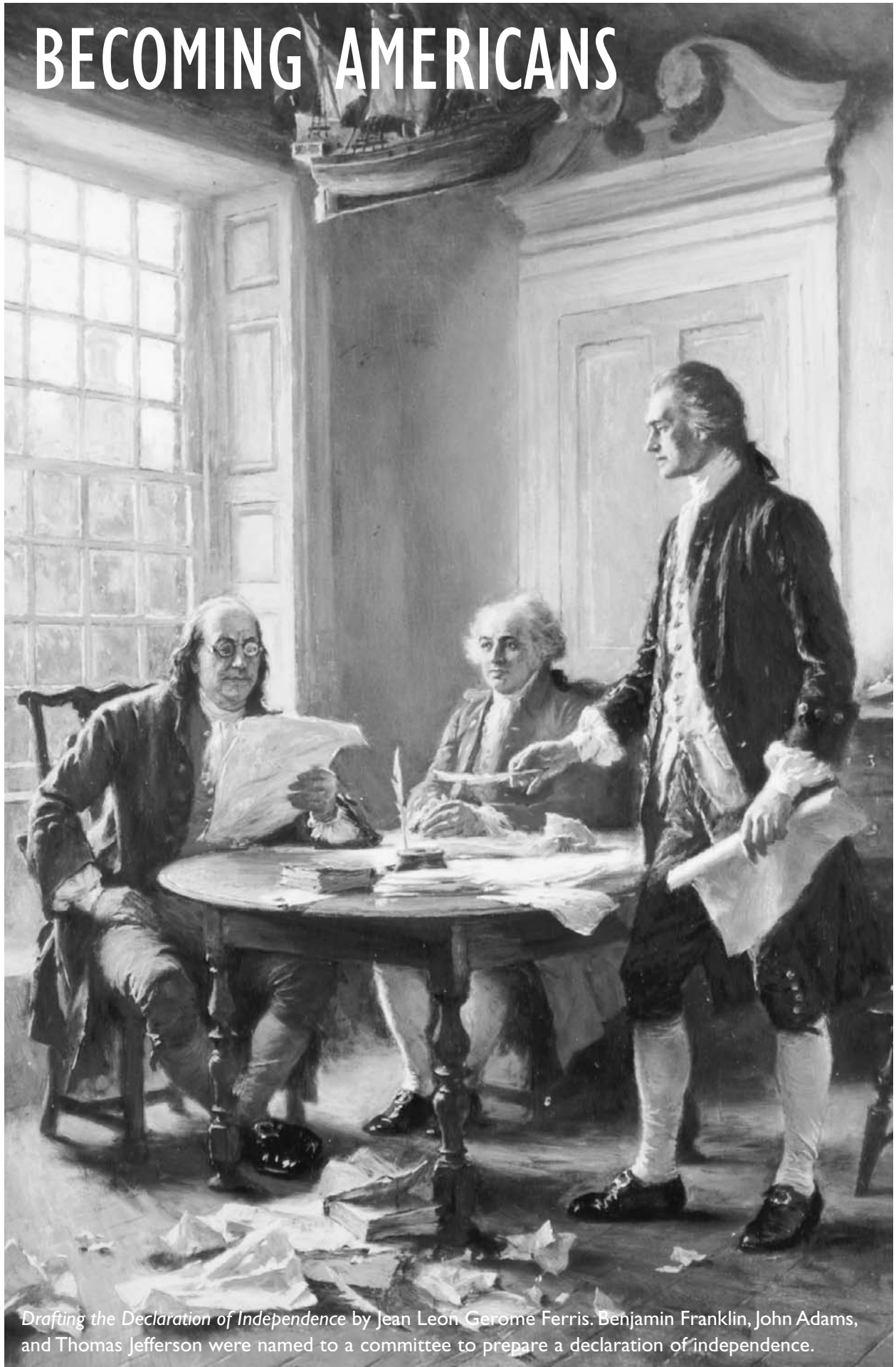
