future effects if left any longer undisturbed,
resolved to prevent her receiving such continual and formi-
dable accessions of wealth and strength, by checking the
growth of those\textsuperscript{21} settlements from which they were to be
derived.

In the prosecution of this attempt, events so unfavour-
able to the design took place, that every friend to the
interests of Great Britain and these colonies entertained
pleasing and reasonable expectations of seeing an additional
force & extension immediately given to the operations of the
union hitherto experienced, by an enlargement of the dominions
of the crown, and the removal of antient and warlike enemies
to a greater distance.

At the conclusion therefore of the late war, the most
glorious & advantageous that ever had been carried on by
British Arms, your loyal colonists having contributed to its

\textsuperscript{20}The word "of" was omitted in the final version.

\textsuperscript{21}This was changed to "these settlements."
success, by such repeated and strenuous exertions, as frequently procured them the distinguished approbation of your Majesty, of the late king, and of parliament, doubted not, that they should be permitted with the rest of the empire, to share in the blessings of peace, and the emoluments of victory and conquest. \( \text{[While with unlimited confidence in the wisdom and benignity of their parent state, they looked up to her for such institutions as might be proper to improve for the commonweal, the advantages lately obtained;]} \) While these recent and honorable acknowledgments of their merits remained on record in the Journals & acts of that august legislature the Parliament, undefaced by the imputation, or even suspicion of any offence \{to their inexpressible disappointment & astonishment, they perceived the dangers of a foreign quarrel quickly succeeded by domestic dangers, in their judgment of a more dreadful kind and\} they were alarmed by a new system of statutes & regulations adopted for the administration of the colonies, that filled their minds with the most painful fears & jealousies; and\(^{23}\) to their inexpressible astonishment, perceived the Dangers of a foreign Quarrel quickly succeeded by domestic Dangers, in their Judgment, of a more dreadful kind.

Nor were their anxieties alleviated by any tendency

\(^{22}\)The final version reads, "doubted not but that."

\(^{23}\)The rest of this paragraph was added by Dickinson, on the bottom of an otherwise blank page 7.
in this system to promote the welfare of their\(^{24}\) (beloved) mother country. For tho its effects were more immediately felt by them, yet its influence appeared to be injurious to the commerce and prosperity of \(\text{(that kingdom) GB,}^{25}\)

We shall decline the ungrateful task of describing the irksome variety of artifices practised by many of your Majesty's ministers, the delusive \(\text{\textit{(hope.}) Pretences}^{26}\) fruitless terrors, and unavailing severities, that have from time to time been dealt out by them, in their attempts to execute this impolitic plan, or of tracing thro a series of years past the progress of the \(\text{(as) unhappy differences between Great Britain and those colonies, that}^{27}\) have flowed from this fatal source.

Your Majesty's ministers persevering in their measures, and proceeding to open hostilities for enforcing them, \(\text{(have at length produced a War; a word so peculiarly) have compell'd us to arm in our own Defence, and have \(\text{(thus) engaged us in a Controversy so peculiarly}^{28}\) abhorrent to the affections of}

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\(^{24}\) The final version reads "the mother country."

\(^{25}\) Dickinson preferred "Great Britain" instead of "that kingdom."

\(^{26}\) "Pretences" was inserted by Dickinson.

\(^{27}\) The final version reads "which have."

\(^{28}\) This revision is in Dickinson's hand.
your still faithful colonists, that when we consider whom we must oppose in this contest, and if it continues what may be the consequences, our own particular misfortunes are accounted by us, only as parts of our distress, (and every successful event that can happen to us, will be but an addition to our afflictions.)

Knowing, to what violent resentments and incurable animosities, (the mutual injuries attending) civil discord, are apt to exasperate and inflame the contending parties, we think ourselves required by indispensable obligations to Almighty God, to your Majesty, to our fellow subjects, and to ourselves, immediately to use all the means in our power not incompatible with our safety, for stopping the further effusion of blood, and for averting the impending calamities that threaten the British empire. 29

Thus called upon to address your majesty on affairs of such moment to America, and probably to all your dominions, we are earnestly desirous of performing this office with the utmost deference for your Majesty; and we therefore pray, that your royal magnanimity and benevolence may make the most favourable construction of (any) our expressions, (we may use) on so uncommon an occasion. Could we represent in their full force the sentiments that agitate the minds of us...

