

The Declaration of Independence: The Mystery of the Lost Original

OVER the past two centuries many legends, myths, misconceptions, and palpable errors have clustered about the Declaration of Independence—a title, incidentally, which it never bore.¹ Among these is the all but universal belief that the engrossed, signed copy on parchment enshrined in the National Archives is the sole, authentic text of what its author called “this holy bond of our union.”² Beyond question, that exalted document should and always will retain its primacy in the affections of the American people. Neither its powerful symbolic appeal nor its unique character can be lessened by a recognition of the truth that, like Magna Carta, its fundamental principles are set forth in more than one form. Unrivalled in the public esteem, it is nevertheless only the most notable of several copies legitimately entitled to be designated as official texts. Each of these was brought into existence by authority of government for a particular purpose at a particular time. All of them, including the signed and engrossed copy, share in common the fact that they are derivatives of the prototype which was adopted by Congress on the evening of July 4, 1776, and which unhappily disappeared from history almost at the moment of its creation. It is the purpose of this article to attempt to describe that missing document and to identify its several derivatives which may be regarded as having official status.

I

“There is certainly no secret in regard to the declaration,” Timothy Pickering declared in 1811, “for it must be a public

¹ Charles Warren, “Fourth of July Myths,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., II (July, 1946), 237-272.

² Jefferson to Dr. John Mease, Sept. 26, 1825, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress; printed in P. L. Ford, ed., *Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1899), 346.

document now among the papers of the Old Congress."³ This was a plausible assumption. But Pickering, one of the first and most ardent critics of both the Declaration and its author, appears to have done nothing to ascertain whether it was grounded in fact. This is surprising, for he had ample opportunity to do so and he also had a powerful incentive in his abiding hatred of Thomas Jefferson and all his works. As Secretary of State from 1795 to 1800, he had had official custody of the papers of the Continental Congress. During his terms as a United States Senator from 1803 to 1811, he had begun an effort that would last almost two decades to show how little credit Jefferson deserved for composing the Declaration. In 1805, while in Washington, he had been shown the originals of Jefferson's letter to Richard Henry Lee and of the enclosed holograph text "as agreed to by the House, and also, as originally framed."⁴ He could easily have sought to verify the accuracy of the text by examining the records in the Department of State. Instead, he made a scrupulously exact copy of both documents and made the following comment upon them:⁵

The preceding Copy of the Declaration of Independence has this day been examined by me; and on a careful comparison with the original copy in the hand-writing of Thomas Jefferson, now the President of the United States, I find that in every word, letter, and point . . . it is an exact transcript of that copy . . . as mentioned in Mr. Jefferson's letter. . . . The copies of the letter and declaration are made conformably to Mr. Jefferson's peculiarities; such as beginning sentences with small letters . . . and a departure from the standard spelling of some words.

In addition, Pickering allowed others to make copies of the two documents. He also counted the precise number of words both in Jefferson's draft and in the deletions and additions made by Congress, arriving at the conclusion that the text had been shortened—and of course improved—by these alterations. But in spite of his

³ Timothy Pickering to Henry Lee, May 3, 1811, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁴ Jefferson to Richard Henry Lee, July 8, 1776, Julian P. Boyd, *et al.*, eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, I (Princeton, 1950), 455-456. As suggested below, Jefferson must have enclosed with his manuscript copy one of the Dunlap broadsides showing the Declaration "as agreed to by the House."

⁵ Pickering's meticulously exact transcripts are in the Pickering Papers along with the accompanying memorandum dated at Washington, Feb. 26, 1805.

meticulous attention to every detail, he never sought to ascertain from the records of Congress whether the draft Jefferson sent to Lee coincided with the text "as agreed to by the House." It is to be doubted whether on any other occasion Pickering ever accepted so unquestioningly any assertion made by the man for whom he entertained such an implacable hostility.

But if he himself failed to seek the answer among the government archives, he may be credited with stimulating others to do so. At a Fourth of July address at Salem in 1823, Pickering brought to a climax his long effort to denigrate Jefferson's authorship and to demonstrate how little originality could be discerned in the principles or the arguments of the Declaration.⁶ The address, though surprisingly restrained and even polite in an allusion to the dignity of Jefferson's style, nevertheless touched sensitive nerves. In his search for facts about the authorship, Pickering had appealed to John Adams as the only authority capable of providing them. Without quoting his own letter of inquiry in the address, he did include Adams' response. When Jefferson saw the result, he revealed his feelings in a lengthy comment to James Madison:⁷

If his principles and prejudices, personal and political, gave us no reason to doubt whether he had truly quoted the information he alleges to have received from Mr. Adams, I should then say that, in some of the particulars Mr. Adams's memory has led him into unquestionable error. . . . Timothy thinks the instrument the better for having a fourth of it expunged. He would have thought it still better had the other three fourths gone out also, all but the single sentiment (the only one he approves) which recommends friendship to his dear England, whenever she is willing to be at peace with us. . . . In other words, that the Declaration, as being a libel on the government of England, composed in times of passion, should now be buried in utter oblivion to spare the feelings of our English friends and Angloman fellow citizens. But it is not to wound them that we wish to keep it in mind; but to cherish the principles of the instrument in the bosoms of our own citizens. . . . In opposition however to Mr. Pickering, I pray God that these principles may be eternal.

⁶ Col. Pickering's *Observations Introductory to Reading the Declaration of Independence* (Salem, 1823). The manuscript of the *Observations* is in the Pickering Papers.

⁷ Pickering to John Adams, Aug. 2, 1822, Adams Family Manuscripts, Massachusetts Historical Society; Adams to Pickering, Aug. 6, 1822, Pickering Papers; Jefferson to James Madison, Aug. 30, 1823, Jefferson Papers, printed in Ford, ed., *Writings*, X, 266-269.

The expression of doubt as to whether Adams had been accurately quoted because of political hostility was unduly harsh, but the difference between the severe criticisms expressed in Pickering's private inquiry of Adams and the moderate tone of the address testified both to the sensitiveness of the orator to the national mood and to the accuracy of Jefferson's perception of the real motive.

