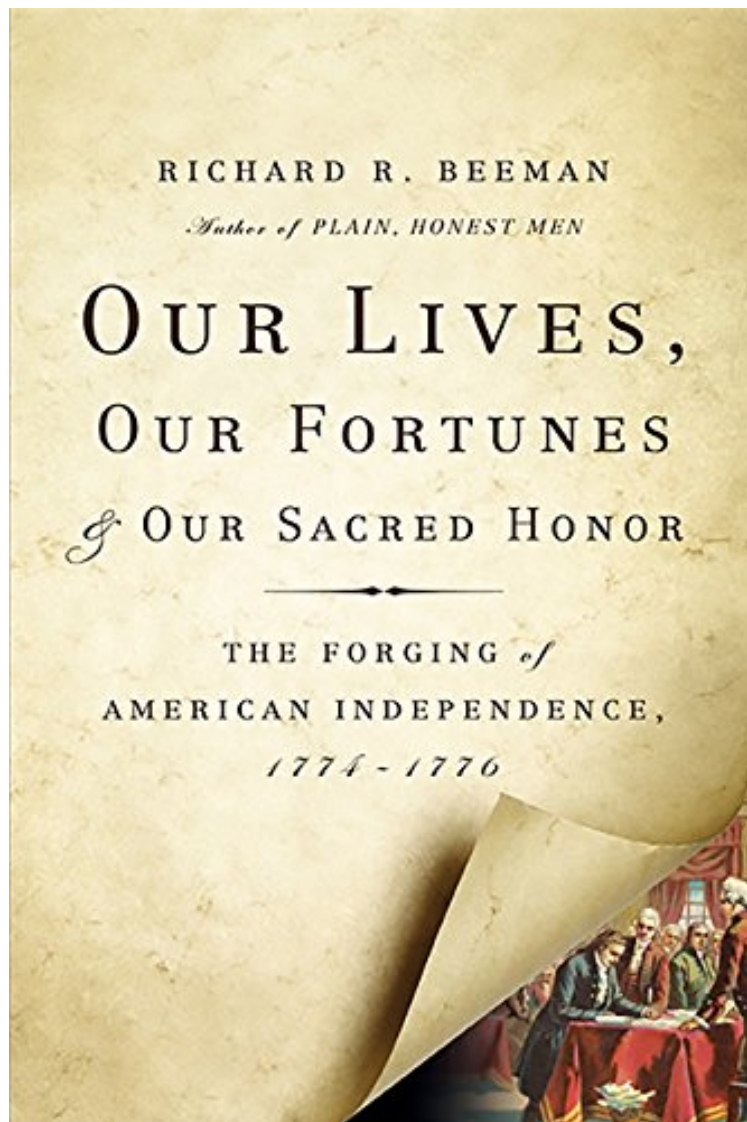


(Library ebook) Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776

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

Richard R. Beeman

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#428729 in Books 2013-05-07 2013-05-07 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.50 x 1.75 x 6.38l, 1.71 #File Name: 046502629X528 pages Author of Plain, Honest Men | File size: 33.Mb

Richard R. Beeman : Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776:

19 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Charles Thomson's work reconstructed...By James T. Kennedy

MDThe American separation from Britain to "assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station" of independent nation is a tale told many times. Oxford University Press presented an official version in 1982 with Robert Middlekauff's *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford History of the United States), in 2002 Gordon Wood gave us a thorough telling with *The American Revolution: A History* (Modern Library Chronicles), and just since then books on the topic would fill a small library. Some versions begin with the French and Indian War since it removed the French from the future fields of revolution and left the British in search of tax revenue to pay its costs. Still other versions carry through to the Louisiana Purchase because it truly opened the doors for a continental United States of America. More recently, we have volumes concerning restricted episodes and time frames within the Revolution such as the newly released *Revolutionary Summer: The Birth of American Independence*, by a prolific Founding writer Joseph Ellis, covering merely five months of the story. Richard R. Beeman's *Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776*, is another slice of the Founding times. This book covers 1774-1776 and is the story of the Continental Congress that produced the Declaration of Independence. Indeed, this book does for the Declaration what Pauline Maier's *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* did for the Constitution. Immediately after assembling on 5 September 1774 in the Carpenter's Hall East Room the delegates chose a president (Peyton Randolph) and then a secretary to record the minutes. They chose Charles Thomson, one of the many "other guys" who never seem remembered in the legends of those events. However, Thomson is not remembered only because his casual, relaxed, inconstant, and even incompetent record keeping has left many lacunae in the official history of American Independency. Indeed, years later Thomson made the conscious choice to burn all his papers and records of the Congress because he wanted the already mythic dimensions of the story and its heroes to remain undisturbed. Thus he removed himself from a place in history at least as famous as Samuel Pepys. Now, Beeman's *Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776* sets out to fill in the blanks and supply an accurately detailed account of the proceedings that produced, in Pauline Maier's title about the same document, "American Scripture" (*American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*). Beeman reconstructs Thomson's missing account. Detail, detail, details are what make this book so valuable to anyone with an interest in the topic. The major theme is the conflict between the delegates searching for reconciliation with Britain and the radicals already convinced that independence is inevitable. Within that story are countless little episodes: the Powder Scare, Washington's contempt for the peace commissioners, Hancock's refusal to relinquish his temporary presidency of the proceedings, Samuel Chase's itinerant diplomacy, Caesar Rodney's famous ride, and anecdote after anecdote about more "other guys" in the story. Beeman thanks his fact-checker, Alicia DeMaio, in his Acknowledgments, as well he should, since fact-checking this book must have been a nightmare. On page 106 Joseph Reed is described as a delegate. He wasn't, at least until 1778, but the error highlights just how many tiny details have to be correct in telling this oft-told tale. Is the book up to the reviewers' "well-written"? On pages 191-5 Beeman provides such a lucid and stirring account of Revere's ride, Lexington and Concord, and Hancock's and Adams' escape to the Congress that it should be plagiarized directly into the next edition of American school children's textbooks. His version of how Tom Paine's *Common Sense* (Dover Thrift Editions) accelerated history by changing the temper of the American people to a Common Cause is another highlight. Perhaps the most important details of the book relate to the provincial legislature-by-legislature account of the final tallies for independence. In Maier's *Ratification* we learn that the final vote for the Constitution by all the states' delegates split 65%-35%. There was opposition. There was opposition to Independence as well, and Beeman's book tells another suspenseful, close-run tale about how the document finally became unanimous in the "The Unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America". The point of both books is that the final decisions went back to and were made by the American people through locally chosen representatives. And if you are curious about which delegates and opponents became Loyalists, Beeman supplies that answer too. Americans expect reverence when our founding documents are discussed, and Beeman supplies veneration aplenty. For a more cynical, ironic, and sardonic view of the same people and events try Conrad Black's *Flight of the Eagle: The Grand Strategies That Brought America from Colonial Dependence to World Leadership*, but for a deeper understanding of the Glorious Cause version Beeman's book fits the bill.

