

## Virginia: Contributions to a New Nation and the Civil War

### Part 1: The actions and ideas of Virginians formed the basis for the new constitutional government of the United States.

Virginians were important participants in the establishment of the new government.

*The Constitutional Convention was held in Philadelphia in 1787, with 55 of the 73 delegates present. All states were represented with the exception of Rhode Island. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss problems among the thirteen states. The delegates had many things in common: all were men who owned property; more than half of them were lawyers; most of the delegates had fought beside George Washington in the Continental Army; and many had also helped write the constitutions for their own states.*



**George Washington**, a Virginian and *Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution*, was elected as the first President of the United States of America and often called the “Father of Our Country.”

- George Washington provided the strong leadership needed to help the young country grow and develop through difficult times.
- George Washington provided the model of leadership for future presidents.



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**Part 2: The actions and ideas of Virginians formed the basis for the new constitutional government of the United States.**

James Madison believed in the importance of having a United States Constitution.

- James Madison kept detailed notes *during the 1787 Constitutional Convention, which helped the delegates understand the process of developing this most significant document.*
- James Madison used his skills at compromise to help the delegates reach an agreement during the difficult process of writing the Constitution of the United States of America. Madison is often called the “Father of the Constitution.”



*The United States Constitution set up a central government with three main branches: Legislative (to make laws), Executive (to carry out laws), and Judicial (to decide if laws have been broken). The delegates of the Constitutional Convention officially signed the Constitution of the United States on September 17, 1787.*



### Virginia: Contributions to a New Nation and the Civil War

The actions and ideas of Virginians formed the basis for the new constitutional government of the United States. Ideas expressed in the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom served as models for the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States of America.

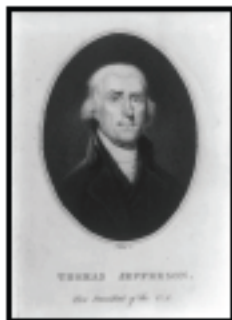
The Virginia Declaration of Rights stated that all Virginians should have certain rights, including freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and the right to trial by jury.



George Mason of Virginia drafted this document in 1776. It spelled out such fundamental rights as freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and the right to a jury trial. It formed the basis of the first Ten Amendments (the Bill of Rights) to the Constitution of the United States of America.

The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom stated that all people should be free to worship as they please.

Thomas Jefferson drafted this bill in 1777. It stated that all people should be free to worship as they please. Without James Madison's leadership guiding this bill through the General Assembly, the bill probably would not have passed. This document was the basis for the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, the amendment that protects religious freedom.



## Virginia: Contributions to a New Nation and the Civil War

After the American Revolution, Virginia's agricultural base began to change. As a result, large numbers of Virginians moved west and to the deep South to find better farmland and new economic opportunities. Geography influenced the movement of people and ideas as Virginians moved to and beyond the Virginia frontier.

### Term to Know

- *fertile soil*: soil containing many minerals needed to grow strong plants

After the American Revolution, Virginia's agricultural base began to change. As a result, large numbers of Virginians moved west and to the deep South to find better farmland and new economic opportunities.

- Tobacco farming drained the minerals in the soil, causing many farmers to look to the west and deep South for new land to farm.
- Virginians migrated into western territories looking for large areas of land and new opportunities.
- As Virginians moved, they took their traditions, ideas, and cultures with them.
- *Settlers crossed the Appalachian Mountains, through the Cumberland Gap, as they migrated to new lands in the western territories.*

