

Working Together

Many people in the colonies had decided that things had to change. But they did not know what the next step should be.

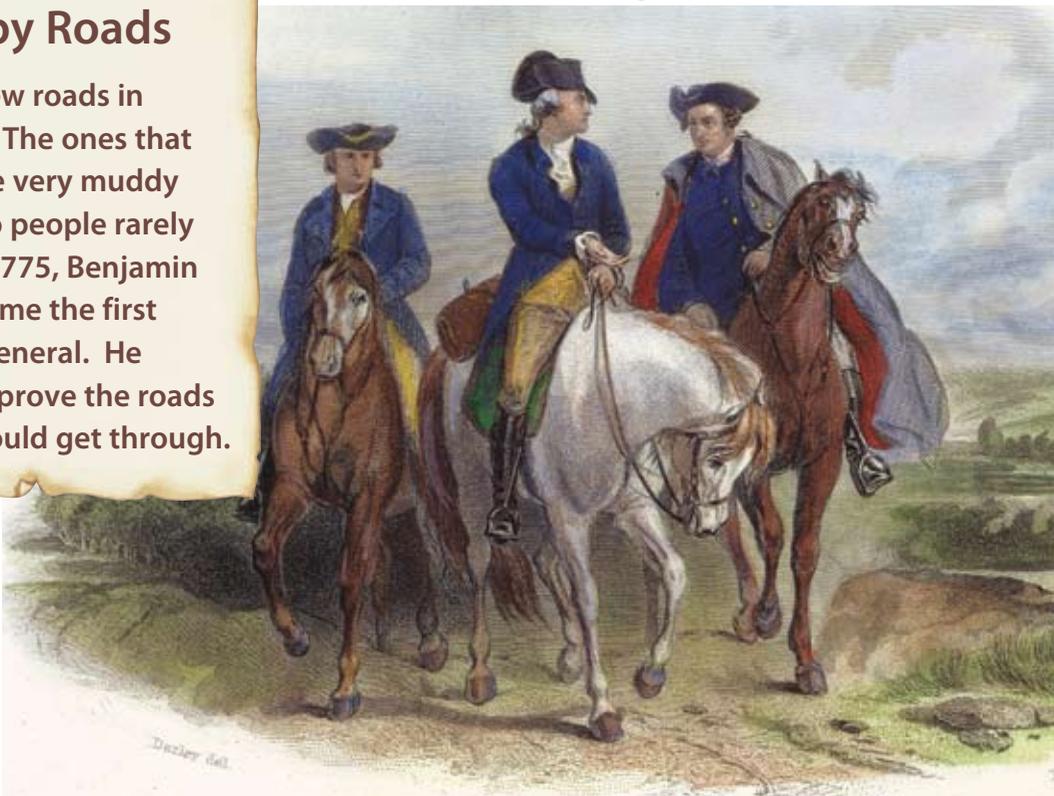
In 1774, the colonists decided to have a meeting. In the meeting, people from different colonies could talk about the problems with Great Britain.

Well-known **delegates** from the colonies came to the First **Continental** (kon-tuh-NEN-tuhl) **Congress**. They all had different ideas. But they listened to each other talk. Some of them even became close friends.

Bumpy Roads

There were few roads in the colonies. The ones that did exist were very muddy and rough, so people rarely traveled. In 1775, Benjamin Franklin became the first postmaster general. He worked to improve the roads so the mail could get through.

▼ Three Virginia delegates on the way to the First Continental Congress

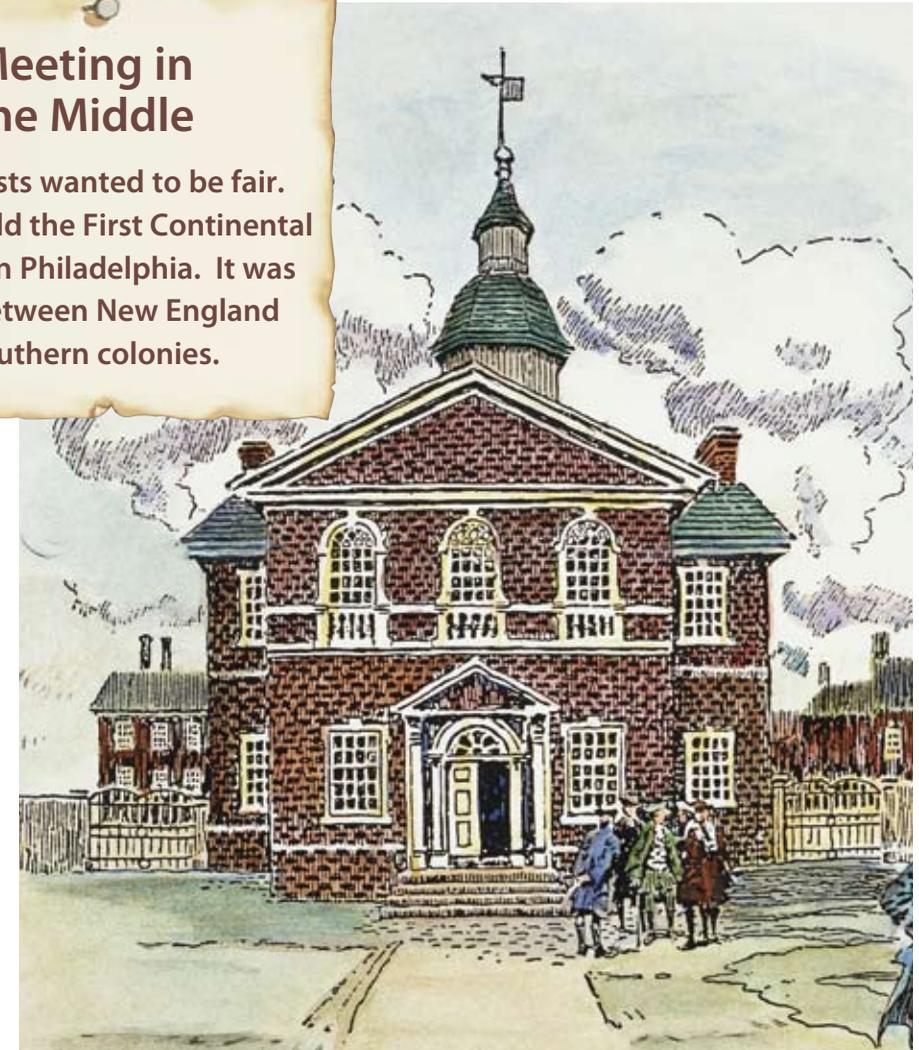


Together they wrote a message to King George. They called it the Declaration of Rights and Grievances (GREE-vuhn-zeh). It politely explained all the colonists' complaints. The king refused to even read it.

The delegates knew a fight was coming. They told the leaders of the colonies to start forming **militias** (muh-LISH-uhz).

Meeting in the Middle

The colonists wanted to be fair. So they held the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. It was halfway between New England and the southern colonies.



▲ Site of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

What Should We Do Now?

The colonists organized many small armies. This angered the British soldiers. On April 19, 1775, redcoats marched to Lexington, Massachusetts. They planned to **confiscate** (KON-fuh-skate), or take, weapons hidden there.

A colonial militia group waited for the British. Nobody knows who fired the first shot. But soon the two sides clashed. Many other battles followed.