Restrained as it was, Pickering's Fourth of July address was widely noticed in the press, arousing some feeling even among those whose political principles could not be properly described as Jeffersonian. The editors of the *Shenandoah Herald* in Virginia, ardent supporters of John Quincy Adams for the presidency, were offended by the charge that the original text of the Declaration was "not *wholly* engrossed" and that much had been deleted. Disclaiming any intent to defend its author because he came from their state, they addressed a letter to Adams, then Secretary of State, asking if one of the departmental clerks could prepare a copy of the original instrument so that they might inform their readers of the facts. This seems to have been the earliest attempt made by anyone to verify from the records of Congress the exact nature of the Declaration as originally adopted by Congress. No evidence has been found to indicate that the editors' request was complied with or that their letter was even acknowledged.⁸

The next impulse to check the files of Congress came shortly thereafter. On August 19, 1825, the American Philosophical Society received as a gift the originals of Jefferson's letter to Lee and the draft of the Declaration that Pickering had so carefully copied twenty years earlier. The latter document bore an endorsement by a member of the Lee family defining the text as the one "reported to Congress." This erroneous attribution became fixed in the official records of the Society when the highly appreciated gift was recorded as being "The Draught of the Declaration of Independence originally presented to Congress."⁹ When John Vaughan, Librarian of the Society, sought from Jefferson any particulars he might be able to

⁸ Smoot & Foster to John Quincy Adams, Woodstock, Va., July 19, 1823, Adams Family Manuscripts.

⁹ Donation Book, Aug. 19, 1825, American Philosophical Society; text in I. Minis Hays, "A Note on the History of the Jefferson Manuscript Draught of the Declaration of Independence," *Proceedings*, XXXVII (Philadelphia, 1898), 88.

give about the "original or copy" that had been donated, he was told that the meaning of "original" was one of definition and that the document as reported should be found among the records of Congress. To this Jefferson added that the copy sent to Lee might be expected to show on its face whether it had been made "after the passage of the instrument . . . with the amendments of Congress."¹⁰ The document would indeed have confirmed this. As received by Lee, it contained none of the amendments made by Congress. Vaughan seems not to have realized this, but Jefferson's suggestion prompted him to inquire whether the text as submitted could be found in the files of Congress. The discovery that it was missing, however, seemed only to confirm the endorsement on the Lee copy and its acceptance in the official records of the Society. Vaughan, an able librarian who had done much to increase the Society's collections, later made a formal statement in which he concluded that, since "the *originally proposed form has not been found* . . . the Document in possession of the Society has with propriety become the sole original Draught."¹¹ Vaughan had good reason to succumb to a librarian's natural tendency to cherish most his institution's own possessions. It was he who had persuaded Lee's grandson to present these and other important manuscripts to the Society.

After Jefferson had inadvertently sent Vaughan down this mistaken road, half a century was to elapse before another inquirer sought the correct answer in the files of Congress. In 1884 Mellen Chamberlain found it by putting the question in a different form: was the draft of the Declaration, after being amended and adopted on July 4th, "forthwith engrossed on paper and thereupon subscribed by all the members then present except Dickinson?" Both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, relying upon the misleading printed *Journal*, had declared that it was. Chamberlain proved the *Journal* erroneous and the two statesmen equally so. In the process, addressing his inquiries to the Department of State, he learned that the

¹⁰ Jefferson to John Vaughan, Sept. 16, 1825, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. Ford, ed., *Writings*, X, 345-346, includes that part of the letter pertaining to the Declaration without indicating that the remainder of the text is omitted.

¹¹ "Note to the Original Draught of the Declaration," signed by Vaughan and prepared for the Prince de Joinville in 1841, Hays, "Note," 97-99, emphasis in the original.

earliest text of the Declaration as adopted on that date was inserted in the Secret Journal in the form of a printed broadside bearing the imprint of John Dunlap. Not only that: he was informed that no manuscript text of the document as submitted on June 28 by the Committee of Five—Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston—was to be found in the departmental files. This should have prompted a new line of inquiry. But Chamberlain, intent upon gaining the answer to his query as he had framed it, relegated to a footnote this part of the remarkably full and detailed information supplied him by Theodore F. Dwight, Chief of the Bureau of Rolls and Library of the Department of State. Having achieved his purpose, he regretted only that the printed *Journal* with its erroneous entry under July 4 would stand for all time as indicating that the “declaration was, by order of Congress, engrossed, and signed by the . . . members” on that day.¹²

Chamberlain did note that if the resolutions moved by Richard Henry Lee on June 7 calling for independence “had not been preserved on the files, we should never have known their authentic form from any public record.”¹³ But the more important report submitted by the Committee of Five had not been preserved and the public record therefore could not reveal its entire and authentic form. This astonishing gap in the files should have appeared all the more puzzling because of the tribute paid to Charles Thomson by Dwight in his communication to Chamberlain: “To him we owe the preservation of all the records of the Continental Congress—not only the Journals, but all those fragments now so precious, *e.g.*, the original motions, the reports of committees, the small odds and ends, which are the small bones of history.”¹⁴ The tribute was fully deserved. Never before in history had the origin of a nation been recorded from the moment it occurred, much less by such an im-

¹² Mellen Chamberlain, “The Authentication of the Declaration of Independence,” Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, 2d. Ser., I (Boston, 1885), 273. Chamberlain modestly disclaimed that his paper presented any new discovery, yet no one previously had given such a thorough analysis of the facts in the case or had so conclusively proved the entry in the printed *Journal* under July 4, 1776 to be erroneous.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁴ Theodore F. Dwight to Mellen Chamberlain, Dec. 23, 1884, *ibid.*, 289–291, n.

mense mass of documentary evidence on every aspect of its creation from the most critical decisions of policy to the most trivial details of accounting. Never before had a single man been accorded the privilege of recording such an event. Nor is it easy to imagine that any other could have met such a demanding responsibility with greater fidelity, industry, and understanding than Charles Thomson brought to the task. For this prodigious accomplishment the nation owes him a debt of gratitude it has never sufficiently recognized. Yet, while the small bones of history were carefully preserved in this great body of records, there is missing from it the first official text of the world-shattering document which, as reported to Congress and as approved by that body, bore the title "A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled." Surely the responsibility for its absence from the files could not justly be placed upon the faithful Secretary of Congress.

II

But in the face of this incongruous loss, we are obliged to pose the questions which Vaughan and Chamberlain did not ask. What was the form of the document which the Committee of Five reported? Why did it disappear? How did its unique character become lost while being transformed into a printer's broadside? The answers to the questions must be sought even though, in the absence of the document itself, no exact description of it is possible. But conjectural reconstruction, that indispensable instrument the historian is obliged to employ when the documentary evidence is lacking, is a legitimate instrument. It is also dangerously double-edged, often misused and unfortunately capable of inflicting more damage upon the truth than upon the careless wielder. In this instance, however, the conspicuous gap in the records so faithfully preserved by Thomson is surrounded by such a number of related texts of indisputable authenticity as to render the reliance upon conjecture virtually without risk. In addition, the circumstances under which the report of the Committee of Five was received and acted upon by Congress make their own significant contribution to our understanding of its nature.

