

Colonial Williamsburg News **EXTRA**

First Liberty Summit Edition • June, 1988

Williamsburg Charter highlights freedom of religion, conscience

The highlight of the First Liberty Summit will be the signing on Saturday of the Williamsburg Charter. Pointing the way toward a more constructive, civil debate on the place of religion and freedom of conscience in American public life, the Charter will be signed by leaders and representatives of more than 100 American organizations and institutions.

Signers during the Summit will include leaders or representatives of such diverse groups as the National Conference of Parents and Teachers, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Council of Churches, American Jewish Committee, Baptist Joint Committee, Greek Orthodox Church, Asian-American Voter's Coalition, American Red Cross, Girl Scouts and 4-H Clubs. Business leaders and elected or appointed members of the legislative, judiciary and executive branches will also be present to sign the document.

Other signers not attending the Summit will include former U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford; the chairmen of the Republican and Democratic National Committees; Archbishop John L. May, president, U.S. Catholic Conference; Ele Wiesel; Jacqueline Wexler, president, National Conference of Christians and Jews; Molly Ward, president, National Organization for Women; and many other religious leaders, elected and appointed political officials, and others representing organizations involved with the issues covered by the Charter.

A Fresh Look ...

Concerned with the "intense controversy" about religious issues, the Charter calls for "a fresh considera-

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Popular folk music trio Peter, Paul and Mary will perform a special First Liberty concert Saturday morning on the south lawn of the Capitol.

Summit to feature a number of activities

The First Liberty Summit, a national celebration which reaffirms Americans' First Amendment right of religious liberty, will be held at Colonial Williamsburg June 24 and 25. Summit activities will include roundtable discussions featuring international leaders and students, public ceremonies and a Grand Tattoo complete with military music and spectacular fireworks display.

Most of the weekend's public activities will take place on Saturday on the south lawn of the Capitol. The ceremonies will begin at 9:45 a.m. with the presentation of the new Virginia Commemorative postage stamp. Popular folk music trio Peter, Paul and Mary will follow with a special First Liberty concert at 10:30.

The highlight of the morning's activities will be the public signing of the Williamsburg Charter by national and international religious, secular and public leaders. Final signatures will be

affixed as the document is officially presented to the nation at 11:00 a.m.

Master of ceremonies for the morning's activities will be retired broadcast journalist Eric Sevard.

The day will come to a rousing close with a special Grand Tattoo on Palace Green, featuring military music and spectacular fireworks, beginning at 9:15 p.m.

The First Liberty Summit is being sponsored by the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian public policy project. Members of the Foundation's board of directors represent a diverse spectrum of American society, including religious, business and government leaders.

Major financial support for the First Liberty Summit has been provided by Mutual of America, one of the nation's largest insurance companies. Additional corporate support has come from the Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc.

Virginia's call for individual rights climaxed the long fight for freedom

Mention the First Amendment to most anyone and they will likely tell you that it guarantees freedom of speech, or freedom of the press. Perhaps more importantly, however, the First Amendment guarantees religious freedom for each of us.

In many parts of the world this freedom—the freedom to worship (or not worship) as we please—is truly a revolutionary concept. It was all the more so during the mid to late-18th century when Virginians like George

Wythe, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, James Madison and others were helping to forge the ideals which still guide our country more than 200 years later.

Saturday's signing of the Williamsburg Charter is set to coincide with the bicentennial of Virginia's public call for a national bill of rights. This call for individual freedoms was the climax to years of effort to break the long-established ties between church and state.

Timeline: The First Liberty

- 1607** The first permanent English settlement is established at Jamestown. Along with their English charter, the Virginia settlers bring with them the Church of England thus continuing a worldwide pattern of established churches.
- 1620** The pilgrims arrive at Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts. "Separatists" who could find no Biblical justification for the Church of England, they were the first of many religious dissenters who came to the colonies seeking religious freedom.
- 1730s - 1740s** The "Great Awakening." A religious revival throughout the colonies, including Virginia, leads to the growth of many new religious groups including Presbyterians, Separate Baptists, Methodists and others.
- May, 1776** As the result of several actions, including the Gunpowder Incident of 1775, the House of Burgesses passes a resolution calling for Virginia's total separation from England.
- June, 1776** George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights is adopted by the General Assembly in Williamsburg. Outlining a number of basic human rights, the Declaration states individuals' right to freedom of religion, as opposed to mere tolerance: "All men are equally entitled to the free Exercise of Religion, according to the Dictates of Conscience."
- 1777** Thomas Jefferson drafts a bill calling for religious freedom, as part of a larger effort aimed at legislative reform. The preamble to his bill, which asserts the freedom of the human mind, states: "Almighty God hath created the mind free." Introduced to the people in the summer of 1779, Jefferson's bill is tabled by the second General Assembly because they feel that it goes "too far" in granting religious freedom.
- 1784** Patrick Henry, reacting to the decline of "religion and morality" during the Revolutionary war, introduces a bill called the General Assessment. Providing for tax sup-

See "Timeline" on page 3

Virginia stamp will be issued during Summit

Saturday morning's First Liberty Summit activities will kick off with a special presentation of the Virginia Commemorative stamp by Senior Assistant Postmaster General David Charters. Featuring the Capitol in the background with a colonial carriage in the foreground, the stamp commemorates the 200th anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution by Virginia.



The stamp was designed by Virginia artist Pierre Mion of Lovettsville, who is best known for his illustrations for National Geographic magazine and in the Smithsonian museums. The Virginia stamp is the 10th in a series of stamps celebrating the 13 original states, and the first of the series to bear the new first-class postage.

The Virginia Commemorative stamp will be on sale at the Public Records Office, next to the Capitol, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. First-day cancellations will also be available there and at the main Post Office at Merchants Square.

Williamsburg: Cradle of the First Liberty

Virginia, its people and places played a leading role in making religious freedom a reality for all Americans. That's one of the many conclusions of a new book published by Colonial Williamsburg for the First Liberty Summit.

In *Williamsburg: Cradle of the First Liberty*, author William L. Miller notes that "Williamsburg was the center of events in Virginia during the Revolutionary era, and Virginia in turn was an important center of development of the American tradition of religious liberty."

According to Miller, there were four reasons for this: Virginia was the largest of the 13 colonies; its population included able and numerous supporters of both sides of the controversy over the separation of church and state; the changes in religious policy that took place here were "the most radical of all state changes" and influenced the others; and, the leaders who contributed to these changes—Mason, Jefferson, Madison and others—became policymakers for the nation as a whole.

Miller discusses each of these points in detail throughout his book, which is very well-written and researched. It is an easy book to read, taking little more than an afternoon. Well laid-out and richly illustrated, the book was designed by Vernon Wooten of the Colonial Williamsburg Publications department.

William L. Miller is Miller Center professor of ethics and institutions at the University of Virginia. Long a student of the relationship between church and state and the issue of religious freedom, he is also the author of *The First Liberty: Religion & The American Republic*, published in 1986 by Knopf.

Mr. Miller will be available during the day Saturday to sign copies of his book at the Visitor Center Bookstore and at Craft House - Merchants Square. (See schedule of events.) The book will also be available at the Inn and Lodge gift shops.

The Grand Tattoo: a rousing conclusion

The First Liberty Summit will come to a rousing close Saturday night with a Grand Tattoo on Palace Green.

Featuring musical performances by the Colonial Williamsburg Fife and Drum Corps, the African-American musicians, Tactical Air Command Band and the Tidewater Pipe Band,

the evening will conclude with a spectacular fireworks display by Ruggieri, USA.

The Grand Tattoo will begin at 9:15 p.m. and will end at 10:30 p.m. Bus service to the Visitor Center will be available after the program. Bring your blankets and lawn chairs and enjoy the show!

Timeline ...

1785

port of "Christian teachers," the bill would have allowed the taxpayer to choose the denomination to which his money would be given. For those who made no choice of denomination, their money would be used for the building of schools. Henry's bill set the stage for a great debate between those who felt the bill was fairer than the old laws which forced everyone to support the Anglican church, and those who felt there should be no state-supported religion.

Summer 1781

James Madison, one of the leaders in the debate against Henry's General Assessment, anonymously writes his "Memorial and Remonstrance," a petition which forcefully states why there should be no state-supported religion. Quoting the Virginia Declaration of Rights, Madison writes. "Religion...can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence. The religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man...this right is in its nature an unalienable right..."

