

Loyalists vs. Patriots

By Sarah Collinge

We usually think of the Revolutionary War as a war between two nations—the U.S. and Great Britain. In many ways the Revolutionary War was a civil war between citizens of a divided nation. The fight during the Revolutionary War was between those people who remained loyal to Great Britain (the Loyalists) and those people who desired independence from Great Britain (the Patriots). In many cases, towns and even individual families were divided by their beliefs. (New York City was an example of a divided city, with half of its population made up of Loyalists and the other half of Patriots.) Many American Loyalists and American Patriots fought against one another—even father against son, as in the case of Benjamin Franklin and his son William Franklin.

The Loyalists and Patriots did have one thing in common—both groups criticized the way Great Britain was taxing the colonists even though the colonists were not represented in Parliament. Their motto became, “No taxation without representation.” However, the way each group chose to respond to this injustice was very different.

Loyalists	Patriots
<p>The Loyalists believed that violence against Great Britain would have a negative impact on the economy of the colonies. At this time, the colonies relied on British trade, and Loyalists believed that they needed Great Britain for economic profit.</p> <p>The majority of Loyalists were shopkeepers and merchants (people who traded their goods with other countries). At the time, Britain was the most powerful nation in the world. Loyalists felt it was to their advantage to be part of this large empire.</p> <p>Those who remained loyal to the King put their homes and lives at risk. Loyalists were arrested, suffered harassment, had their property stolen, and were violently attacked. Many loyalists fled the colonies during the revolution to avoid these risks. Others joined the British soldiers in war.</p>	<p>The Patriots did not believe in monarchy—a form of government that gives power to a single person, king or queen. They believed in democracy—government that is powered by the common people through elected representatives.</p> <p>After Great Britain placed taxes on the colonies, they rebelled against British control. They began to protest against British taxes and form their own militia—an army of ordinary citizens.</p> <p>They also formed several groups that protested British rule.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Sons of Liberty—This group printed newspapers and advertisements encouraging people to rebel against British control.• The Daughters of Liberty—These women made their own fabric and tea in order to prove the colonies could survive without British goods.• The First Continental Congress—This congress, which included representatives from each of the colonies, drafted the Declaration of Independence.

Resources:

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