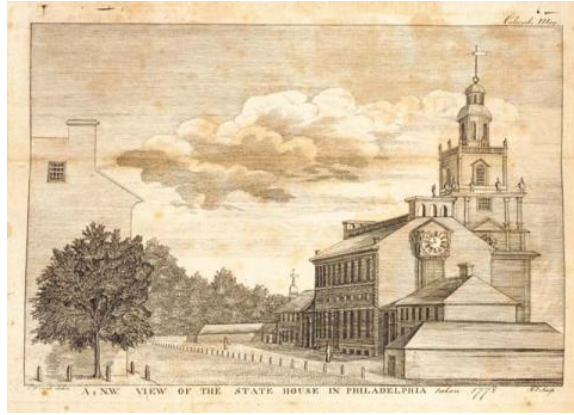




0. WE ARE ALL BORN FREE - Story Preface

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15. A SPECIAL 4TH OF JULY

During the late spring of 1776, Tom Jefferson traveled to Philadelphia as a Virginia delegate to the Second Continental Congress. His mission was to vote on a resolution which would "declare the United Colonies"—including Virginia—"free and independent states." Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

In 1770, while a young lawyer, Thomas Jefferson represented Samuel Howell, a third-generation slave who had run away. Asserting Howell should not be enslaved, Jefferson filed a case against Wade Netherland who claimed that he "owned" Howell.

Unsuccessfully arguing for his client's freedom, in *Samuel Howell v Wade Netherland*, Jefferson told the court, among other things:

That this [the Virginia law which allowed slavery] did not, under the law of nature, affect the liberty of the children, Because, under that law we are all born free.

The court resoundingly rejected Jefferson's argument. After he lost the case, Samuel and his brother ran away again. The young lawyer, however, had not forgotten his transcendent argument:

...under that law [the law of nature] we are all born free.

Six years after he told the court "we are all born free," Jefferson was convinced the colonies should sever their ties to Great Britain. Already at war - since the first battles at Lexington and Concord in April of 1775 - colonial separation seemed logical.

Then - on the 15th of May, 1776 - the Virginia Convention instructed its delegates to the Second Continental Congress (which was meeting in Philadelphia) to do something radical:

Propose to that respectable body to declare the United Colonies free and independent states.

North Carolina, one month earlier, had instructed its delegates to do the same thing. (See the Halifax Resolves.)

Thomas Jefferson, a member of Virginia's delegation to Congress, made the week-long trip to Philadelphia. He left behind his ill and suffering wife. The couple had lost their baby daughter Jane, in 1775, and Patty had recently miscarried - again.

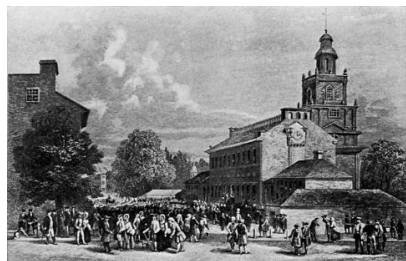
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WE-ARE-ALL-BORN-FREE-Thomas-Jefferson>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WE-ARE-ALL-BORN-FREE-Thomas-Jefferson>

Media Stream

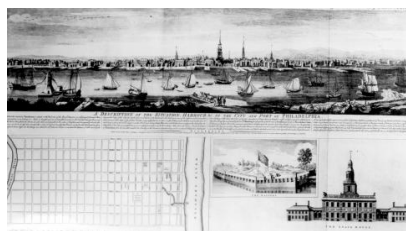


Philadelphia - Old State House

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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Philadelphia - 18th Century Panorama

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