



Name _____

Date _____ Class _____



BACKGROUND: *North Carolina's First Constitution*

Between 1774 and 1776, five provincial congresses met in North Carolina. The Fourth Provincial Congress met in Halifax, in April 1776. A committee drafted a document declaring North Carolina's support for American independence from England, titled the "Halifax Resolves." These resolves ordered North Carolina's delegation to the second Continental Congress in Philadelphia to seek independence from Great Britain. North Carolina was the first of the colonial governments to call for total independence and motivated the writing of the Declaration of Independence, which was adopted by all colonies present on July 4, 1776.

The Fifth Provincial Congress again met in Halifax from November 12 to December 23, 1776, to write the first state constitution. Delegates looked to John Adams' advice and to the new state constitutions from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. Delegates selected Richard Caswell as president of the convention and then governor upon the adoption of the constitution. On December 17, 1776, North Carolina's congress adopted the Declaration of Rights, and the next day, December 18, delegates approved the state constitution.



Caswell Miniature Portrait. N.C. Museum of History collection, 2022.37.1

Richard Caswell was the state's first and fifth governor, 1776-1780 and 1785-1787. He was also the major general over North Carolina's militia in 1780 and from 1781 to 1783. Born in Maryland, Caswell settled in Lenoir County as a teenager and later established the town of Kinston.

Quick Fact Check

1. Which colony was the first to call for independence from Great Britain?
2. Where and when was the Declaration of Independence signed?
3. Where did the delegates meet to vote on the state's first constitution in 1776?
4. What other state constitutions served as models for North Carolina's?