The first and by far the most important circumstance to be taken into account is that involving the action by Congress on the first of Lee's resolutions—"That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."¹⁵ This crucial decision had been made on July 2 after a debate which Jefferson later described as lasting nine hours without pause or refreshment, "during which all the powers of the soul had been distended by the magnitude of the object."¹⁶ Compared with the debate which decided this great question, the discussion over the document which announced and sought to justify the event was of a secondary order, revolving around the nature of the arguments and the mode of presentation best calculated to win assent at home and abroad. Second, once the fateful resolution had been adopted, Congress naturally became more urgently preoccupied than ever with measures for securing foreign alliances, for developing a plan of confederation, for supplying Washington's army, for obtaining finances, and for sustaining the commitment to independence. The form of the Declaration was of course recognized to be integrally related to these objects, for unless its appeal gained approval by the American people and by the European powers whose aid was being sought, the result might be failure. Finally, it should be noted that the proceedings were carried on in secret. This is understandable, for Congress was a revolutionary body and all of those who had pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to support the resolution for independence could have been arraigned for overt acts of treason if the resort to arms had failed.

It was in these circumstances that Congress took up the report of the Committee of Five which had lain on the table since being presented on June 28. "We were all in haste," John Adams later wrote, "Congress was impatient, and the Instrument was reported,

¹⁵ Lee's resolutions from the Papers of the Continental Congress, Record Group 59, National Archives, are reproduced in facsimile in Julian P. Boyd, *The Declaration of Independence: The Evolution of the Text* (Princeton, 1945).

¹⁶ Jefferson to the editor of *Journal de Paris*, Aug. 29, 1787, *Papers*, XII, 63.

as I believe, in Jefferson's handwriting as he first drew it."¹⁷ There could be no doubt about the prevailing haste, impatience, and sense of urgency. Nor, indeed, could there be any question that the text as submitted was in Jefferson's handwriting—though not as he first drafted it. That it had evolved through several stages is clear. "Whenever, in the course of the composition, a copy became overcharged, and difficult to be read with amendments," Jefferson wrote in 1825, "I copied it fair, and when that also was crowded with other amendments, another fair copy was made &c. These rough draughts I sent to distant friends who were anxious to know what was passing."¹⁸ This both overstated the case and confused it. It also exposed Jefferson to the charge of having violated his pledge of secrecy if indeed he had revealed either a composition draft or a fair copy before Congress had acted. But the important fact is that, after it had done so, he sent copies to various friends in order to show the text "as originally reported" to Congress. These subsequent copies afford the most reliable evidence of the nature of the document submitted to Congress which, after numerous deletions and substitutions, became on adoption the first official text of the Declaration. They derive this authority from their relationship to one of the most interesting documents in American history.¹⁹

That document is the one which Jefferson, in old age, mistakenly described as the "original Rough draught" because it seemed to him to be scored and scratched like a schoolboy's exercise. It was not quite that much disfigured, having been originally a fair copy of some prior composition draft which appears not to have survived. But it does bear on its face a few alterations made by Adams and Franklin in their own handwriting. In addition, it embodies corrections made by Jefferson himself, possibly including some suggested by other members of the Committee of Five. Subsequently, during or after the debates in Congress, he indicated on it the principal

¹⁷ John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Aug. 6, 1822, Adams Family Manuscripts.

¹⁸ Jefferson to John Vaughan, Sept. 16, 1825, Jefferson Papers. See note 10.

¹⁹ It is known that Jefferson sent fair copies to Richard Henry Lee, Philip Mazzei, Edmund Pendleton, and George Wythe, perhaps also to John Page. Facsimiles of all that are known to survive, including the copy made for James Madison as taken from the text incorporated in Jefferson's notes of debates in Congress, are reproduced in facsimile in Boyd, *Declaration*; see *Papers*, I, 315-319.

amendments made by that body. It thus became overlaid with all, or almost all, of the corrections or additions that were added at every stage of its progress from beginning to end. At an early point in its evolution Jefferson submitted it to John Adams, who fortunately took a fair copy of it in his own handwriting and thus established a criterion for determining its approximate text as it stood before he and Franklin made their changes in it. For the same reason, the fair copies executed by Jefferson and sent to his friends after July 4 are touchstones for removing from "the original Rough draught" the additional overlay of amendments made by Congress. As Jefferson himself declared and as the texts prove, they were transcribed from that complicated draft.²⁰ In their original state, with three exceptions, they contained no indication of the amendments made or proposed by Congress. These exceptions, which have been discussed elsewhere and need not be detailed here, are important as indicating that at least two of them—the Wythe and Lee copies—were executed sometime after the report of the Committee of Five had been submitted and before other alterations were made in Congress.²¹ Such immediacy at a critical moment in history adds weight to their authority as authentic reflections of the earliest stage of the first official text of the Declaration.

Three of these contemporaneous copies are known to survive—the two just mentioned and another sent to an unidentified recipient.²² Except for minor details of punctuation, capitalization, and the variant use of the ampersand for the conjunction, their texts are identical. The one sent to George Wythe was the first to be made known to the public, having appeared in the *Richmond Enquirer* only a fortnight after Wythe's death and being widely copied by other newspapers. It also bears evidence of having been the first of the surviving texts to be executed by Jefferson.²³ This

²⁰ Jefferson to John Vaughan, Sept. 16, 1825. See note 10.

²¹ These are discussed in Boyd, *Declaration*, 40-46; see note 25 below. The "original Rough draught" has been reproduced many times, being first published in a faithfully-executed facsimile engraving in Thomas Jefferson Randolph, ed., *Memoirs, Correspondence, and Miscellanies from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, IV (Charlottesville, 1829), following p. 532.

²² The Lee copy is in the American Philosophical Society. The copy in the New York Public Library is identified in Boyd, *Declaration*, 43-45, as the one sent to Wythe. The imperfect copy in the Massachusetts Historical Society may have been sent to Pendleton or Page.

²³ The texts of these three copies have been collated with other texts in John H. Hazelton, *The Declaration of Independence* (New York, 1906), 306-342.

would have been appropriate. Wythe had departed from Philadelphia two days after the appointment of the Committee of Five, bearing with him the final draft of Jefferson's proposed constitution for Virginia, the first form of which served as part of the composition draft of the Declaration. Always prompt in discharging his committee assignments, Jefferson very likely would have discussed with him before his departure the form that that document should take. Wythe would surely have approved the substance if not the form of Jefferson's impassioned indictment of George III for disallowing laws abolishing the slave trade. Having been guided by Wythe through a wide range of legal and other studies and looking up to him as "one of the greatest men of the age," Jefferson can easily be imagined taking counsel with his revered mentor and presenting to him the first copy of the final composition.²⁴ That text, stripped of later additions made by Wythe or others, may be relied upon as being virtually identical with the wording of the document presented to Congress on June 28.²⁵

The other characteristics of the missing original can be established with less certainty. Could that document indeed have been the "original Rough draught" from which Jefferson copied it? This seems so highly implausible that we may safely conclude it was not. In 1825, with that text before him, Jefferson asserted that after Adams and Franklin had made two or three merely verbal alterations in it, he "then wrote a fair copy, reported it to the Committee, and from them unaltered to Congress."²⁶ That the text was so slightly altered must be doubted, but for several reasons we may accept Jefferson's assurance that the document handed in was a fair copy of the "original Rough draught." In the first place, the latter had become so heavily corrected in the course of its evolution as to make it unpresentable. Jefferson also retained it in his personal files, something he could not have done if it had been handed in.