29Dickinson here wrote in the left margin that "This Clause should come in before the two next proceeding" but later changed his mind and crossed the statement out.
your dutiful subjects, we are persuaded, (your Majesty would
discover so severe a sense of our grievances joined with so
great a reverence for those in whose names they are inflicted,
that your royal goodness would assuredly ascribe any appear-
ances of deviation from the latter, in our language, or even
in our conduct, not to any reprehensible intention, but to the
impossibility of so exactly regulating either words or actions,
while we are impelled incessantly to attend to our own pre-
servation, as not to seem deficient in respect to their homes
or [illeg.] whose confidence and authority we see abused by
our enemies for the purpose of effecting our destruction.)
your majesty would ascribe any seeming deviation from reverence
in our language & even in our conduct, not to any reprehensi-
ble intention, but to the impossibility of reconciling the
usual appearances of respect with a just attention to our own
preservation against those artful & cruel enemies who abuse
your royal confidence & authority for the purpose of effecting
our destruction.  

Attached to your Majesty's person, family &
government with all the devotion that (duty) Principle &
and affection can inspire, connected with Great Britain by
the strongest ties that can unite societies, and deploiring
every event that tends in any degree to weaken them, We

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30 This correction is in the hand of Charles Thomson. In the
approved version, a new paragraph begins with the word
"Attached."

31 Dickinson substituted the word "Principle" for "duty."
solemnly assure your Majesty, that we not only most ardently desire the former harmony between her and these colonies, may be restored, but that a concord may be established between them upon so firm a basis, as to perpetuate its blessings uninterrupted by any future dissensions to succeeding generations in both countries, and to transmit your Majesty's name to posterity adorned with that signal and lasting glory, that has attended the memory of those illustrious personages, whose virtues & abilities have extricated states from dangerous convulsions, and by

securing happiness to others, have erected the most noble and durable monuments to their own Fame.

We beg leave further to assure your Majesty, that notwithstanding the sufferings of your loyal colonists during the course of the present controversy, our breasts retain too (filial) (respect) tender\(^{32}\) a regard for the kingdom from which we derive our origin, to request such a reconciliation, as might in any manner be inconsistent with her dignity or her welfare—These, related as we are to her, honor & duty, as well as inclination induce us to support and advance; and the apprehensions that now oppress our hearts with unspeakable grief, being once removed, your Majesty will find your faithful subjects on this continent, (not only

\(^{32}\)This change is in Dickinson's hand.
cheerfully disposed to contribute to the common defence in proportion to their circumstances, but ready and willing at all times, as they ever have been with their lives and fortunes to assert and maintain the rights and interests of your Majesty and of our mother country.

We therefore beseech your Majesty, that your royal authority and influence may be graciously interposed to procure us relief from our afflicting fears & Jealousies occasioned by the system before mentioned, and to settle Peace through every Part of (the Empire,) your Dominions,\(^{33}\) with all humility submitting to your Majesty's wise consideration, whether it may not be expedient for facilitating these important purposes, that your Majesty be pleased to direct some mode by which the united applications of your faithful colonists to the throne, in pursuance of their common councils, may (by them jointly, be more fully and particularly explained;) be improved into a happy & permanent Reconciliation; and that in the meantime, measures be taken for (see below)\(^{34}\) for preventing the further Destruction of the Lives of your Majesty's subjects; and that such statutes as more immediately distress any of your Majesty's colonies be repealed—

\(^{33}\) Dickinson inserted this phrase.

\(^{34}\) This change is also in Dickinson's hand. The note, beginning with "for preventing" and continuing through "and that" was added at the bottom of the page.
For by such arrangements as your Majesty's wisdom can form, for collecting the united sense of your American people, we are convinced, your Majesty (and parliament) would receive such satisfactory proofs of the dispositions of the colonists towards their sovereign and the parent state, that the wished for opportunity would soon be restored to them, of evincing the sincerity of their professions by every testimony of devotion becoming the most dutiful subjects and the most affectionate colonists.

That your Majesty may enjoy a long & prosperous reign, and that your descendants may govern your dominions with honor to themselves & happiness to their subjects, is our sincere and fervent prayer.35

35 The congressmen's names, with the omission of John Adams, were listed by Charles Thomson on page 3 in the order the document was signed. The draft is docketed "Petition to the King" and John Dickinson's signature is in the bottom right corner.
ENGROSSED COPY PRESENTED
TO
LORD DARTMOUTH

To the King's most excellent Majesty

Most gracious Sovereign

To 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 New Castle Kent and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of these colonies, who have deputed us to represent them in general Congress, entreat your Majestys gracious attention to this our humble petition.

The union between our Mother country and these colonies, and the energy of mild and just government, produced benefits so remarkably important, and afforded such an assurance of their permanency and increase, that the wiser

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36 The text is taken from the Public Record Office copy, which has been compared with the second engrossed copy in the New York Public Library and with the Bradford printing. Except for punctuation and capitalization, all variations are noted.