June 25, 1788

Delegates from twelve of the thirteen colonies meet in Philadelphia to write the U.S. Constitution. While the Constitution does not directly discuss the issue of religious freedom, the body of the document makes no mention of God, takes no religious position, nor makes any endorsement of Christianity or any other religion.

June, 1791

Virginia ratifies the U.S. Constitution. Because of concern that the Constitution has no written guarantee of human rights, Virginia leaders make the first public call for a bill of rights similar to Virginia's Declaration of Rights. This action and others taken during the ratification process results in an agreement that pro-ratification forces would introduce a written bill of rights.

December, 1791

James Madison introduces the Bill of Rights during the first Congress. After debate in the House and conference with the Senate, the proposed amendments are sent to the states to be ratified.

The Bill of rights becomes part of the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment, our First Liberty, guarantees religious freedom, stating in part: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

From *Williamsburg: Cradle of the First Liberty*, by William L. Miller; Colonial Williamsburg, 1988.

Schedule of Events

Charter ...

tion of religious liberty in our time and of the place of the First Amendment religious liberty clause in our national life." Acknowledging that "signing this Charter implies no pretense that we believe the same things," the document is seen as a "solemn mutual agreement ... on how we should contend with each others' deepest differences."

The Charter was drafted by a committee representing major religious and secular groups. Over a period of nearly two years, various drafts of the Charter were sent to more than 125 individuals and organizations believed to have an interest in the issues involved.

The challenge faced by the drafting committee was to prepare a document that would be historically and legally accurate, culturally sensitive to an increasingly pluralistic society, yet clear and constructive in the principles it sets forward on the guidelines for debate of religious issues in the public arena.

The Charter was written to be non-sectarian, non-partisan, and non-ecumenical, and to avoid specific political positions on issues involving religious beliefs. Writers of the Charter included representatives of the leading faiths in America — Protestants, Catholics and Jews, as well as secularists — with input from Eastern Orthodox leaders as well as a number of other interested individuals, groups and religions.

Parking ...

Employees wishing to attend the First Liberty Summit are encouraged to park at the Visitor Center or in designated employee parking areas. Historic Area busses will run from 8:30 a.m. Saturday morning until after the Grand Tattoo Saturday night.

Employees and their dependents may ride the Historic Area busses for free. Just show your valid employee and/or dependent's pass to the bus driver as you board the bus.

Saturday, June 25

At the Capitol

- 9:45 a.m. to 10:25 a.m.** The Virginia Commemorative Stamp, featuring the Capitol building, will be presented by David Charters, Senior Assistant Postmaster General.
- 10:25 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** A special First Liberty Concert will be presented by folk music trio Peter, Paul and Mary.
- 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** The Williamsburg Charter will be signed by international religious and secular leaders.

Around Town...

- 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.** William L. Miller, author of *Williamsburg: Cradle of the First Liberty*, will be available to sign copies of the book. *At the Visitor Center Bookstore.*
- 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** Historic documents relating to religious freedom, including the *Virginia Declaration of Rights*, James Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance," and the *Bill of Rights* will be displayed in a special **First Liberty Exhibit**. *At the Courthouse daily through September 30. Free.*
- 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** The Virginia Commemorative Stamp, with first-day cancellations, will be available for purchase. *At the Public Records Office, next to the Capitol.*
- 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** **First Liberty Capitol Evening** - As members of the fifth Virginia Convention, members of the audience will participate in a dramatic re-enactment of one of our most historic debates—whether to include religious freedom in the Virginia Declaration of Rights. *Performances begin every half-hour, at the Capitol. Employees and dependents admitted free, with valid employee and dependent passes, on a space-available basis.*
- (Evening performances will take place on June 26 at 8:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Employees and dependents admitted free, with valid employee or dependent passes, on a space-available basis. Tickets may be purchased for \$2.00 each at the Visitor Center or at the Capitol door before each performance.)*
- 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** William L. Miller will be available to sign copies of *Williamsburg: Cradle of the First Liberty*. *At the Craft House - Merchants Square.*
- 4:15 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.** William L. Miller will discuss Williamsburg, its people and places, and their role in the growth of the concept of religious freedom. *At the Williamsburg Theatre. Free.*