²⁴ Jefferson to Ralph Izard, July 17, 1788, *Papers*, XIII, 372.

²⁵ The copy sent to Wythe is reproduced in facsimile in Boyd, *Declaration*. In the second line of the title the word "General" is underlined in the Wythe copy, in the copy in Jefferson's Notes of Proceedings in Congress (*Papers*, I, 309-327), and is both bracketed and underlined in the Madison copy. No such marking appears in the "original Rough draught," the Lee copy, or that in the Massachusetts Historical Society. It is for this reason that the Wythe copy is assigned chronological precedence.

²⁶ Jefferson to John Vaughan, Sept. 16, 1825. See note 10.

Had it been the document actually before Congress, it would have borne evidence of the fact in the form of docketings, additions, excisions, and amendments in the hand of Charles Thomson. In 1825, knowing that the instrument reported was a fair copy, Jefferson had far better reason than Timothy Pickering or anyone else to assume that it "should be among the records of the old Congress."²⁷

But its disappearance from the files need not deprive us of some knowledge of its form. It was beyond question in Jefferson's hand. We may also plausibly assume that, like its prototype and the contemporaneous copies made for Wythe and Lee, it was a four-page document written on paper with a watermark bearing the appropriate device *Pro Patriae Eiusque Libertate*. Since *The Declaration of Independence* painted by John Trumbull was based in large part upon information given to him by Thomas Jefferson in Paris, it is not without interest that he is shown in the act of presenting the report on behalf of the Committee of Five, grasping with both hands what is obviously a folded, four-page manuscript—the document which disappeared from history immediately thereafter. The report was undoubtedly presented in a single copy on June 28, being laid on the table that day because the resolution of independence had not yet been acted upon. From then until its adoption on July 4 it was available for inspection by members. Judging by the number and the detail of subsequent amendments made during the debates in the Committee of the Whole on July 2, 3, and 4, some of the delegates must have subjected it to rather close scrutiny. As one alteration after another was made in the text, we may assume that Charles Thomson recorded these on the face of the document itself, just as Jefferson himself was doing simultaneously with his retained copy of its model.

On the afternoon of the 4th, Benjamin Harrison, chairman of the Committee of the Whole, reported that the members had "agreed to a Declaration which he delivered in." We may be quite certain that, in the urgent situation in which Congress found itself, Charles Thomson had no time to make a fair copy of the text as amended. Had he done so, the original would assuredly have been preserved

²⁷ Jefferson himself had assumed that this document would show on its face evidence of the excisions and additions made by Congress. *Ibid.*

among the files, along with the manuscript of Lee's first resolution whose text it incorporated. Indeed, the pressure of time forbade his transcribing it even in the Secret Journal. An indication of the prevailing sense of urgency is to be found following the entry Thomson made in the Secret Journal after Congress resumed its deliberations, with John Hancock presiding: "The Declaration being again read was agreed to as follows." At this point Thomson left most of the lower half of the page blank, knowing well that the next action to be taken would be an order that the Declaration be authenticated and printed; that the Committee of Five "superintend and correct the press"; and that copies be sent to the various state assemblies, conventions, and committees of safety and to the commanding officers of the continental troops so that it could be "proclaimed in each of the united states and at the head of the army."²⁸ One of the printed copies, properly folded, would later be attached by wafers to the blank space left by Thomson in the Secret Journal. Having given this directive to the Committee of Five, Congress then proceeded to dispose of other pressing matters of business and the faithful Secretary continued recording its actions.

It is thus reasonable to suppose that the text agreed to by the Committee of the Whole and read again on the 4th was the one that had been presented as a fair copy but was now perhaps even more scratched and scored like a schoolboy's exercise than its prototype. But did it bear the signature of John Hancock authenticating it and that of Charles Thomson attesting it as ordered by Congress? This is doubtful. If it followed the four-page format of those most closely related to it and also bore a heavy overlay of docketings and alterations, there would not have been space for adding these official signatures. They of course could have been written upon a separate scrap of paper affixed to or sent with the document to the printer. But this would not have been necessary. The essential point was to have the authentication and attestation on those copies that would be dispatched to state officials and commanding officers. The official printer to Congress, John Dunlap, would have known how to meet the requirement in print merely by being told that Congress had ordered it.

²⁸ Secret Journal, III, 95, Record Group 360, Item 1, National Archives; facsimile reproduction in Boyd, *Declaration*.

As for the related order, did the entire Committee of Five “superintend and correct the press”? This we may surely doubt, if for no other reason than that its execution would not have required the presence of more than one person. So far as the records show, Sherman and Livingston had taken no part in preparing the Declaration and it is not likely that they would have manifested any more enthusiasm for a lesser assignment. Franklin, the most famous printer in America, was by the standards of the time an aged man, being more than twice as old as Jefferson. At his age he had no need and probably no desire to spend most of the night hanging around a printing shop. It seems unlikely that John Adams, whom Jefferson described as “our Colossus on the floor” while the question of independence hung in the balance, would have bothered himself with an important but undemanding task after the great battle had been won. He was indeed so transported with enthusiasm over the event—he described it as the greatest question “ever . . . debated in America, and a greater perhaps never was or will be decided among men”²⁹—as perhaps to disqualify him for mere proofreading. Charles Thomson was not a member of the Committee of Five. After the Declaration was approved, he was still busily engaged in recording other actions taken that day. But, knowing that the text as printed would be inserted in the Secret Journal in the space he had left for it, and being aware also that it would bear his name attesting its authenticity, he must surely have met his duty that night with his usual fidelity. So, too, may we assume with equally good reason that Jefferson, as author of the document and as head of the Committee of Five, would have been present at the printery. We may easily imagine that, with Thomson still busy and time pressing, Jefferson himself transmitted the manuscript to Dunlap. Surely this proclamation to the world announcing one of the most decisive events in history would not have been entrusted to an ordinary messenger when the charge had been specifically given to a committee of which Jefferson was head. He, too, had a deep and abiding sense of public duty. Also, no American of the day, not even Franklin, was so aware of the power of the printing press or so

²⁹ John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776, Adams Family Manuscripts. This famous letter has been printed many times, most authoritatively in L. H. Butterfield, *et al.*, eds., *Adams Family Correspondence*, II (Cambridge, 1963), 27–28.

interested in the new forms of typography then being developed. It would have been quite characteristic of him to have borne the document to the Market Street printing shop of Dunlap four blocks from the State House, just as he would take delight a few years later in visiting the printers of Paris to learn more about their new methods.³⁰ It would also have been characteristic of Thomson to join him later in the evening to meet the special responsibility that lay upon him. They had known each other since 1764 when they formed a lifelong friendship based on mutual trust and respect.³¹ It is pleasant to imagine them in Dunlap's shop waiting for the printers to do their work. Perhaps no others involved in the transaction could have symbolized so well or grasped so fully the meaning of the document that was about to come from the press and carry its message throughout the world.

