**Patriot American Revolution**

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*This article is about the Patriots in the* [*American Revolution*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution)*. For other uses, see* [*Patriot (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriot_(disambiguation))*.*

**Patriots** (also known as **American Whigs**, **Revolutionaries**, **Congress-Men** or **Rebels**) were the colonists of the [British](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Great_Britain) [Thirteen United Colonies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirteen_United_Colonies) who rebelled against British control during the [American Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution) and in July 1776 [declared](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Declaration_of_Independence) the [United States of America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) an independent nation. Their rebellion was based on the political philosophy of [republicanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republicanism_in_the_United_States), as expressed by pamphleteers, such as [Thomas Jefferson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Jefferson), [Alexander Hamilton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Hamilton), and [Thomas Paine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine).

As a group, Patriots represented an array of social, economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds. They included college students like Alexander Hamilton; [planters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plantations_in_the_American_South) like Thomas Jefferson; merchants like [Alexander McDougall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_McDougall); lawyers like [John Adams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams); and plain farmers like [Daniel Shays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Shays) and [Joseph Plumb Martin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Plumb_Martin).

**Terminology**

The critics of British rule called themselves *Whigs* after 1768, identifying with members of the British [Whig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whig_(British_political_party)) party (including the [Radical Whigs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical_Whigs) and [Patriot Whigs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriot_Whigs)), who favored similar colonial policies. The [*Oxford English Dictionary*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_English_Dictionary) third definition of "Patriot" is "*A person actively opposing enemy forces occupying his or her country; a member of a resistance movement, a freedom fighter. Originally used of those who opposed and fought the British in the American War of Independence."* The earliest citation is a 1773 letter by [Benjamin Franklin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin). In Britain at the time, "patriot" had a negative connotation, and was used, says [Samuel Johnson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Johnson) to attack "a factious disturber of the government."

Those colonists who remained loyal to the [British Crown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_monarchy) called themselves [Loyalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalist_(American_Revolution)), "[Tories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tory)",

**About the Patriots**

Many Patriots were active before 1775 in groups such as the [Sons of Liberty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sons_of_Liberty). The most prominent leaders of the Patriots are referred to today by Americans as the [Founding Fathers of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_Fathers_of_the_United_States). The Patriots came from many different backgrounds. Among the most active of the Patriots group were highly educated and fairly wealthy individuals. However, without the support of the ordinary men and women, such as farmers, lawyers, merchants, seamstresses, homemakers, shopkeepers, and ministers, the struggle for independence would have failed.

In 2000 historian Robert Calhoun said the consensus of historians is that in the Thirteen Colonies between 40 and 45 percent of the white population supported the Patriots' cause, between 15 and 20% supported the Loyalists, and the remainder were neutral or kept a low profile. With a white population of about 2.5 million, that makes about 380,000 to 500,000 Loyalists. The great majority of them remained in America, since only about 80,000 Loyalists left the United States 1775-1783. They went to Canada, Britain, Florida or the West Indies, but some eventually returned.

**Psychology**

One way to understand the Patriots is to compare their psychology with that of the Loyalists. Labaree (1948) has identified eight characteristics of the Loyalists that made them essentially conservative; opposite traits characterized the patriots. Psychologically, Loyalists were older, better established, and resisted innovation. They thought resistance to the Crown—the legitimate government—was morally wrong, while the Patriots thought morality was on their side. They were alienated when the Patriots resorted to violence, such as burning houses and tarring and feathering. Loyalists wanted to take a middle-of-the road position and were angry when forced by the Patriots to declare their opposition. Many Loyalists, especially merchants in the port cities, had a long-standing sentimental attachment to Britain (often with business and family links to other parts of the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire)). Some Loyalists were procrastinators who realized that independence was bound to come someday, but wanted to postpone the moment; the Patriots wanted to seize the moment. Loyalists were cautious and afraid of anarchy or tyranny that might come from mob rule; Patriots made a systematic effort to use and control mob violence. Finally, Labaree argues that Loyalists were pessimists who lacked the Patriots' confidence that independence lay ahead.

**No taxation without representation**

The Americans rejected taxes not imposed by their own legislatures. "[No taxation without representation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_taxation_without_representation)," was their slogan—referring to the lack of representation in the British parliament. The British countered there was "virtual representation," that is, all members of Parliament represented the interests of all the citizens of the British Empire.

Though Patriots declared that they were loyal to the king, they believed that the assemblies should control issues relating just to the colonies. They should be able to run themselves. In fact, they had been running themselves after the period of "salutary neglect" before the French and Indian War. Some radical Patriots tarred and feathered tax collectors and customs officers, making those positions dangerous, especially in [New England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_England), in which lived the most Patriots.

**List of prominent Patriots**

Most of the individuals listed below served the American Revolution in multiple capacities.

**Statesmen and office holders**

* [Thomas Jefferson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Jefferson)
* [John Adams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams)
* [John Dickinson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dickinson_(delegate))
* [Benjamin Franklin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin)
* [Jonathan Shipley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Shipley)
* [William Paca](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Paca)

**Pamphleteers and activists**

* [Samuel Adams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Adams)
* [Alexander Hamilton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Hamilton)
* [William Molineux](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Molineux)
* [Timothy Matlack](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_Matlack)
* [Thomas Paine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine)
* [Paul Revere](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Revere)
* [Patrick Henry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Henry)
* [Samuel Prescott](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Prescott)
* [Molly Pitcher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molly_Pitcher)
* [Roger Sherman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Sherman)
* [Philip Mazzei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Mazzei)

**Military officers**

See also: [Military leadership in the American Revolutionary War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_leadership_in_the_American_Revolutionary_War)

* [Nathanael Greene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathanael_Greene)
* [Nathan Hale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathan_Hale)
* [Francis Marion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Marion)
* [Andrew Pickens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Pickens_(congressman))
* [Daniel Morgan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Morgan)
* [James Mitchell Varnum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Mitchell_Varnum)
* [Joseph Bradley Varnum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Bradley_Varnum)
* [George Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington)
* [John Paul Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Paul_Jones)
* [Thomas Sumter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Sumter)
* [Francis Vigo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Vigo)

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This page was last modified on 28 March 2012 at 13:56.