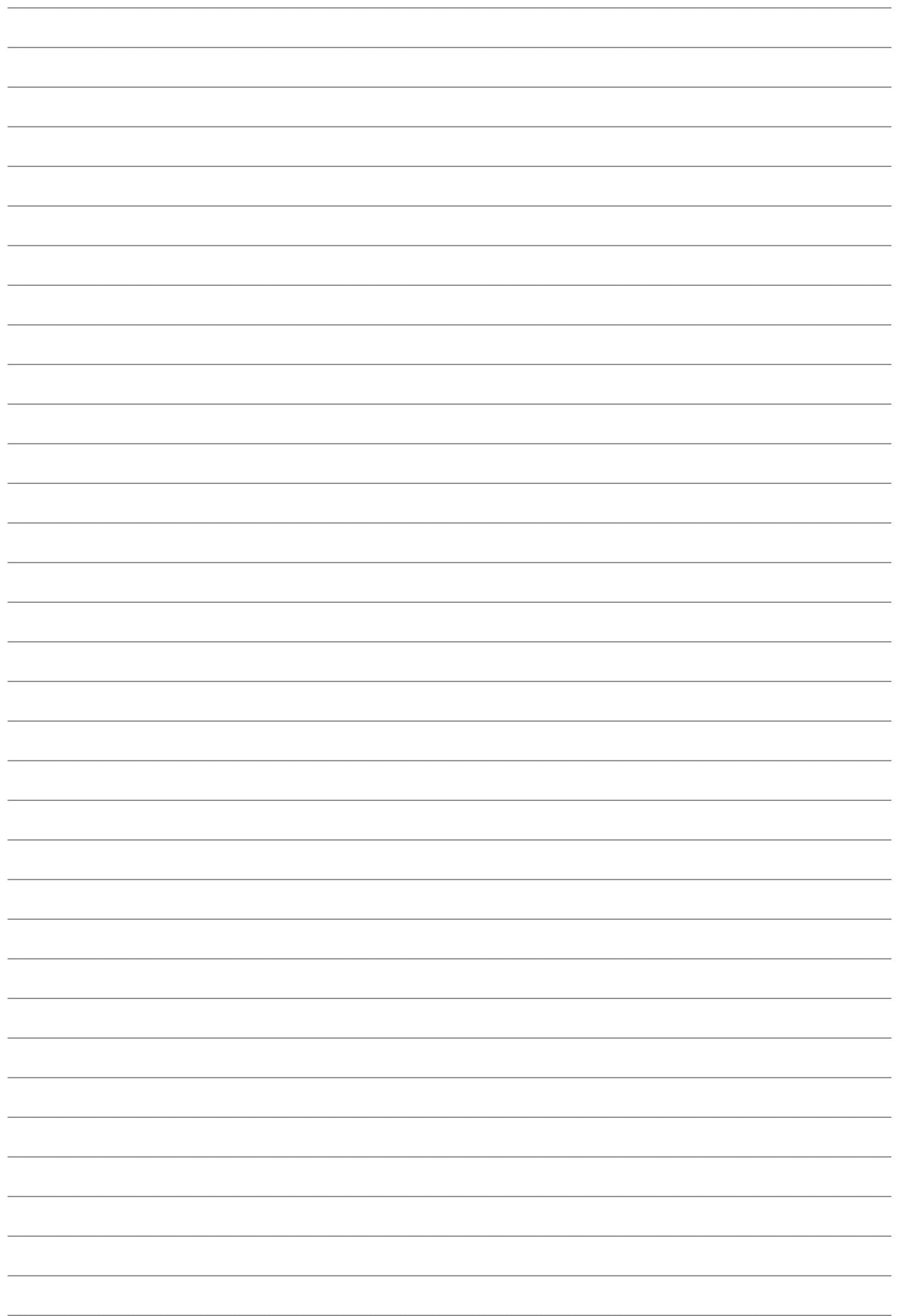