But we need not rely upon conjecture to conclude that the document approved by Congress and sent to the printer was actually drawn by Jefferson and that, for purposes not hitherto examined, it bore marks that had significance for him alone. Evidence supporting this conclusion was inadvertently produced that night in Dunlap's printing shop and then, quite properly, was obliterated from the final result. For this evidence we must turn to a document as immediately related to the missing prototype as were Jefferson's "original Rough draught" or the copies he made from it. It is one which also marks the earliest known stage of the broadside which, on being wafered into the Secret Journal, became the second official text of the Declaration.

III

That document survives in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania as an apparently unique copy of Dunlap's broadside, of which, unfortunately, only the upper half remains. It differs in several respects from that in the Secret Journal and from all other copies known to be extant. It is indeed an uncorrected proof of the broadside as first pulled and shown to Jefferson, Thomson, or whoever

³⁰ See, for example, *Papers*, X, 318-326.

³¹ Jefferson to Charles Thomson, Jan. 9, 1916, Ford, *Writings*, X, 5-7.

was overseeing the press. While its true character had been previously recognized, it was not until recently that this was established beyond doubt through an extraordinary study sponsored by the Library of Congress for this specific purpose. This investigation, carried out by Frederick R. Goff, benefited both from his bibliographical expertise and from an unprecedented cooperative effort on the part of private and institutional owners of copies of the broadside. Seventeen of the twenty-one copies known to exist, including the Society's uncorrected proof, were assembled at the Library of Congress in May 1975. This was unquestionably the largest number ever brought together since the night they were produced in Dunlap's shop. Besides achieving its primary object, the Goff study revealed indications of the sense of urgency prevailing in the printery that night. In all copies the chain lines were found to be not quite parallel to the printed text, making it apparent that the form was slightly askew in the coffin of the press. Haste was also suggested by the fact that many of the copies, being folded before the ink was dry, were found to contain offset impressions. More important was the discovery through the position of the imprint that at least two distinct states came from the press, their priority being established through evidence furnished by damaged letters. The unique proof copy, by definition, takes precedence over all others.³²

This suggests that, because of the urgent need to dispatch copies to state officials and commanding officers, the printers must have supplied Congress with additional batches as the need arose. John Hancock did send off copies by express riders on July 5th and 6th. It is not known how many were printed, but it is extremely unlikely that such an epochal manifesto, destined to be distributed from New Hampshire to Georgia, would have been issued in less than one or two hundred copies.³³ Members of Congress would

³² Frederick R. Goff, "A Report on the John Dunlap Broadside Printing of the Declaration of Independence: A Bibliographical Study," August 1975 (mimeographed copy). The Goff Report, including facsimiles of the surviving copies of the Dunlap broadsides, is scheduled for publication by the Library of Congress in 1976. Titled *The John Dunlap Broadside: The First Printing of the Declaration of Independence*, it will contain facsimiles of all known copies of the broadside including the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's proof copy.

³³ A few weeks later, by direction of the Pennsylvania constitutional convention, John Dunlap printed 400 copies of its draft constitution for public consideration—an important

certainly have desired copies to send to their constituents.³⁴ No one was more interested in doing this than Jefferson himself. It is not very likely that, in sending copies to Wythe, Lee, and others so that they might compare the text as reported with that as adopted, he would have gone through the laborious effort of copying the broadside by hand when printed texts were available. Always avoiding clerical chores whenever possible, Jefferson throughout life eagerly adopted and improved such time-saving devices as the copy-press and the polygraph for making quick and accurate copies of letters and documents. Whether or not he was at Dunlap's shop that night discharging a responsibility placed upon him by Congress, he would scarcely have missed the opportunity to acquire several copies of the broadside and thus save himself the tedium of transcribing several by hand.

The evidence of haste prevailing in Dunlap's shop as disclosed in the Goff study is confirmed by the special characteristics of the proof copy which were readily discernible before the study was made and which indeed prompted it.³⁵ The least apparent of these

document but far less so than the Declaration. John N. Shaeffer, "Public Consideration of the 1776 Pennsylvania Constitution." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XCVIII (1924), 419. In the same month, under a remarkably strict injunction to secrecy, Dunlap was directed to print "80 copies, and no more" of the draft of the Act of Confederation for use of the members. W. C. Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, V (Washington, 1906), 555. In 1787 the Federal Convention directed Dunlap to print 500 copies of the Constitution to be submitted to Congress. J. H. Powell, *The Books of a New Nation* (Philadelphia, 1957), 66. For the Declaration of Independence, of which, as Caesar Rodney reported on the evening of its adoption, "Hand-bills . . . will be printed and sent to the Armies, Cities, County Towns &c. to be published or rather proclaimed in form," it seems unlikely that less than 200 copies would have been struck off. Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, I (Washington, 1922), 527.

³⁴ John Hancock himself was one of these. In addition to the copies that he sent as president to the various state bodies and commanding officers as directed by Congress, he also sent at least one to a private individual. Hancock to William Cooper, July 6, 1776, Burnett, *Letters*, II, 1-2.

³⁵ Since it was I who suggested that such a study be made, I should like to express my gratitude to Mr. McGeorge Bundy for his interest in the proposal; to the Ford Foundation for its grant to the Library of Congress which made it possible; to Mr. Goff for his remarkably thorough and definitive study; and to all of the institutions and individuals who cooperated by lending their copies of the broadside. I should especially like to thank Mr. David J. Hawke who some years ago first called my attention to the Society's uncorrected proof and raised questions about the puzzling quotation marks which ultimately led to the present effort to explain their presence.

was the typesetter's mistake in inserting an indefinite article in the passage asserting the right of the people to alter or abolish and to institute "a new Government." The "a" clearly had not been present in the manuscript employed as printer's copy since it appears in no other text. But the most obvious and the most important characteristic of the proof is its inclusion of a series of quotation marks in the two opening paragraphs.³⁶ Both the inconspicuous "a" and the glaring marks were perceived as errors by the person or persons correcting the proofs and were removed. Their removal caused serious irregularities in spacing between the words and, in the first few lines, the compositor sought to remedy the defect. Then, abandoning the effort in succeeding lines, he left these irregularities of spacing as another testimonial to the prevailing haste. The important question is not the presence of these puzzling quotation marks but their meaning. It is incredible to suppose that a compositor of the competence to be expected in a leading printery such as Dunlap's would have placed them there if they, or something comparable to them, had not been present in the manuscript used as copy. But what did the anonymous typesetter see and interpret as quotation marks?

