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AMERICANS TODAY

Becoming

NO. 1 FOR COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG



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Autumn 1774

Newsline

August 1-6, 1774

First Virginia Convention meets in Williamsburg. Newly elected and former members of the House of Burgesses protest the Intolerable Acts by drafting an association forbidding the importation of British goods and slaves after November 1, 1774, and the exportation of all goods to Great Britain after August 10, 1775.

September 5-October 26, 1774

First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia.

Peyton Randolph is elected president.

Delegates from Virginia: Richard Henry Lee, George Washington, Patrick Henry, Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison, and Edmund Pendleton.

October 1774

Liberty Pole erected in Williamsburg.

October 10, 1774

General Court cancelled for the fall.

October 10, 1774

Col. Andrew Lewis of Augusta County defeats the Shawnee Indians under Chief Cornstalk in the Battle of Point Pleasant at the mouth of the Great Kanawha.

October 19, 1774

Chief Cornstalk accedes to Treaty of Camp Charlotte ending Dunmore's War. Terms negotiated by Lord Dunmore recognize Virginia's claims in the Upper Ohio River Valley.

November 1774

Burgesses arrive in Williamsburg, but do not convene because of Dunmore's absence.

November 7, 1774

Yorktown "Tea Party." Irate Yorktown citizens throw two half-chests into the York River from deck of *Virginia*. Shipped by John Norton and Sons of London, the tea was headed to John Prentis's store in Williamsburg.

November 9, 1774

Some 400-500 merchants gather in Williamsburg to sign the Continental Association and present it to Peyton Randolph and other congressional delegates at the Capitol.

November 25, 1774

James City County elects committee of safety.



THE REVOLUTION COMES HOME!

Williamsburg, November 3

Last Sunday Morning arrived in Town, from the General Congress, the Honourable PEYTON RANDOLPH Esq.; Chairman thereof, with Colonel RICHARD BLAND and BENJAMIN HARRISON, Esq.; of Berkeley, two of the delegates from this Colony. These Gentlemen left Philadelphia the 24th of October, and the Congress was expected to break up in a Day or two, soon after which their whole Proceedings will be published; and in the Meanwhile, for the satisfaction of the Publick, the Association entered into by that august Body in the Behalf of all North America, with their Address to the People of Great Britain, and Memorial to the Inhabitants of the Colonies, are laid before them. . . .

We his majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects . . . avowing our Allegiances to his Majesty, our Affection and Regard for our Fellow Subjects in Great Britain and elsewhere, afflicted with the deepest Anxiety, and most alarming Apprehensions at those Grievances and Distresses with which his Majesty's American subjects are oppressed, and having taken under our most serious Deliberation the State of the whole Continent, that the present unhappy Situation of our Affairs is occasioned by a ruinous System of Colony Administration, adopted by the British Ministry about the Year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving

these Colonies, and with them the British Empire: In the Prosecution of which System, various Acts of Parliament have been passed for raising a Revenge in America, for depriving the American Subjects, in many Instances, of the constitutional Trial by Jury, exposing their Lives to Danger, by directing a new and illegal Trial beyond the Seas . . . several late, cruel, and oppressive Acts, have been passed respecting the Town of Boston and the Massachusetts Bay, and also an Act for extending the Province of Quebec, so as to border on the western Frontier of these Colonies, establishing an arbitrary Government therein, and discouraging the settlement of British Subjects in that wide-extended Country, thus, by the influence of civil Principles, and ancient Prejudices, to dispose the Inhabitants to act with Hostility against the free Protestant Colonies, whenever a wicked Ministry shall choose to direct them.

To obtain Redress of these Grievances, which threaten Destruction to the Lives, Liberties, and Property, of His Majesty's Subjects in North America: we are of the Opinion that a Non-importation, Non-consumption, and Non-exportation Agreement, faithfully adhered to will prove the most speedy, effectual, and peaceable Measure.