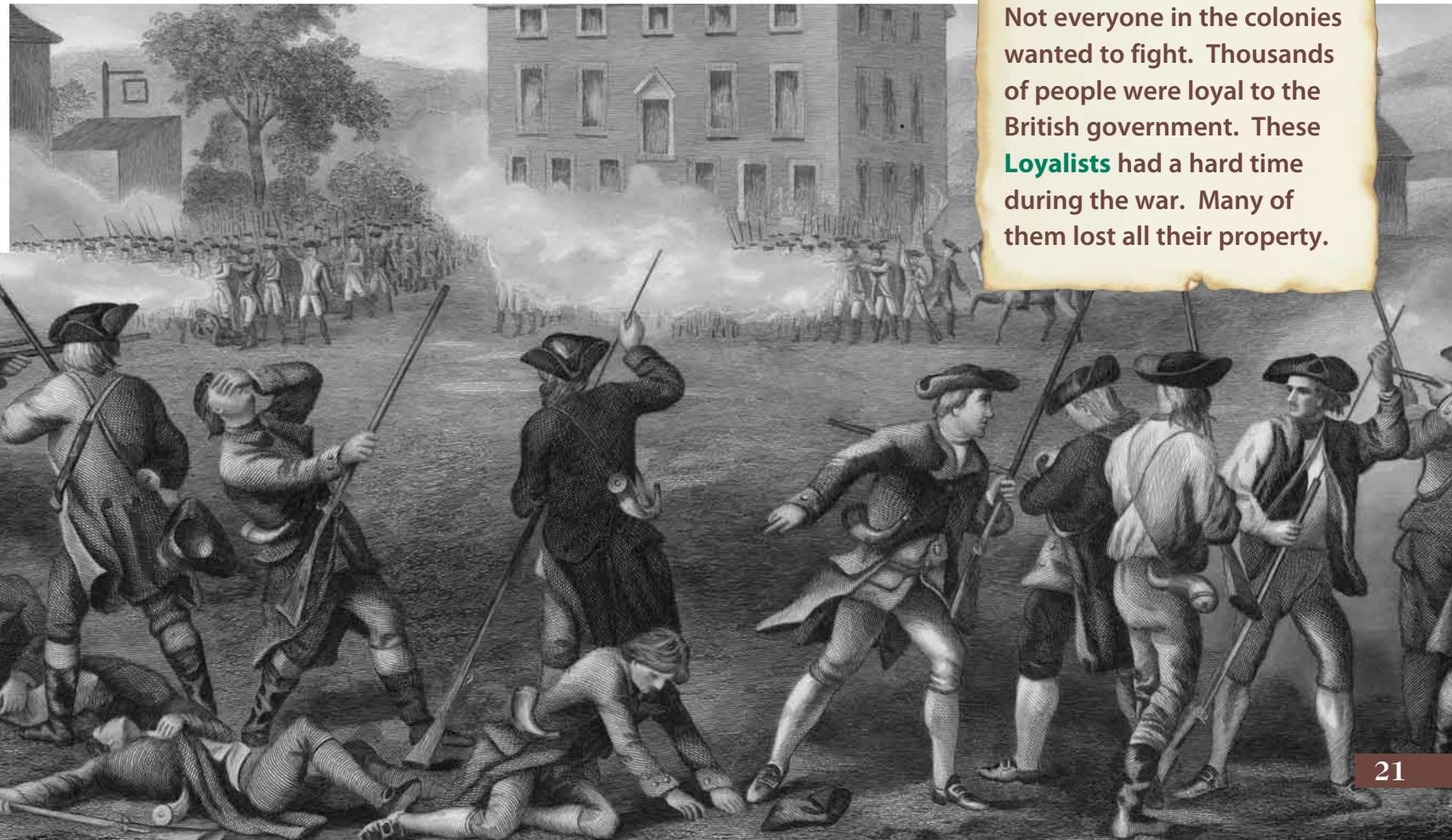
Commander-in-Chief

The delegates needed a strong leader for their army. They chose a man from Virginia named George Washington. He left right away to join his soldiers.

The colonists wondered, “What should we do now?” It was one thing to talk about breaking away from England. It was another to actually fight to form a new country.

They called another meeting, the Second Continental Congress. First, the delegates worried about being ready to fight. They organized the small armies into one large Continental Army. Then, they spent a long time arguing about what the colonies should do next.

▼ Battle of Lexington in April 1775



Outnumbered

Not everyone in the colonies wanted to fight. Thousands of people were loyal to the British government. These **Loyalists** had a hard time during the war. Many of them lost all their property.