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. 4.5 Rating By RHF This work is a welcomed close-up examination of the secretive momentous twenty-two month period of activity of the nascent Continental Congress from September 5, 1774 to its grim yet bold decision and articulation for independence in July of 1776. It is a lively well written narrative with a variety of strands that highlight the causes, players, meetings, correspondences, and written works of the Congress along with the popular sentiment and major influences of the provinces and their congresses. The likes of Sam and John Adams, John Dickinson, Thomas Jefferson and other members are brought to a new level of understanding and appeal through Richard R. Beeman's research and fine writing. In spite of John Adams's acknowledged vanity and occasional obnoxiousness, I suspect, there is a sustained series of subtle undercuts by the author to Adams's wit, intellect, eloquence, character and contribution. (See p.374 where the author casts doubt on Adams's recollection in effecting an affirmative vote in favor of independence by the two New Jersey delegates after Adams's speech.) Adams's ambiguous wording in his recollection may imply this or not. Yes, affecting but not effecting the votes could be the import of Adams's speech written recollection. This is a

reasonable conclusion. There are numerous examples of such, see p.381 Adams's two letters to Abigail on July 3, 1776. On the other hand, John Dickinson receives the praise he deserves for his prominent role. The book offers little on any probable correspondence between Congress members themselves and their respective provincial leaders over the last two months in 1774 after the adjournment of the first congress. In summary, I would recommend this book to the general reader interested in the American revolutionary era, particularly in its raw evolutionary political impetus to democracy. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating look at what actually happened in the Continental Congresses, the beginnings of our democratic traditions. By Katherine Humphrey This reads almost like a thriller, in the sense that you can't wait to see what happens next. Familiar people are given much more depth than in the usual telling of these two years. In fact, in all my research on this era, the only other book that covers this time period as minutely, but from a different perspective, is Kevin Phillips' "1775" in which he examines an extended year as being the real start of the Revolution, well before Independence was declared. In fact many Royal Governors fled to British ships in 1775 and the Royal Governments were gradually replaced with Constitutional Conventions in several of the colonies which created independent governments. Phillips' view of the period dwells more on what was happening all over the colonies, while Beeman is focused on the 1st and 2nd Continental Congresses, showing how we were gradually developing our constitutional traditions. Fascinating. And good, ol' John Adams is in the thick of things, fuming that the Congress won't move more quickly.

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.

From Booklist Like his account of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, *Plain, Honest Men* (2009), Beeman's depiction of political events culminating in the Declaration of Independence features the main characters in the historical drama, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and John Dickinson. Using the Continental Congress as his narrative vehicle, Beeman strives to recover its members' proceedings in Philadelphia, not a simple task, considering the authors' condemnation of the assembly's secretary, Charles Thomson, as an abysmal record keeper. But Beeman succeeds in showing readers the intricacies of the Congress activities. If history knows Congress traveled from petitioning the British king to denouncing him, Beeman counters assumptions of inevitability with the debates and political maneuvers of radicals and moderates. Showing how, during a two-year period, 1774-76, the position of reconciliation with Britain evaporated, Beeman perceptively portrays the dilemmas of moderates like Dickinson as he does the drift of sentiment toward independence within each colony's delegation. Capped by the editing of Jefferson's first draft of the Declaration, Beeman's is an engaging history of the Founders of 1776. --Gilbert Taylor Richard Beeman's account of the movement to American independence is gripping, even if the reader knows the subject well and has no doubt as to how it ends.... We are fortunate to have as readable and cogent an account of it as *Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor*. Federal Lawyer New insight to an old story.... Beeman is a strong, direct writer, adept at bringing historical personalities to life. Philadelphia Inquirer Our best history of the Continental Congress and the grand debate that led to independence.... With back-room deals and personality clashes in abundance, Beeman's tale of independence is as complex, worldly, and occasionally tedious as modern-day politics. Books Culture