# BECOMING AMERICANS



*Drafting the Declaration of Independence* by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson were named to a committee to prepare a declaration of independence.



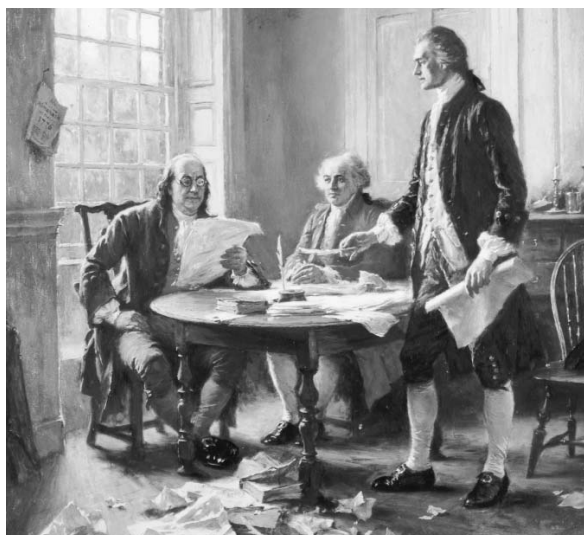
# BECOMING AMERICANS

The belief of American colonists that the locus of control over colonial affairs ought to reside in colonial assemblies rather than in Parliament led to a struggle with Great Britain that gave rise to a sense of American identity.

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## STANDARDS OF LEARNING

K.1–K.7, 1.1, 1.4–1.9, 2.2, 2.5, 2.7–2.9, 2.12, 3.3,3.7, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12, VS.1, VS.2, VS.6, US1.1–US1.4, US1.8,VUS.1,VUS.6

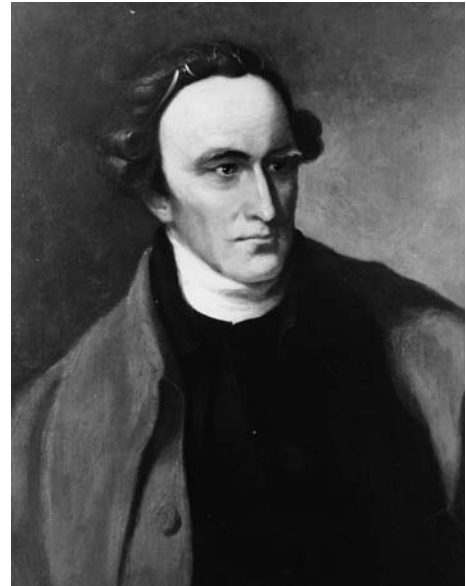


## KEY POINTS

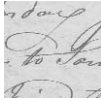
- Great Britain failed to recognize the political and economic maturity of the American colonies.
- The growth of slavery in Virginia in the 1700s led to greater white solidarity and paved the way for the idea that “all [white] men were created equal.”
- The main cause of the Revolution was the contention that local assemblies, such as the General Assembly in Williamsburg, were the source of authority, not Parliament in London.
- The Virginia gentry had the conservative goal of preserving its authority but had to resort to radical and revolutionary measures to achieve it.
- The Revolution had the largely unintended consequence of discrediting nearly all ideas of dependence, hierarchy, and deference.
- By vesting sovereignty in the people at large, the Revolution became a model for similar movements around the world.
- The Revolution caused a slight and temporary rise in the status of women and led to new thinking, by whites, about slavery.
- The colonies’ shared struggle helped give rise to an American identity.
- Virginia’s leaders played perhaps the largest role in founding the new republic.

# VIRGINIA'S REVOLUTIONARY

On December 1, 1763, at Hanover Court House, Patrick Henry (right) argued on behalf of the defendants in a legal case called “The Parson’s Cause.” He daringly asserted that a king who vetoed popular laws was no king, but a tyrant who ought not to be obeyed. In 1765, passage of his resolutions opposing the Stamp Act made the twenty-nine-year-old lawyer Virginia’s most influential politician. His speech included the passage “Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George III—” the speaker of the house, John Robinson, interrupted with a cry of “Treason!” “—and George III may profit from their example,” Henry continued. “If this be treason, make the most of it,” he calmly concluded.



This c. 1830 painting of Patrick Henry arguing the Parson’s Cause, attributed to George Cook, depicts the event that propelled Henry to prominence.



## Primary Source

### The Virginia Gazette

The *Virginia Gazette* was published in Williamsburg and was one of the earliest newspapers in the American colonies. Advertisements can provide an invaluable source for discovering the economic and social conditions of a particular period. Read these *Gazette* ads from 1769, remembering that the colonial “s” is often written as “f.”

