

State of Vermont

House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

Concurrent House Resolution

H.C.R. 35

Offered by Representatives Bos-Lun of Westminster, Burt of Cabot, Charlton of Chester, Cooper of Pownal, Eastes of Guilford, Goldman of Rockingham, Masland of Thetford, Morrow of Weston, Mrowicki of Putney, and Sweeney of Shelburne

Offered by Senators Harrison and Hashim

House concurrent resolution commemorating the 250th anniversary of the March 13, 1775 Westminster Massacre

Whereas, for two centuries Vermonters have considered the Westminster Massacre, which occurred on March 13, 1775, to constitute the first bloodshed of the American Revolution, and

Whereas, in 1774, the Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Association, enacting a trade embargo against Great Britain, and New York was the only province that did not ratify the Articles, and

Whereas, the Cumberland County, NY towns, comprising all of current Vermont east of the Green Mountains from Tunbridge to the Massachusetts border, voted to uphold the Articles, and

Whereas, in 1775, local Whigs (supporters of American liberty) were experiencing excessive lawsuits, resulting in their Tory neighbors acquiring the Whigs' property through bankruptcy proceedings, and

Whereas, 40 Whigs met with Chief Judge Thomas Chandler at his home to request that the court be closed, but Judge Chandler said he had a murder case to try and after the trial he would discuss it with them, and subsequently, the Whigs learned that the court officials planned to arrive early and deny them entry, and

Whereas, on March 13, 1775, 100 Whigs, armed only with staves, occupied the courthouse before Sheriff William Paterson and his posse's arrival, and the sheriff read them the Riot Act but they defied him, and

Whereas, Judge Chandler promised the protesters they could remain in the courthouse overnight unmolested, but Sheriff Paterson returned with his posse and ordered his men to fire point-blank, which wounded several Whigs, including William French of Brattleboro (who died overnight and whose gravesite has been maintained with State financial support) and Daniel Houghton of Dummerston (who died several days later), and the Sheriff's posse retook control of the courthouse, and

Whereas, on March 14, 1775, 400 armed local militia, including many from New Hampshire, filled the street and recaptured the courthouse, imprisoning all the New York officials and permanently terminating New York government in Cumberland County—but refraining from any further violence—nearly two years before Vermont independence was declared in Westminster on January 15, 1777, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly commemorates the 250th anniversary of the March 13, 1775 Westminster Massacre, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Westminster Historical Society.