

NOTES ON THE PATRIOTS- AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*, #1, December 1776. As Patriot soldiers were contemplating the British offer of pardon in return for leaving the army, Thomas Paine—the renowned and notorious author of *Common Sense*—published in December 1776 the first of sixteen pamphlets entitled *The American Crisis* (or *The Crisis*). Paine had joined the Continental Army in July 1776, in time to witness Washington's retreat into Pennsylvania as the British occupied New York. With that experience in mind he crafted his direct appeal to the troops to resist the British and reject Howe's offer of pardon. So effective was his prose that Washington had *The Crisis* read aloud to his army before the Battle of Trenton on December 26, 1776.

The current thought is that about 20 percent of the colonists were LOYALISTS — those who remained loyal to England and King George. Another small group in terms of percentage were the dedicated PATRIOTS, for whom there was no alternative but independence.

In the end, many Loyalists simply left America. About 80,000 of them fled to Canada or Britain during or just after the war. Because Loyalists were often wealthy, educated, older, and Anglican, the American social fabric was altered by their departure. American history brands them as traitors. But most were just trying to maintain the lifestyles to which they had become accustomed. After all, history is always written by the winners.

During the American Revolution, colonists like Benjamin Franklin who supported republicanism and eventually, independence, came to be known as Patriots. Historians estimate that about 40-45% of white men were patriots. Those men who chose to continue supporting the king, like William Franklin, were called Loyalists, or Tories. They made up about 15-20% of the white male population. The last 35-45% never publicly chose sides.