To be RENTED, and entered upon immediately,



**T**HE ORDINARY in JAMES CITY county known by the name of *Rhodes's*, which is about 11 miles from *Williamsburg*, and on the main road to *Newcastle* and *Cowles's* ferry. About 50 acres of land belong to the ordinary, and there are all convenient outhouses, which, with the ordinary, are in good repair. Any person inclinable to rent the place may know the terms of *William Lewis* in *Williamsburg*, or the subscriber in *New Kent*.

JOHN LEWIS.

To be LET on CHARTER to any port in Britain, or the West Indies,



**T**HE ship *Brothers*, about 360 hogheads of tobacco burthen, now lying in *Rappahannock* river.

For terms apply to the subscriber at *Falmouth*. GAVIN LAWSON.

To be SOLD at *Richmond town*, on Monday the 7th of August next, being *Henrico* court day,

**F**OUR hundred acres of LAND, lately the property of *JULIUS BURTON*, lying near *Westham*, and within 7 miles of *Sbockoe*. Terms of payment to be agreed on at the time of sale. PATRICK COURTS. JAMES BUCHANAN.

To be SOLD at *Rocky Ridge*, on Thursday the 12th of October, for ready money,



## Activities

### The Virginia Gazette

- What are the items for sale? What goods were imported?
- What comments can you make about colonial lifestyles by reading this information?
- How does the writing style differ from newspapers of today?
- Compare these ads to other newspaper advertisements of a later period.
- What can we learn about slavery by reading the ad by Henry Lee?

mediately after divine service, in the church of the parish of *Suffolk*, in the county of *Nansemond*, and be also posted up at the front door of the Capitol, in the city of *Williamsburg*.

9

BEN. WALLER.

WILLIAMSBURG, May 27, 1769.

**C**OMMITTED to *James City* prison, a *Virginia* born Negro fellow named *JAMIE*, about 30 years of age, about 5 feet 7 inches high, who has on an osnabrug shirt and trowsers, and Negro cotton waistcoat with large metal buttons, and says he belongs to *George Berry*, of *Albemarle* county, who is desired to send for him, and pay charges.

Tf

WILLIAM LANE.

For SALE,



**F**IVE hundred acres of very valuable LAND, lying on *Shining creek*, in the county of *Brunswick*, within 4.5 miles of *Peterburg*. Six months credit will be allowed for one half the purchase money, and twelve months for the other half. Bond (to carry interest from the date, unless punctually discharged) with good security, will be required.

Tf

W. STITH.

TEN POUNDS REWARD.



**R**UN away from the subscriber's plantation, in *Loudoun* county, from *James Whaley*, overseer, on last *Easter Monday*, *TOM*, a Negro man slave, by some called *Tom Salter*, of a middle size, well made for strength, about 18 years old, has bad teeth, and many small pimples about his beard; he can read, and play on the fiddle, and had a variety of clothes, but his common working dress was died brown cotton. He managed several years as an overseer for me, under *Capt. Robert Downman*, at a plantation of mine on *Morattico* creek, in *Richmond* county, where he always lived until lately. He is a dissembling artful fellow, and generally smiles when he speaks. I suspect he is lurking about a plantation belonging to *Charles Carter*, Esq; in *Hanover* county, at or near *South Wales*, where he has a wife named *Sebra*, and perhaps at times about his old haunts at *Morattico*. Whoever will deliver him to me, in *Prince William* county, shall have the above reward; or if they will secure him in any of his Majesty's gaols, so that I may get him again, 5 l. and if he is taken out of the colony, and brought home to me, 20 l. paid by

Tf

HENRY LEE.

To be SOLD,



**T**WO TRACTS of LAND, lately belonging to *Col. John Fry*, one of them about 1000 acres, on the branches of *Hardware* river, a branch of *James* river, in the county of *Albemarle*; the other about 1200 acres, on the branches of *Willis's* river, in the county of *Buckingham*. The above tracts of land were taken up and surveyed in small parcels, but are now included in two patents. For terms apply to the subscribers, who have deeds for the same, and will dispose of them either according to the inclusive patents or in separate parcels, agreeable to the first surveys.

