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“These Boisterous Times...”  
**THE WEEK IN '76**

\*Alexander Purdie, *Virginia Gazette*,  
January 1, 1776

**JANUARY 1976**

January 18-24, 1976



PAMPHLET FILE

January 20, 1776

The fourth Virginia Convention, which had been meeting in Williamsburg since December, was adjourned. The Convention had laid the foundation for Virginia's navy, established county commissions to try loyalists who had borne arms, extended the committee of safety for another year, ordered construction of salt works and powder mills to relieve shortages of those commodities, and approved the "opening of our ports to all persons willing to trade with us; Great Britain, Ireland, and the British West Indies excepted."

Williamsburg, Jan. 20, 1776  
I intend to leave the Colony immediately.  
William Maitland.

William Maitland, a merchant, had arrived in Virginia in 1771 and had established a business in Williamsburg, in partnership with Robert Miller, a local businessman and bursar of the College. When Miller was absent in 1775 he left Maitland in charge and also appointed him to "transact the Business of Bursar to the College of William and Mary." But like many Virginians, Maitland was loyal to the king, and he joined Lord Dunmore and abandoned "considerable property" (unspecified) in Williamsburg.

January 21, 1776

Mr. Peter Scott's old house in this city, which he had rented and lived in for 43 years, was burnt down last Sunday night, by accident.

There was constant danger in Williamsburg of fires. Most of the buildings were built of wood, and even brick structures were not fireproof. The Wren Building at the College burned in 1705 and the Capitol in 1747. The College acquired a fire engine in 1716, and one was ordered for the Capitol in 1754. The first mention of a fire engine being used in Williamsburg occurred when Dr. Peter Hay's Apothecary Shop burned in 1756. By 1761 the City of Williamsburg had purchased an engine.

Scott's house was owned by John Parke Custis, George Washington's stepson. Edmund Randolph described the fire to Washington and assured him that the state government would pay for the damages because the fire was started by soldiers quartered in the building:

About 5 days since, Mr. Custis's Tenement, where Scot lived, opposite the Church, was burnt to the Ground, by the Negligence of some of the Soldiers, who had been quartered there. The Wind, being due South, the out-House escaped the Flames; the Difficulty of saving the Church became thereby very great. The Country are surely answerable for this Damage, as it accrued in their service.



## January 25-31, 1976

January 24, 1776

Fredericksburg, Jan. 24, 1776

The commissioners of the Gun Manufactory want a considerable quantity of Brass, for mountings. Any old brass (not mixed with bell metal) will do. Mr. Robert Nicolson of Williamsburg will receive, and pay for, any quantity that may be delivered there: and the commissioners beg the attention of other gentlemen to this necessary article. The cash will be paid, on notice, by

The Commissioners.

Robert Nicolson, a well-known tailor and merchant, owned a store on Duke of Gloucester Street near the Raleigh Tavern. He worked for many prominent citizens, among them St. George Tucker, Robert Carter, and Lord Botetourt. It was not unusual for Nicolson to be appointed agent for the Commissioners of the Gun Factory, because merchants were often named to collect money or perform other tasks for out-of-town concerns.

January 25, 1776

Because of tightened credit and high wages, Archibald Diddep, a Williamsburg tailor, announced that he would no longer extend credit to his customers.

Archibald Diddep, Tailor, Williamsburg, Returns his employers in general, and his old customers in particular, the most cordial thanks for past services, and shall always be ready to execute any command which they may hereafter intrust him with. As his family is extensive, journeymens wages very high, and his creditors exceedingly solicitous for their due, he hopes those whose accounts have been long standing will not take it amiss should he earnestly entreat them to make immediate payment; and those for whom he shall in future do business, it is expected, will not hesitate to tender down the cash so soon as their work is done. Ladies riding habits are still made by him, on the shortest notice.

Francis Street, January 25, 1776.

In 1767, when he was about twenty years old, Archibald Diddep testified in a dispute between James Mercer and Dr. Arthur Lee. Lee challenged Mercer to a duel to be decided at the race track near Waller's Grove, just outside Williamsburg. Mercer appeared at the time and place appointed, but he claimed that Lee did not. Archibald Diddep, who was employed as a tailor in Robert Nicolson's shop on Francis Street, testified that Nicolson believed Mercer, a lodger in Nicolson's house, to be in danger and asked him to watch from the shop door. Diddep claimed that he had a clear view from Dr. Lee's front door to the race track and saw no one leave or enter Lee's house. Diddep's testimony, along with that of others, proved that even though Lee challenged Mercer, Lee did not keep the appointment.

By 1773 Diddep had opened a tailor's shop next door to the Semple house on Francis Street, where he carried on his work until his death in 1787. He was appointed an ensign in Captain Southall's company of Williamsburg militia on August 22, 1777.

January 27, 1776

The paper shortage had become so serious that John Pinkney announced in Dixon and Hunter's *Gazette* that he was unable to publish his newspaper this week.

After having received so many Instances of public Favour, I should think myself inexcusable did I not make known the Reason why I do not this Week publish a Gazette. It is owing to a Disappointment in receiving Paper from the Northward, which no human Prudence could have prevented. Next Week, however, or in a short Time, I expect a very considerable Quantity, when I shall endeavour to make up for all Deficiencies, and shall continue to render my Paper, as far as the most unwearied Diligence can enable me, the Vehicle of instructive Amusement, and of every Piece of authentic Intelligence, which may be either curious or important. It gives me the greatest uneasiness that I cannot publish such Advertisements as ought to have appeared this Week, but as far as a Restitution of Money can atone for the Disappointment, it shall be made.

I am the Public's obliged, and devoted Servant,

John Pinkney.