The first observation to be made is that, at the bottom of the third page of the "original Rough draught," there are certain diacritical, or distinctive, marks which have been noted but whose meaning has never been explored.³⁷ They occur there as single and double accents which, if found also in the manuscript used as copy by Dunlap's compositor, could easily have been mistaken for quotation marks. But since their use in either document obviously could not have been to indicate that the passages were actually quoted, what was their purpose? For the only plausible explanation both of their meaning and of their presence in the printer's copy, which can be assumed, we must begin with the fact that responsibility for presenting the report of the Committee of Five to Congress rested upon its chairman who, having only the single copy, would have to read it. To this must be added the well-known fact that Jefferson—unlike Richard Henry Lee, whom John Adams looked upon as a

³⁶ See illustration page 456.

³⁷ See illustration page 457.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION
BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

WHEN in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People "to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another," and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station "to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them," a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires "that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, "that all Men are created equal," "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, "deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed," that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, "it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shewn, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security." Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government." The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good. He has refused his Assent to Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inestimable to them, and formidable to Tyrants only.

He has called together legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.

He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and Convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither; and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

in every stage of these oppressions" we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered ^{only} by repeated injuries, a prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a people. ^{free} [who mean to be free. future ages will scarce believe that the hardness of one man, adventurous within the short compass of twelve years to ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~foundations~~ ^{foundations} of ~~freedom~~ ^{freedom} & ~~indisposed~~ ^{indisposed} for tyranny,

Detail from the "original Rough draught" of the Declaration of Independence

"Man of uncommon Eloquence"³⁸—could not sway a legislative body with oratorical effort as Lee could. While his old teacher Wythe boldly engaged in debates in Congress, Jefferson was almost silent upon the floor.³⁹ Adams overstated the case in describing him as unable to stand competition with Lee "or anyone else" in elocution and public debate, but he was undeniably correct in saying that in conversation and in committees he was "prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive."⁴⁰ As legislator, as diplomat, and as chief executive, Jefferson preferred whenever possible to let his pen speak for him. In his years of incredibly wide and disciplined study under Wythe, he seemed to reveal an awareness of this natural disposition in the attention he gave to ancient and modern works of logic and rhetoric. His pursuit of these subjects had a discernible influence on the cadenced prose and logical arguments of the Declaration of Independence.⁴¹

But it is especially important to note that in those years Jefferson also gave much attention to elocution, the more so, perhaps, because he knew that in his court pleadings and in his legislative contests in Virginia he would encounter some of the ablest debaters of the day. As a youth he possessed the pseudonymous work issued by Franklin and Hall in 1748 under the title *The American Instructor; or, Young Man's best companion*, a widely used text for instruction in reading and other basic subjects.⁴² He also possessed John Rice's *Introduction to the Art of Reading with Energy and Propriety*, published in London in 1765.⁴³ In his later advice to a young law student to read Small's

³⁸ L. H. Butterfield, et al., eds., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, III (Cambridge, 1961), 367.

³⁹ In the debates early in 1776 in which Wythe actively engaged, John Adams called him "one of our best Men." *Ibid.*, III, 372; see also, II, 195, 208, 211, 214-215, 229-230.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 336; John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Aug. 6, 1822, Adams Family Manuscripts; text in C. F. Adams, ed., *Works of John Adams*, II (Boston, 1856), 514n.

⁴¹ Wilbur Samuel Howell, "The Declaration of Independence and Eighteenth-Century Logic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., XVIII (1961), 463-484.

⁴² Jefferson to Dr. James Ewell, Nov. 7, 1819, Jefferson Papers; quoted in E. Millicent Sowerby, *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson*, I (Washington, 1952), 508.

⁴³ Sowerby, *Catalogue*, 511. Jefferson possessed a copy of the first edition of 1765. It is not known when he acquired it, but the date of publication coincided with his years of study and in view of the attention that Wythe gave to instructing his students in debating and in conducting moot courts—a practice which Jefferson in turn recommended to his students—it is very likely that this volume was one of his early acquisitions.

American Speaker and other works on elocution and oratory, Jefferson urged that no trouble be spared in making the presentation appropriate to the particular audience because this was "the last and most important exercise."⁴⁴ One feels that this admonition, coming as a climax to a remarkably comprehensive outline of recommended studies, arose out of deep personal experience and reflected the kind of guidance he received from George Wythe. In addition to his own careful preparation for public speaking, Jefferson was keenly interested then and later in works of shorthand and abbreviated methods of writing, such as Thomas Shelton's *Tachy-Graphy. The most exact and compendious methods of short and swift writing that hath ever yet been published by any.*⁴⁵ But Jefferson, who in his teens had been prompted by his love of order to conceive the stratigraphic method of archeological excavation and who later invented the wheel cipher—both unprecedented and a century in advance of their independent discovery in Europe—needed and probably used such works only as a stimulus to create his own methods. He was of course familiar with conventional accents used in works of elocution and phonetics. But comparable marks to be found in his own manuscripts employed as reading copies or for illustrative purposes seem to have been his own. For confirmation of this we must turn to Jefferson's years in Paris.

"I began with the design of converting you to my opinion that the arrangement of long and short syllables into regular feet constituted the harmony of English verse," Jefferson wrote to his friend the Marquis de Chastellux in 1786, "I ended by discovering that you were right in denying that proposition." The result was Jefferson's essay called "Thoughts on English Prosody" in which, with illustrative quotations from Shakespeare and others, he employed

⁴⁴ Jefferson to Bernard Moore, ca. 1773, as incorporated (with the addition of subsequent titles) in his letter to John Minor, Aug. 30, 1814, Library of the University of Pennsylvania Law School; text given in facsimile in Morris L. Cohen, "Thomas Jefferson Recommends a Course of Law Study," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, CXIX (1971), 823-844. Ford, *Writings*, IX, 480-485, prints the letter to Moore as if it were a separate text. Jefferson mentions other works on rhetoric, oratory, and elocution in this letter.