Tf

HENRY FRY.  
JOHN SCOTT.  
JOHN NICHOLAS.

## INDEPENDENCE

The Declaration of Independence—mostly the work of Thomas Jefferson—reflected the duality of the American Revolution as an anti-colonial struggle for independence and a revolution in thinking about the nature of government. As a propaganda document, it indicted the king, rather than Parliament. The Declaration of Independence is remembered for making the “pursuit of happiness” by ordinary people the chief object of government, for vesting sovereignty in the people rather than in kings, and for its assertion that all men were created equal. In a seeming contradiction, this new nation was founded on principles of liberty and equality but tolerated conditions that oppressed women, Indians, and African Americans.



Portrait of Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) attributed to John Trumbull

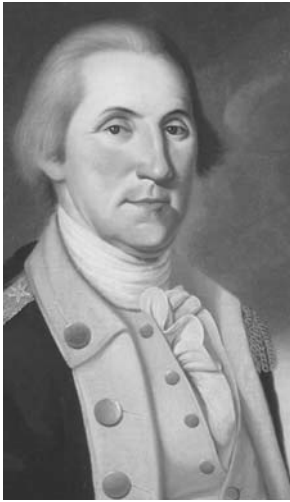




## Activities

### *The Founding Fathers*

The following Virginians played prominent roles in the founding of our nation. List the most important contributions made by each. Research and study the lives of other leaders of the era.



George Washington

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



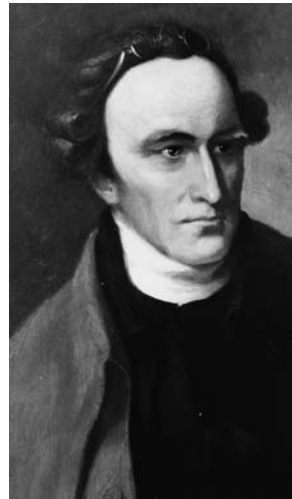
James Monroe

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Thomas Jefferson

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



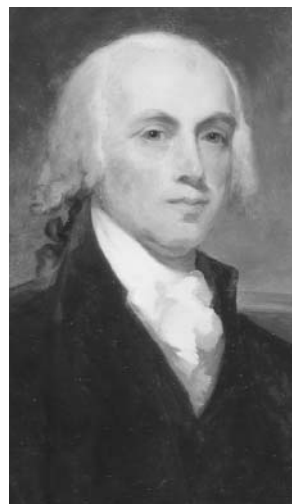
Patrick Henry

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



George Mason

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

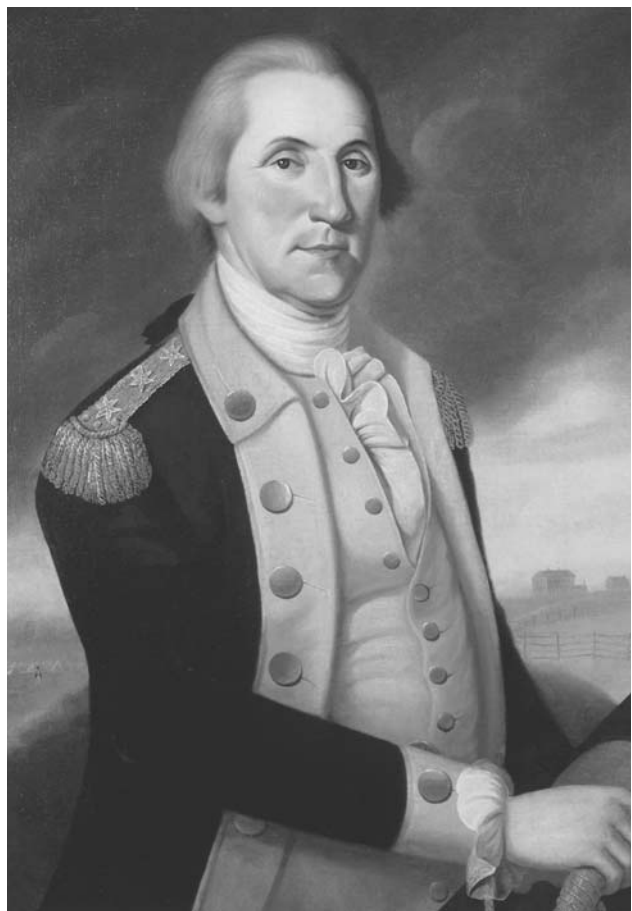


James Madison

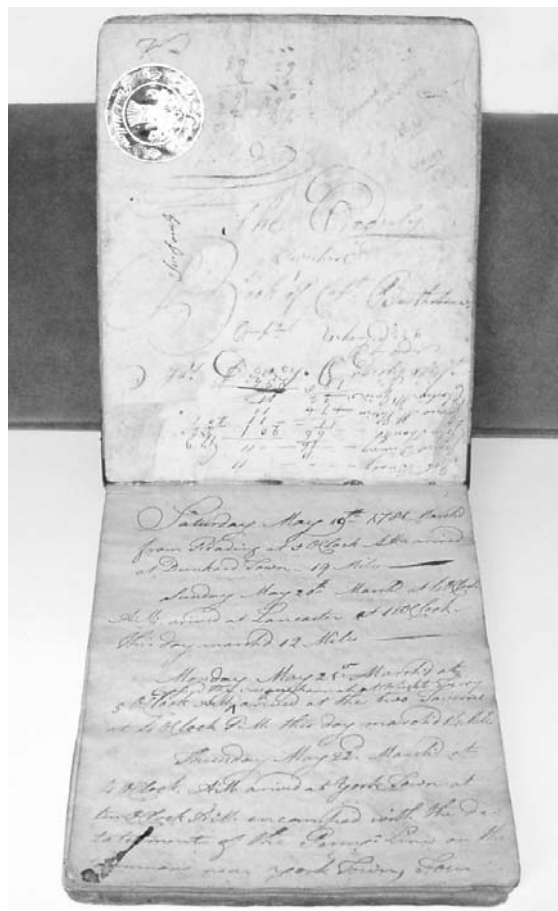
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The Revolutionary War was Great Britain's equivalent of the Vietnam War. There were British "hawks" and "doves." The morality of the war was questioned. Rebel leaders were both reviled and revered. There was a "domino theory" that other colonies would follow America in rebellion. At the beginning of the war, probably one-third of the colonists were Loyalist, one-third Patriot, and one-third undecided. After six years of fighting, the British public finally concluded that the war could not be won. The decisive event occurred at Yorktown, where the British Army was besieged by a combined Franco-American army. The French fleet sealed the Chesapeake Bay, preventing the British from resupply, reinforcement, or escape. Lord Cornwallis surrendered his whole command. The British prime minister took the news "as he would have a [musket] ball in the breast" and moaned, "Oh God, it is all over, it is all over."



This depiction of George Washington (1732–1799) as commander of the Continental army was painted in the 1790s by Charles Peale Polk, who derived the image from portraits taken from life by his more famous uncle Charles Willson Peale.



Capt. Benjamin Bartholomew's diary (above) describes his experiences as a continental soldier on the march from Pennsylvania to the final conflict at Yorktown. Below, Lord Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown.





## THE REVOLUTION AND BLACK VIRGINIANS

All Virginians, including black Virginians, were divided by the Revolution. The rhetoric proclaiming liberty and equality was heard by everyone. In November 1775, the last royal governor, Lord Dunmore, proclaimed freedom for slaves who joined the British cause. Thousands of black Virginians served with the British, and a smaller number served with American forces. In 1789 the Virginia legislature freed Caesar, a slave of the Tarrant family who had piloted the *Patriot*, a Virginia vessel on which other black seamen had served. Saul Matthews was praised for his services as a spy and guide by baron von Steuben and Nathanael Greene. In 1778, Virginia outlawed the slave trade, and in 1782 the General Assembly allowed slave owners to free their slaves. Outright abolition seemed too costly, but a minority of slaveholders—often evangelical Christian—granted freedom to their slaves.

