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Act of Renunciation, 1776

This act, passed on May 4, 1776, officially repealed Rhode Island Colony's allegiance to King George III of England. Rhode Island was the first state to renounce its allegiance to the King and passage of this act preceded the Declaration of Independence by two months.

In the original document the second paragraph is crossed out and replaced with a new paragraph which is written out on a separate page.

An Act repealing an Act entitled "An Act for the effectual securing to His Majesty the Allegiance of His Subjects in this His Colony and Dominion of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations" and altering the Form of Commissions of all Writs and Processes in the Courts, and of the Oaths prescribed by Law.

~~Whereas George the Third King of Great Britain entirely departing from the Duties and Character of a good King instead of protecting is endeavoring to destroy the good People of this Colony and of all the United Colonies by sending Fleets and Armies to America to confiscate our Property and spread Fire Sword and Desolation throughout our Country in order to compel us to submit to the most debasing and detestable Slavery—And whereas Protection and Allegiance are reciprocal, the latter being only due in Consequence of the former:~~

And Be it further Enacted by this General Assembly, and by the Authority thereof It is Enacted that in all Commissions for Offices Civil and Military and in all Writs and Processes in Law whether original, judicial or executory civil or criminal wherever the Name and Authority of the said King is made Use of the same shall be omitted and in the Room thereof the Name and Authority of the Governor and Company of this Colony shall be substituted in the following Words to wit: "The Governor and Company of the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations" That all such Commissions Writs and Processes shall be otherwise of the same Form and Tenor as they heretofore were: That the Courts of Law be no longer entitled nor considered as the Kings Courts: And that no Instrument in Writing of any Nature or Kind, whether public or private, shall in the Date thereof mention the Year of the said King's Reign: Provided nevertheless, That nothing in this Act contained shall render void or vitiate any Commission, Writ, Process or Instrument, heretofore made or executed, on Account of the Name and Authority of the said King being therein inserted.

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the Oaths or Engagements to be

This transcript is intended to capture the substance of the document.

For details of capitalization, punctuation, spelling and spacing, we recommend consulting the original document.

administered to the Officers appointed in this Colony shall be as follows, to wit

General Officers

“You _____ being by the free Vote of the Freemen of this Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations elected unto the Place of _____ do solemnly engage to be true and faithful unto this said Colony, and in your said Office equal Justice to do unto all Persons, poor and rich, within this Jurisdiction, to the utmost of your Skill and Ability, without Partiality, according to the Laws established, or that may be established, by the General Assembly of this Colony, as well in Matters military as civil: And this Engagement you make and give upon the Peril of the Penalty of Perjury.”

[There are additional pages of oaths which have been omitted here since they do not add significantly to the meaning of the document.]

[The next two paragraphs are the replacement language for the crossed-out paragraph on the first page. These replacement paragraphs appear on a separate page in the original document.]

Whereas in all States existing by Compact Protection and allegiance are reciprocal the latter being only due in Consequence of the former: And Where as George the Third King of Britain forgetting his dignity, regardless of the Compact most solemnly entered into ratified & confirmed to the Inhabitants of this Colony by his illustrious Ancestors- and till of late fully recognized by him and entirely departing from the duties and Character of a good king- instead of Protecting is endeavoring to destroy the good people of this Colony, and of all the united Colonies by sending Fleets and Armies to America to confiscate our Property and to spread Fire, Sword and Desolation throughout our Country in order to compel us to submit to the debasing and detestable Tyranny whereby we are obliged by necessity and it becomes our highest Duty to use every means with which God and Nature have furnished us, in support of our invaluable rights, & privileges to oppose that Power which is exerted only for our destruction.

Be it therefore Enacted by this General Assembly and by the Authority thereof it is Enacted that an Act entitled “An Act for the more effectual securing to His Majesty the Allegiance of his Subjects in this His Colony and Dominion of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations” be and the same is hereby repealed.

This primary source comes from the Rhode Island State Archives, #0210 – Acts & Resolves of the General Assembly; filed with Misc. Document # 8.