⁴⁵ Sowerby, *Catalogue*, 512. In 1820 Jefferson wrote to Daniel Humphreys: "accident threw Shelton's tachygraphy into my way when young, and I practised it thro' life. Although it had serious defects, I have not looked into any other with fewer" (*loc. cit.*). Jefferson refers to the work in a letter to John Page, Jan. 23, 1764, *Papers*, I, 14-15.

single, double, triple, and quadruple accents in an ascending scale of emphasis. He was far from presuming this mode of accentuation to be perfect and concluded that no two persons would accent the same passage alike and that "no person but a real adept would accent it twice alike."⁴⁶ This remarkable essay not only revealed Jefferson's careful and continuing study of rhythm, timing, stress, and quantity in reading: it also employed the same mode of accentuation to be found in the "original Rough draught" of a decade earlier and in the reading copy of his second inaugural address delivered twenty years later.⁴⁷ The single and double diacritical marks in these two notable documents differ only in number from those to be found in the essay on prosody. Their presence in manuscripts spread over such a long period of time points inescapably to the conclusion that they must have appeared also in the missing report of the Committee of Five which it was Jefferson's duty to read and which, quite naturally, he would have wished to present to a far from unanimous audience with all of the force and emphasis appropriate to the great occasion.

What else could the typesetter in Dunlap's shop have seen that would have caused him to introduce quotation marks as the nearest equivalent to these peculiarly Jeffersonian accents? There seems to be no alternative explanation for their presence in the proof. The marks in the missing text, if we may judge from those in its prototype, may have been so light as to be almost indiscernible, thus perhaps explaining the absence of opening and closing quotation marks in three of the passages. We may therefore be grateful to the compositor who saw, misunderstood, and preserved through a fortunate error those marks which meant something very different from what he assumed they meant. Let us hope that Dunlap did not chastise his journeyman too severely for what must have seemed on that hectic night only a blundering waste of precious time.

But, once the error had been corrected, what happened to the all-important printer's copy which should have been preserved for

⁴⁶ Jefferson to the Marquis de Chastellux, undated but written ca. October 1786, *Papers*, X, 498. This letter enclosed the manuscript of Jefferson's "Thoughts on English Prosody." His draft of twenty-seven pages is in the Jefferson Papers, folios 41823-37, Library of Congress, though the order is incorrect. See illustration page 461.

⁴⁷ See illustration, page 463, containing a detail from folio 41834 of the draft, *ibid.*

Cowards die many times before their deaths:
The Valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange, that men should fear.
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come. Shakespeare

I cannot tell what you, and other men
Think of this life: but, for my single self,
I had as lief not be, as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
I was born free as Cæsar; so were you.
We both have fed as well; and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he. Shakesp.

The cloud-capt towers — the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples — the great globe itself,
Yea all which it inherit shall dissolve,
And like the baseless fabric of a vision
Leave not a wreck behind. Shakespeare.

Detail from Jefferson's "Thoughts on English Prosody," 1786

all time as the first official text? No one would have been more interested in preserving it than Jefferson, not only because he was its author and was justifiably proud of it as being, in his words, "the charter of our liberties," but also because from his youth onward throughout life he had been indefatigable in the preservation of manuscripts and artifacts of historical significance. The answer may be the simple one that he himself gave in another connection: that "manuscripts get so cut up and dirtied in the process of printing as to be in fact destroyed."⁴⁸ Because of the haste that night, the manuscript used as printer's copy may actually have been cut into sections and distributed among several compositors in order to save time. This, appropriately enough, is precisely what happened to the manuscript of Jefferson's first inaugural—that eloquent reaffirmation of the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence—though fortunately Samuel Harrison Smith, who was given the privilege of first putting it in type, reassembled the parts and preserved the whole.⁴⁹ Possibly John Dunlap did the same with the first official text of the Declaration. Possibly Jefferson, in reflecting upon what sometimes happened to manuscripts in a printing shop, was only remembering and regretting the loss of a document unprecedented in human annals.

IV

"The Congress, for some Time past," John Hancock wrote to Washington on July 6th, "have had their Attention occupied by one of the most interesting and important Subjects that could possibly come before them; or any other Assembly of Men." He enclosed a copy of the Dunlap broadside and asked that it be proclaimed at the head of the army.⁵⁰ On the day before Elbridge Gerry had declared that, as soon as New York supported the measure, its title

⁴⁸ Jefferson to Wilson Cary Nicholas, Mar. 19, 1817, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ The manuscript was cut into eleven sections, numbered in sequence by Smith and then reassembled. J. Henley Smith Papers, Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ John Hancock to George Washington, July 6, 1776, Burnett, *Letters*, II, 2.

mat. Religion I have considered, & it is free exercise is place. b. y. Consenⁿ independ^t & y. pow^r... & y. Gen^l. (see m.)

I have undertaken, on no occasion, to prescribe y. relig^o. exercise, in suit^o. to it.

b. h. y. left^m, as y. Consenⁿ found^m y. end^m y. direct^m & discipl^e. & y. ~~exp.~~ or ch. author^{ty} actn^o. b. y. sev^l relig^o. socie^{ty}.
The Aborig^{es}. inhab^{it}. & y. count^y. I have regard^d. wth. y. concern^t y. hist^o. & inspir^{at}ion.

endow^d wth. y. facult^{ies}. & y. rights of men, breath^e. an air^o love & lib^{ty}. & independ^{ce}

& occup^y. a country w^{ch} left^m y. n. des^{ire}. b. t. b. undist^{urb}. y. str^u & ov^{er}-flowⁿ pop^ulⁿ. fr. oth^{er} relig^o. div^{er}. Its. on y. showⁿ.
wth. pow^r. to divert, or hab^{it}. to cont^{rol}. ag^{ain}st it y. h. b. ^{ov}erwhelm^d. b. y. cur^{re}nt or drivⁿ. b^oth^{er} it.

now red^{uc}d. withⁱⁿ lim^{its}. to nat^{ure}. fr^{om} y. hunter sta^{te}. human. emp^{ty}. us to teach y. agr^{ic}ult^{ure} & y. domest^{ic}. arts
& encour^{age}. y. t. y. industry w^{ch}. ab^{und}. c. enab^{le}. m. to maint^{ain} y. pl^{ac}e in exist^{ence}.

& t. prep^{are}. y. in temp^{or}. fr. y. sta. & soc^{ety}. w^{ch}. t. bod^y. comp^{os}. adv^{ance} y. imp^{ro}vim^{ent} & y. mind & moral^{ity}.

wth. y. lib^{erty}. furn^{ish}. y. w^{ch}. y. implem^{ent}. of his b^{od}y. & h^{is} use. w^{ch}. plac^e. am^{ong}. y. instr^u. in y. w^{ar} & fr. necess^{ity}.

