



Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776

Richard R. Beeman

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In 1768, Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush stood before the empty throne of King George III, overcome with emotion as he gazed at the symbol of America's connection with England. Eight years later, he became one of the fifty-six men to sign the Declaration of Independence, severing America forever from its mother country. Rush was not alone in his radical decision—many of those casting their votes in favor of independence did so with a combination of fear, reluctance, and even sadness.

In *Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor*, acclaimed historian Richard R. Beeman examines the grueling twenty-two-month period between the meeting of the Continental Congress on September 5, 1774 and the audacious decision for independence in July of 1776. As late as 1774, American independence was hardly inevitable—indeed, most Americans found it neither desirable nor likely. When delegates from the thirteen colonies gathered in September, they were, in the words of John Adams, “a gathering of strangers.” Yet over the next two years, military, political, and diplomatic events catalyzed a change of unprecedented magnitude: the colonists' rejection of their British identities in favor of American ones. In arresting detail, Beeman brings to life a cast of characters, including the relentless and passionate John Adams, Adams' much-misunderstood foil John Dickinson, the fiery political activist Samuel Adams, and the relative political neophyte Thomas Jefferson, and with profound insight reveals their path from subjects of England to citizens of a new nation.

A vibrant narrative, *Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor* tells the remarkable story of how the delegates to the Continental Congress, through courage and compromise, came to dedicate themselves to the forging of American independence.

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