



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

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

MARCH 1976

March 1-6, 1976



PAMPHLET FILE

March 1, 1776

Wanted for the army, a large number of SHOES, for which ready money will be given; and I will engage to take any quantity that can be furnished, throughout the year, from any part of the colony. Such persons as can supply me, and are willing to engage, will meet with proper encouragement by applying to the subscriber, or mr. Wm Armistead at the regimental store in Williamsburg.
William Aylett.

The regimental store, or Public Store as it was more commonly called, was established by the Virginia Convention on August 21, 1775, "to provide arms and accoutrements, cloathes, waggons, tents, and bedding on the best and cheapest terms" to Virginia troops. The store was in the care of the Commissary of Stores and all supplies purchased by the State Agent, a purchasing agent, were delivered to the Public Store. When the store was originally established William Aylett, a merchant, was appointed to both positions. In September 1777 Aylett accepted the position of Commissary General of the Southern Department and resigned his state offices. The Governor and Council immediately appointed William Armistead, Aylett's assistant, Commissary of Stores, and Thomas Smith State Agent. Armistead held his position until the Public Store was discontinued in 1782.

The Commissary of Stores contracted with many Williamsburg craftsmen for shoes, clothing, tents, and other supplies and furnished tools and materials to them. The store was housed in buildings rented from William Hornsby. In October 1778 the state purchased Hornsby's buildings and lots for £3,000.

March 5, 1776

On March 5, 1776, the Committee of Safety in Williamsburg ordered payment to James Slate for "making a sett of Colours for the Mecklenburg minute Battalion."

The first mention of Slate in Williamsburg was in July 1774, when he announced his arrival from London in the *Virginia Gazette*:

Williamsburg, July 19, 1774

James Slate, Tailor from London, begs leave to inform the Publick that he has just opened Shop the second Door below Mr. Anderson's Tavern, where he carries on his Business in all its Branches, and will be much obliged to those who may please to favour him with their Custom.

Williamsburgers, always craving the latest fashions from England, must have flocked to Mr. Slate, because two months after his first advertisement Slate offered "good encouragement" for "one or two Journeymen Tailors that understand their Business well."

Not only did Slate make flags for the Mecklenburg Minute Battalion, but he made them for other units as well. There is no indication of the design of the flags, but each flag required 3/4 yards of persian, a silk fabric. Slate also made uniforms, tents, and knapsacks in large numbers. In June 1776

he advertised for three more journeymen tailors. In October and December 1777 he was paid over £11 for making clothes for Bawbee, an Indian attending the College of William and Mary.

Bawbee, the half-breed son of a French trader in Detroit, arrived in Williamsburg from Fort Pitt in November 1775. Dr. Thomas Walker brought Bawbee to Williamsburg to be entered into William and Mary. Bawbee returned to his people in 1779 and spread unfavorable reports about the Virginians.

March 7–13, 1776

March 7, 1776

Williamsburg, March 8.

Yesterday 32 members of the Assembly met at the Capitol, pursuant to adjournment; which not being a sufficient number to proceed on business, and no representative of the King appearing, they thought proper farther to adjourn, to the First Thursday in May next, when that honourable body will meet, as well as the General Convention, for the discussion of sundry important matters, tending to the safety and well-being of the colony, and of America in general.

During the June session of the General Assembly, which met from June 1 to June 24, 1775, Governor Dunmore fled Williamsburg because he believed his life was in danger. Nothing the House of Burgesses could do convinced Dunmore to return, so it adjourned until October. At the October meeting not enough members appeared "to proceed to Business." The House of Burgesses again adjourned until the first Monday in March 1776. Still too few members appeared and the House adjourned until May 6. On that day the minutes read:

Several Members met, but did neither proceed to Business, nor adjourn, as a House of Burgesses.
Finis.

March 9, 1776

Williamsburg, March 9.

Last Saturday Captain Gregory's company of regulars, from Charles City, and two others from Spotsylvania, commanded by Captains Towles and Stubblefield, came to town; and this week also arrived Capt. Smith's company from King and Queen, Capt. Faulkner's from Chesterfield, Capt. Johnson's from Lunenburg, and Capt. Hawe's from Caroline. Many more are upon the march, and hourly expected.

Troupes arrived almost daily in Williamsburg to be outfitted and assigned stations. The companies listed above were equipped with hunting shirts, leggings, and other items furnished by the Public Store. Capt. Towle's company was sent to relieve the minutemen stationed at Hampton who were to be discharged, and Capt. Gregory's company marched to Suffolk to reinforce the troops stationed there.

While in Williamsburg the captains received their commissions from the Committee of Safety, which paid them their recruiting expenses.

Compiled by Harold B. Gill, Jr.

