

Debating Independence: Delaware's John Dickinson Squares Off with Thomas Jefferson LIVE in Dover

ST. JONES NECK – Two towering statesmen of the American Revolution will meet head-to-head in Dover this weekend to debate the most important question in the history of the United States: Take up arms against Great Britain, or pursue a peaceable road to independence?

On Sunday, Nov. 19, The Old State House will host an engaging historical dramatic production, John Dickinson and Thomas Jefferson Debate Independence: “We have called by different names brethren of the same principle,” presented by the [American Historical Theatre of Philadelphia](#).

The two American patriots will spar over their conflicting  views on how to protect and strengthen the American colonies. The audience joins Delaware's own John Dickinson (Doug Thomas) and Thomas Jefferson (Steve Edenbo) on the day that the Continental Congress voted on the question of American independence. Dickinson speaks for the moderates and argues that, although eventual independence is inevitable, the not-yet-united states are ready for neither war nor independence. Jefferson speaks for the radicals. He argues that the opportunity for independence might never come again if we miss our chance.

After offering the question to the audience for its vote, Dickinson and Jefferson open the scope of the discussion, telling the stories of what happened in their lives after the fateful vote on the 2nd of July, 1776. They then invite the audience to ask questions about any topics or events from

their respective lives.

The program will begin at 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 19, at The Old State House, 25 The Green, Dover. A reception with refreshments will be held from 3-4 p.m. This event is free and open to the public; due to space restrictions reservations are recommended, please call 302-739-3277.

This special production is offered as part of a season-long celebration of John Dickinson, "Penman of the Revolution," and the 250th anniversary of the publication of his most famous writings: "Letters From a Famer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies."

To commemorate the "Letters" and the role John Dickinson played in setting the stage for the American Revolution, the Delaware Department of State has launched a new website, de.gov/johndickinson, and a slate of special programming to take place over the coming months.

The website hosts biographical information about Dickinson and context framing the "Letters" in their historical moment. Assembled in cooperation with the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the site will serve as a hub for activities to celebrate the anniversary.

The site's calendar of events lists programming taking place now through February in cooperation with the University of Delaware, the Delaware Public Archives, the Friends of the John Dickinson Mansion and others.

Events at the John Dickinson Plantation will explore how life was lived on a large farm in 18th-century Delaware, including a presentation on the history of the African American inhabitants of the plantation, both free and enslaved, and Dickinson's complicated relationship with the institution of slavery.

The season of programming will conclude in February with a

traditional wreath-laying at Dickinson's gravesite at the Friends Meetinghouse in Wilmington, sponsored by the Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation.