

Virginia: Colonial Life and the American Revolution

Conflicts developed between the colonies and Great Britain over how the colonies should be governed as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. England became Great Britain in the early 1700s.

Terms to Know

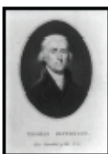
- assembly:** a lawmaking group of people gathered together for a meeting



The American colonists and the British Parliament disagreed over how the colonies should be governed. The British Parliament believed it had legal authority in the colonies, while the colonists believed their local assemblies had the legal authority. The British Parliament believed it had the right to tax the colonies, while the colonists believed they should not be taxed since they had no representation in Parliament. The new laws developed by the British Parliament angered the colonists. The colonists objected to taxation without representation by the British Parliament.

Virginians participated in events leading to war with Great Britain with the appointment of Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence gave reasons for and some basic ideas on which a government should be based. It also gave reasons why Americans should become independent of Great Britain. The Declaration of Independence stated that authority to govern belonged to the people rather than to kings, that all people were created equal, and had rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. On July 4, 1776, delegates of the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia and adopted the Declaration of Independence.



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Virginians made significant contributions to the American Revolution.

Terms to Know

- patriot:** a person who is loyal or supports one's own country



During the Revolutionary War, most Virginians provided food, clothing, and supplies for the Continental Army. Many people tried to help the Americans win the war. Virginians served together in the Continental Army to gain independence from Great Britain. Farmers, sailors, business owners, and teachers all helped. Some Virginians were neutral and did not take sides. Other Virginians remained loyal to Great Britain.

Most Virginia women farmed and supported troops. They continued to work the farms when the men were fighting in the war. They made clothes for the soldiers in the Continental Army and cared for the soldiers who were wounded.

African Americans were divided about the Revolutionary War. Some slaves fought for the British because they were promised their freedom. The free slaves fought for independence along with the colonists in the American Revolution.

Many American Indians fought alongside both the Virginia patriots and the British. American Indians in western Virginia fought against the Virginia patriots to protect their land while others volunteered to fight against the British.

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James A. Lafayette, from New Kent County, was one of many enslaved Africans from Virginia who served with the troops of the Continental Army. He took important military information to other American spies. After the war was over, the General Assembly acknowledged his support and they granted him his freedom.



George Washington provided military leadership by serving as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

Patrick Henry inspired patriots from other colonies when he spoke out against taxation without representation at the Henrico Parish Church (named St. John's Church fifty years later) in Richmond, Virginia, by stating, "...give me liberty or give me death."



Thomas Jefferson provided political leadership expressing the reasons for colonial independence from Great Britain in the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence laid out some basic ideas on which a government should be based. It also gave reasons why Americans should become independent.

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Virginia played an important role in the American Revolution.

Terms to Know

- minutemen:** soldiers who pledged to be ready to fight at a minute's notice

Battles of Lexington and Concord (April 1775)



The battles of Lexington and Concord took place in Massachusetts and were the first battles of the American Revolution. The British were unable to capture the minutemen's supplies. The battles signaled that the American colonists would fight for their freedom.

Battle of Great Bridge (December 1775; Location: 7 miles south of Norfolk, Virginia)

The road leading from North Carolina to Norfolk was known as the Great Road. A bridge crossing the marshlands to Norfolk was constructed. Its purpose was to transport goods that were to be shipped to Great Britain. A village was started at this point known as Great Bridge. Although it was a brief battle (30 minutes), it was the first decisive battle fought in Virginia. It led to the destruction of Norfolk in January of 1776. The Virginian victory was a major step in eliminating British supply lines, which forced the British governor to flee from the city of Norfolk and made the British realize the colonists would be hard to beat.



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Virginia played an important role in the American Revolution.

Jack Jouett was a Captain in the Virginia Militia. He was stationed in Charlottesville, but was near Cuckoo Tavern (Louisa County) attending to business for his father on the evening of June 3, 1781. Captain Jouett was asleep on the lawn in front of the Cuckoo Tavern when he was awakened by the sounds of a large number of British soldiers. He realized they were headed to Charlottesville where the General Assembly was in session, knowing that Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Daniel Boone, and others were in attendance.



Jack Jouett quickly mounted his horse and traveled 40 miles through the dense backwoods to Monticello. *He awoke Thomas Jefferson and other legislators staying at Monticello, warning them that the British were approaching. Jack Jouett continued on to Charlottesville to the Swan Tavern where most of the other legislators were staying to warn them. Most of the members of the General Assembly were able to escape before the British arrived. The General Assembly acknowledged Captain Jouett's heroism by presenting him with silver-mounted pistols and a jeweled sword.*

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Battle of Yorktown (1781)

Yorktown was located on a peninsula on the southern shore of the York River in southeastern Virginia. Virginia patriots served in the Continental Army and fought against the British. The French Navy gained control of the Chesapeake Bay, preventing the English Navy from helping British General Cornwallis. The French Army helped the Americans dig trenches around Yorktown and fought in the battle.

The American victory at Yorktown resulted in the surrender of the British Army, which led to the end of the American Revolution. *The Treaty of Paris between the United States, England, France, and Spain, formally ended the war in 1783. It acknowledged the independence of the 13 colonies as the United States of America.*