One of the most interesting spy stories in Virginia history involved James Armistead of New Kent County. James Armistead aided the marquis de Lafayette by securing invaluable information from behind the British lines. By the summer of 1781, Armistead had infiltrated the British headquarters at Yorktown and won the confidence of General Cornwallis. The British believed that Armistead was spying for them. In fact, Armistead was a double agent. Because of his outstanding contributions, James Armistead was granted his freedom in January 1786. Changing his name to James Armistead Lafayette, he settled in New Kent with his wife and son and owned property that included three slaves. In 1818, he was granted a pension of \$40 a year by the Virginia legislature. When the marquis de Lafayette

made his final visit to the United States in 1824, he held a brief reunion with his namesake.

In 1800, the slave Gabriel of Henrico County planned an uprising designed to capture the governor and force the emancipation of Virginia slaves. One of his followers intended to fashion a banner that inverted the famous words of Patrick Henry—“Death or Liberty.” Nat Turner, in 1831, symbolically scheduled a slave revolt for the 4th of July. The legacy of the Revolution was a profound one for African Americans who saw too clearly the hollowness of the claim that “all men are created equal.”



Pictured above, James Armistead Lafayette was freed by the Commonwealth of Virginia for his services as a double agent during the Yorktown campaign.

# THE REVOLUTION AND WOMEN

During the Revolutionary War, landowner Hannah Lee Corbin complained that she was a victim of taxation without representation. She wanted to vote along with her male peers. Her brother, Richard Henry Lee, was sympathetic, but most Virginia men thought the idea preposterous. Only very gradually did the expansion of the idea of freedom have an effect on the status of Virginia women.

In the 1780s, Virginians were granted the right to divorce, although legislative approval was required until 1827. The concept of “republican womanhood” encouraged mothers to expand their minds in order to nurture better young citizens. Schools for young white women began to open across Virginia. Women organized and established charities (such as orphanages), and they were the mainstay of churches and church-sponsored organizations.

The emerging cult of domesticity tied women to the home. Women, who traditionally had been seen as inferior to men in body and mind, came to be seen as more virtuous and religious than men. They were able to exercise their influence within the home but less in the outside world. Thus the role of the Revolutionary-era woman was improved, but this role was still limited when compared to the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of white men.



Martha (Dandridge) Custis Washington (1731–1802), by Charles Willson Peale



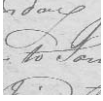
Dolley (Payne) Todd Madison (1768–1849), by Joseph Wood



## Activities

### *Revolutionary Women*

- Research the lives of Martha Washington and Dolley Madison. What role did each play during her husband's presidency?
- Compare the lives of these two women to the life of a farmer's wife, the life of a free black woman living in Richmond, the life of a black woman living on a small plantation, and the life of an Indian woman living on the Mattaponi reservation.



## Primary Source

### *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*

*Written by Thomas Jefferson and passed by the Virginia General Assembly on January 16, 1786*

I. Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishment or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget the habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was his Almighty power to do. . . .

II. Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

III. And though we well know that this assembly elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the act of succeeding assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act to be irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present, or to narrow its operation, such as would be an infringement of natural right.

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The **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom** is both a statement about freedom of conscience and the principle of separation of church and state. Written by Thomas Jefferson and passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1786, the statute was the forerunner of First Amendment protections for religious freedom. Divided into three paragraphs, the statute is also a statement of Jefferson's philosophy.

The first paragraph is both a statement of natural right and Jefferson's religious views. Jefferson is often referred to as a "deist"—a person who believes that God created the universe, but then let it operate according to His laws. Jefferson's views were a bit more complex. He reconciled his religious beliefs with his commitment to reason, writing "that God must more approve the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear." In other words, only through the exercise of a free conscience could man come to know God.