37 Spelled "pomancy" in the Bradford printing.
of other nations were excited, while they beheld Great Britain risings to a power the most extraordinary the world had ever known.

Her rivals observing, that there was no probability of this happy connection being broken by civil dissensions, and apprehending its future effects, if left any longer undisturbed, resolved to prevent her receiving such continual and formidable accessions of wealth and strength, by checking the growth of these settlements from which they were to be derived.

In the prosecution of this attempt events so unfavourable to the design took place, that every friend to the interests of Great Britain and these colonies entertained [page 2] pleasing and reasonable expectations of seeing an additional force and extension immediately given to the operations of the union hitherto experienced, by an enlargement of the dominions of the Crown, and the removal of ancient and varilix enemies to a greater distance.

At the conclusion therefore of the late war, the most glorious and advantageous that ever had been carried on by

...38 Spelled "risings" in Bradford printing.

39 This word has been changed to "those" in both the New York Public copy and the Bradford printing.

40 "Interests" is singular in the Bradford printing.
British arms, your loyal colonists having contributed to its success, by such repeated and strenuous exertions, as frequently procured them the distinguished approbation of your majesty, of the late king, and of parliament, doubted not but that they should be permitted with the rest of the empire, to share in the blessings of peace and the emoluments of victory and conquest. While these recent and honorable acknowledgments of their merits remained on record in the journals and acts of that august legislature the Parliament, undefaced by the imputation or even the suspicion of any offence; they were alarmed by a new system of statutes and regulations adopted for the administration of the colonists, that filled their minds with the most painful fears and jealousies; and to their inexpressible astonishment perceived the dangers of a foreign quarrel quickly succeeded by domestic dangers, in their judgment of a more dreadful kind.

Nor were their anxieties alleviated by any tendency in this system to promote the welfare of the Mother Country.

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41 A new paragraph begins here in both of the other versions.
42 "Honorable acknowledgments" is spelled "honourable acknowledgments" by Bradford.
43 The word is spelled "domestick" in the New York Public copy.
44 The Bradford printing reads "these."
45 The other copies read "their."
For the\textsuperscript{46} its effects were more immediately felt by them, yet its influence appeared to be injurious to the commerce and prosperity of Great Britain.

We shall decline the ungrateful task of describing the irksome variety of artifices practised by many of your Majestys ministers, the delusive pretences, fruitless terrors, and unavailing severities, that have from time to time been dealt out by them, in their attempts to execute this impolitic plan, or of tracing through\textsuperscript{47} a series of years past the progress [page 3] of the unhappy differences between Great Britain and these colonies which\textsuperscript{48} have flowed from this fatal source.

Your Majestys ministers persevering in their measures and proceeding to open hostilities for enforcing them, have compelled us to arm in our own defence, and have engaged us in a controversy so peculiarly abhorrent to the affections of your still faithful colonists, that when we consider what we must oppose in this\textsuperscript{49} contest, and if it continues, what may be the consequences, our own particular misfortunes are accounted by us, only as parts of our distress.

\textsuperscript{46} The Bradford printing reads "though."
\textsuperscript{47} Bradford printed "tracing through."
\textsuperscript{48} The other two copies read "that have flowed."
\textsuperscript{49} "This" was changed to "the" by Bradford.
Knowing, to what violent recentments and incurable
ominosities, civil discords are apt to exasperate and
inflame the contending parties, we think ourselves require-
cd by indispensable obligations to Almighty God, to your
Najesty, to our fellow subjects, and to ourselves, immedia-
tely to use all the means in our power not incompatible with
our safety, for stopping the further effusion of blood, and
for averting the impending calamities that threaten the
British Empire.

Thus called upon to address your Majesty on affairs of
such moment to America, and probably to all your dominions,
we are earnestly desirous of performing this office with
the utmost deference for your Majesty; and we therefore
pray, that your royal magnanimity and benevolence may make
the most favourable construction of our expressions on so
uncommon an occasion. Could we represent in their full
force the sentiments that agitate the minds of us your duti-
ful subjects, we are persuaded, your Majesty would ascribe
any seeming deviation from reverence, in our language, and
even in our conduct, not to any reprehensible intention but
to the impossibility of reconciling the usual appearances of
respect with a just attention to our own preservation against

50 Bradford inserted the word "Majesty's" here.

51 "Construction" is plural in the printed copy.
those artful\textsuperscript{52} & cruel enemies, who abuse your royal confidence & authority for the purpose of effecting our destruction.

[page 4] Attached to your Majesty's person, family and government with all the\textsuperscript{53} devotion that principle and affection can inspire, connected with Great Britain by the strongest ties that can unite societies, and deploiring every event that tends in any degree to weaken them,\textsuperscript{54} we solemnly assure your Majesty, that we not only most ardently desire the former harmony between her and these colonies may be restored but that a concord may be established between them upon so firm a basis, as to perpetuate its blessings uninterrupted by any future dissensions to succeeding generations in both countries, & to transmit your Majesty's name to posterity adorned with that signal and lasting glory, that has attended the memory of those illustrious personages, whose virtues and abilities have extricated states from dangerous convulsions, and by securing happiness to others, have erected the most noble and durable monuments to their own fame.

We beg leave further to assure your Majesty that notwithstanding the sufferings of your loyal colonists during the course of the\textsuperscript{55} present controversy, our breasts retain

\textsuperscript{52}The Bradford printing reads "awful and cruel."
\textsuperscript{53}"The" is omitted in the printed version.
\textsuperscript{54}Bradford begins a new sentence with "We."
\textsuperscript{55}The Bradford printing reads "this present."
too tender a regard for the kingdom from which we derive
our origin to request such a reconciliation as might in
any manner be inconsistent with her dignity or her welfare.
These, related as we are to her, honor and duty, as well as
inclination induce us to support and advance; and the
apprehensions that now oppress our hearts with unspeakable
grief, being once removed, your Majesty will find your
faithful subjects on this continent ready and willing at all
[page 5] times, as they ever have been with their lives and
fortunes to assert and maintain the rights and interests of
your Majesty and of our Mother country.

We therefore beseech your Majesty, that your royal
authority and influence may be graciously interposed to
procure us relief from our afflicting fears and jealousies
occasioned by the system before mentioned, and to settle
peace through56 every part of your dominions, with all
humility submitting to your Majesty's wise consideration,
whether it may not be expedient for facilitating those im-
portant purposes, that your Majesty be pleased to direct some
measures by which the united applications of your faithful colo-
nists to the throne, in pursuance57 of their common councils,
may be improved into a happy and permanent reconciliation;

56 The New York Public copy reads "thro."
57 The Bradford printing reads "presence."
and that in the mean time measures\textsuperscript{58} be taken for preventing the further destruction of the lives of your Majesty's subjects; and that such statutes as more immediately distress any of your Majesty's colonies\textsuperscript{59} be repealed;\textsuperscript{60} For by such arrangements as your Majesty's wisdom can form for collecting the united sense of your American people, we are convinced, your Majesty would receive such satisfactory proofs of the disposition of the colonists towards their sovereign and the parent state, that the wished for opportunity would soon be restored to them, of evincing the sincerity of their professions by every testimony of devotion becoming the most dutiful subjects and the most affectionate colonists.

That your Majesty may enjoy a long and [page 6] prosperous reign, and that your descendants may govern your dominions with honor\textsuperscript{61} to themselves and happiness to their subjects is our sincere and fervent prayer.\textsuperscript{62}
Franz, Lewis, John Jay, Robt. R Livingston junr., Lewis Morris, 
Mr. Floyd, Henry Winner; second column: Mr. Livingston, John 
Do Kirt, Richd. Smith, John Dickinson, B Franklin, Geo; Ross, 
James Wilson, Chas Humphreys, Edwd. Biddle, Caesar Rodney, 
The McLellan, Geo; Reed, Nat. Tilghman, Thos. Johnson Junr., 
Mr. Parke, Samuel Chase, Thos; Stone; page 7: P. Henry 
Richard Henry Lee, Edwad Pendleton, Benja. Harrison, Thos; 
Jefferson, Will Hooper, Joseph Hewes, Henry Middleton, 
Charles Humphreys of Pennsylvania and Henry Middleton and 
Edward Rutledge of South Carolina did not sign the copy in 
the New York Public Library. On both copies, Charles Thomson 
suritized the name of the colony before the list of its repres- 
entatives.

Sixteen men who had been elected to Congress in 1775 did 
not sign the petition. There is definite proof that eight of 
them, John Sullivan, Thomas Mifflin, Richard Bland, Peyton 
Randolph, George Washington, Richard Caswell, George Clinton 
and Philip Schuyler, were attending to other duties. There is 
no record of the attendance of Robert Goldsborough, John Hall, 
Stephen Crane, James Kinsey, John Horton, Thomas Willing and 
Sebastian Deburn in the summer of 1775. Lyman Hall is the only 
representative definitely in Philadelphia in July who did 
not sign the document.
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