& y. r. cov^{er}. w^{ch}. y. legis^{lature} & y. law ag^{ain}st ~~the~~ ag^{ain}st. fr^{om} a. m. s. over^{er}.

would be "THE UNANIMOUS DECLARATION OF THE THIRTEEN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA."⁵¹ On July 19 Congress ordered that the Declaration be fairly engrossed on parchment, that its title be changed to the form just quoted, and that, when engrossed, it "be signed by every member of Congress." On August 2 the Journal noted that the engrossed copy, after being "compared at the table, was signed by the members"—the comparison obviously being made with the Dunlap broadside. Both of these resolutions appeared in the Secret Journal, neither in the corrected or public Journal. Thus came into existence the cherished Declaration of Independence as the third official text, twice removed from its missing prototype. The rather crude vellum used was probably engrossed by Timothy Matlack, but there is at least a possibility that engrossing by print may have been contemplated. A unique copy on a superior quality of parchment was printed by John Dunlap sometime after July 19, being a complete resetting from fresh type.⁵² While this is a single sheet with no space for signatures, these could have been added on a second sheet sewn to that containing the text, as was done in the parchment scroll of the original Act of Confederation. Since the document bears Dunlap's imprint, however, it seems more likely that it was executed for some other purpose—possibly because Dunlap himself was none too proud of the hastily produced broadside printed the night of July 4. It is well known that the engrossed copy of the Declaration was not signed by all of those who voted for the measure on July 4; that

⁵¹ Elbridge Gerry to James Warren, July 5, 1776, *ibid.*, II, 1.

⁵² This copy, which bears the same title as the Dunlap broadside and hence presumably was printed before July 19, 1776, is in the American Philosophical Society, having been presented to the Society by Dr. James Mease, who had obtained it from the daughter of David Rittenhouse. It is described in I. Minis Hays, American Philosophical Society, *Proceedings*, XXXIX (1900), 72-74. Along with the Lee copy, the Dunlap broadside, and the first newspaper publication of the Declaration in the Philadelphia *Evening Post* for July 6, 1776, this unique copy is scheduled for publication in 1976 in a separate brochure edited by Whitfield J. Bell, Jr.

It may be noted in this connection that John Dunlap printed the first copies of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, and that a unique copy of the first state of the first printing of each of these fundamental documents is in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. As to the latter, see J. H. Powell, *The Books of a New Nation*, 64.

some of those who signed it were not present on that date; and that not all who signed did so on August 2.⁵³

The fact of signing and the names of those who signed were not matters of public knowledge until some months later. On January 18, 1777—just two weeks after Washington's encouraging victories at Trenton and Princeton, it should be noted—Congress ordered that an authenticated copy of the Declaration, with the names of members who had subscribed it, "be sent to each of the United States, and they be desired to have the same put upon record." Congress was then sitting in Baltimore and thus the fourth official text, derived from the engrossed parchment copy, came into existence in that city in the form of a broadside printed by Mary Katharine Goddard, duly authenticated and attested with the actual signatures of Hancock and Thomson. This broadside, like the subsequently printed *Journal*, also carried the erroneous impression that the Declaration had been signed on the day of its adoption, "In Congress, July 4, 1776."⁵⁴ It is worth noting that, while the resolutions of Congress of July 4 had directed that the Declaration "be proclaimed in each of the United States, and at the head of the army," that of January 18 requested that these copies, with the names of signers affixed, be "put upon record." The first aimed to gain the assent of the people, the second to put the signers on record. The fourth official text as issued from the press of Mary Katharine Goddard thus has the distinction of being the first to convey to the American people the names of those who had given their pledge to support the Declaration.

It was not until after the second conflict with Great Britain that a powerful wave of patriotic fervor spread across the land and brought into existence the fifth and final official text. By then the

⁵³ The most detailed account of the signing is in Hazelton, *Declaration*, 193-219. Thomas McKean did not sign until 1781. He was naturally disturbed when both the printed *Journal* and the Goddard broadside issued early in 1777 omitted his name. When Timothy Pickering was Secretary of State, Pickering and he examined the various journals and the engrossed parchment text, but, like Vaughan and Chamberlain later, both were intent on other questions and made no mention of the missing text as reported and approved. Hazelton, *Declaration*, 285, quoting a letter from McKean to A. J. Dallas, Aug. 4, 1796.

⁵⁴ A facsimile of this broadside is in Hazelton, *Declaration*, at p. 284. It should be noted that both the copies in the Library of Congress and in the New York Public Library are signed by Hancock and Thomson authenticating and attesting their text.

parchment scroll, which had traveled about the country during both wars and had narrowly escaped destruction more than once, was somewhat the worse for wear. Printers and engravers such as Benjamin Owen Tyler and John Binns had caused it to be rolled and unrolled so that exact facsimiles of the signatures might add to the appeal of their engravings. Distinguished visitors to the Department of State also asked that it be shown to them. Some patriotic citizens, perhaps, had made something of a nuisance of themselves to the Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, who was never one to suffer fools gladly. Thus it was that in 1823 he authorized William J. Stone to execute an exact facsimile, engraved on copperplate and printed on parchment. This operation, laudable as it was in spreading remarkably faithful replicas throughout the nation, led to still further damage to the original because of the customary wet-press process employed, which lifted so much of the ink from it as to render parts of it almost illegible. Two hundred copies were printed. On May 26, 1824 Congress ordered that two copies be distributed to each of the surviving signers of the Declaration—Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Charles Carroll of Carrollton—and that other copies be sent to President Monroe, former President Madison, the Marquis de Lafayette, the governors and legislatures of the states and territories, and the different universities and colleges in the United States.

The Secretary of State executed this assignment with understanding and feeling. In his letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, Adams referred to the Declaration of Independence as a "Proclamation of Principles, destined to change the face of the world, and . . . to ameliorate the condition and exalt the character of the human species."⁵⁵ The letter of transmittal to his father, referring to him as one of the subscribers of a document "unparalleled in the Annals of Mankind," ended with a complimentary close which must have touched John Adams deeply: "With every sentiment of veneration, I have the honour of subscribing myself your fellow Citizen."⁵⁶ The

⁵⁵ John Quincy Adams to the Marquis de Lafayette, Oct. 16, 1824, Record Group 59, Domestic Letters, National Archives.

⁵⁶ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, June 24, 1824, *loc. cit.*

letters to Jefferson and Carroll followed the same form except for this final touch.

Thus did John Quincy Adams play his role in helping to focus the attention of the American people for all time upon that text which deserves its preeminence above all others. In doing so, he had good reason to avoid answering the inquiry sent him a few months earlier by the editors of the *Shenandoah Herald* about the prototype from which it and all others were derived. To have disclosed it as missing from the archives would have been unthinkable after the signed copy on parchment had been elevated to its proper niche in history.

The Papers of Thomas Jefferson

JULIAN P. BOYD