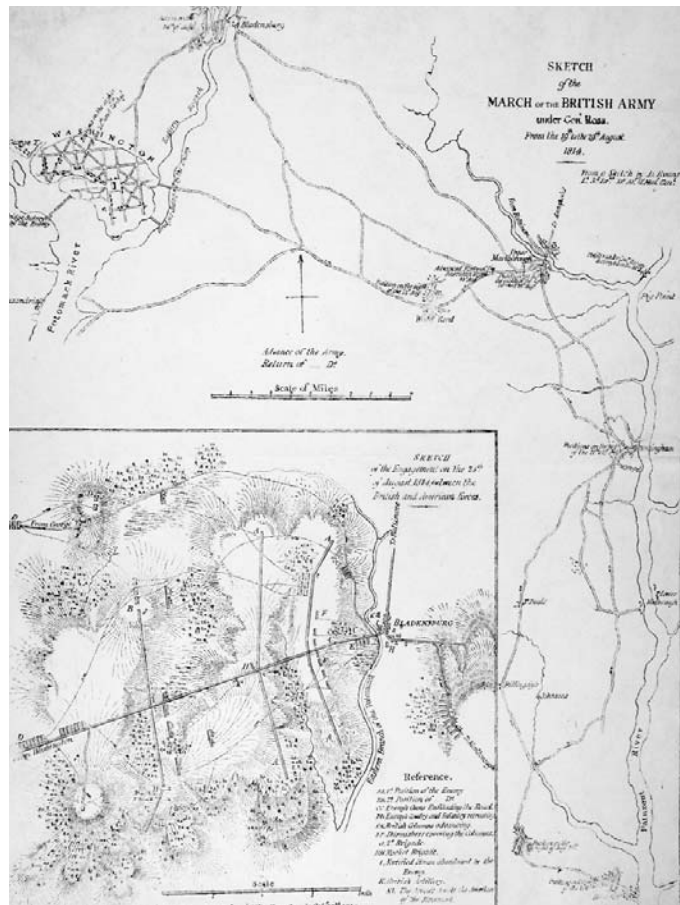
The second paragraph is the act itself, which states that no person can be compelled to attend any church or support it with his taxes. It says that an individual is free to worship as he pleases without discrimination.

The third paragraph reflects Jefferson's belief in the people's right, through their elected assemblies, to change any law. Here, Jefferson states that this statute is not irrevocable because no law should bind future generations. However, future assemblies that choose to repeal or circumscribe the act do so at their own peril, because this is "an infringement of natural right." Thus, Jefferson articulated his philosophy of both natural right and the sovereignty of the people.

# THE WAR OF 1812

During Jefferson's presidential administration, tensions increased between the British and the Americans. The War of 1812 broke out when the British continued to interfere with American trade to France and to impress or capture American sailors (claiming they were British citizens). In the west, the English also encouraged the Indians to attack settlements on the American frontier.

Several important events took place on Virginia soil during the War of 1812. A strategic British attack on Norfolk was skillfully driven off in 1813. Les Chasseurs d'Angleterre, turncoat French troops fighting for the British, looted Hampton, terrorized civilians, and liberated slaves. In 1814, Alexandria was spared destruction by surrendering. Tangier Island became the staging ground for an unsuccessful assault on Baltimore. The British attacked and burned Washington, D.C., after landing on the Chesapeake Bay. One of the final actions in Virginia was the plundering of the town of Tappahannock on the Rappahannock River in December 1814. Although the war ended in a stalemate, Americans remembered only the final victory at New Orleans, which resulted in an upsurge of national unity and patriotism.



*Sketch of the March of the British Army . . . (London, 1814)*



## In the Classroom

### *The War of 1812*

- After discussing the causes of the War of 1812, identify the following: neutrality, War Hawks, Henry Clay, Andrew Jackson.
- Discuss the burning of Washington, D.C. (population 8,000 in 1814) by the British troops. What was the role of the president's wife Dolley Madison during the evacuation of Washington?
- The military fame of Andrew Jackson was largely based on the battle of New Orleans, which was fought after the signing of the peace treaty. Discuss the types of communication and the length of time to send news in 1814. Compare this with communication today.
- Study the results of this war, including: the development of American nationalism, the growth of manufacturing, the surge of the westward movement, and the respect of foreign nations for the new nation of America.
- How would the War of 1812 have affected your family if you had been a farmer in Tidewater, a merchant in Norfolk, an exporter of flour in Richmond, or a shipbuilder in Portsmouth?