Signed PEYTON RANDOLPH, President
[*Virginia Gazette*, November 3, 1774 (Purdie)]



TEA DUMPED AT YORKTOWN

The Inhabitants of York after having been informed that the *Virginia*, commanded by Howard Esten, had on Board two Half Chests of Tea, shipped by John Norton, Esq; and Sons, Merchants in London, by Order of Mess[es]. Prentis and Company, Merchants in Williamsburg, assembled at 10 o'Clock this Morning, and went on Board the same Ship, where they waited some Time for the Determination of the Meeting of several Members of the House of Burgesses in Williamsburg, who

had taken this Matter under Consideration. A Messenger was then sent on Shore to inquire for a Letter from the Meeting; but returning without one, they immediately hoisted the Tea out of the Hold and threw it into the River, and then returned to the Shore without doing Damage to the Ship or any other Part of her Cargo.

Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence, Vol. II: The Communities and the Second Convention, 1773-1775 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), 164.

During the first Continental Congress, the colonies acted together in powerful protest against Britain's actions. The Virginia delegation carried with it the outline of the association adopted on May 27, 1774, by the 89 members of the dissolved House of Burgesses; the association called for "an end of the importation of tea and other East India goods except saltpeter and spices." These ideas heavily influenced the final decisions of the first Continental Congress, which convened in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774. The congress strengthened the Virginia resolution by adding saltpeter and medicines to the list, thereby stopping the importation of all British goods, including slaves, by December 1, 1774.

CONGRESS ADOPTS A CONTINENTAL ASSOCIATION

- * That from and after the 1st day of December next, we will not import in British America from Great Britain or Ireland any goods, wares, or merchandise whatsoever, or from any other place, any such goods, wares, or merchandise as shall have been exported from Great Britain or Ireland. Nor will we, after that day, import any east India tea from any part of the world.
- * We will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the 1st day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade.
- * We will, in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts, and the manufactures of this country . . . and we will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially like horse racing, all kinds of gaming, cockfighting—
- * That a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town by those who are qualified to vote for the representatives in the legislature, whose business it shall be to attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching the association.

[*Journal of the Continental Congress*, Vol. 1]

Williamsburg's Meeting of Merchants



WILLIAMSBURG, November 10

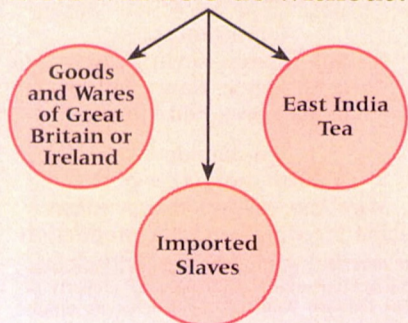
This afternoon the whole Body of Merchants at present in this City, supposed to be between 4 and 500, waited upon the Honourable PEYTON RANDOLPH, Esq., and the rest of the Delegates of this Colony assembled at the Capitol, and presented an ADDRESS. . . . To which they received the following ANSWER: Gentlemen

It gives us great Satisfaction to find that our Conduct has received the Approbation of your respectable Body, and you may be assured we shall on all Occasions endeavour to move on the firm Principles of Justice and the Constitution. The delegates are very sensible of the great Advantage this Country will receive from your union with them, and they consider it as very meritorious that you, disregarding the influence of your commercial Interest, have generously concurred with them in the great Struggle for Liberty. Such Unanimity, we trust, will convince an inimical Administration of the Imprudence of their Measures, and produce Effects so salutary as to make us reflect with Pleasure on the Part we have taken in the Support of American Freedom.

[*Virginia Gazette*, November 10, 1774 (Purdie & Dixon)]

VIRGINIA TODAY SNAPSHOT

The Continental Association Takes Effect December 1, 1774
NO IMPORTATION!
What will YOU do without?



MONEY

SHIPPING

The majority of items exported are tobacco, grains (corn and wheat), and lumber (staves and shingles) in the colonial coastal trade and Virginia's transatlantic, Caribbean, Mediterranean, and Wine Islands trade. The carriers for the transatlantic trade are generally ships and brigs that carry more than 150 tons, whereas carriers for the coastal and Caribbean trade are schooners that usually carry less than 100 tons.

VIRGINIA'S TRADE CALENDAR

September–October: Convoy of imported goods arrives in Virginia from Britain and later returns to Britain with Virginia tobacco
October: Wheat from Virginia is exported to the West Indies
October–June: Prime market for grain cargos exported to southern Europe
Number of Ships entering the Lower Chesapeake: September, 20; October, 30; November 40
Number of Ships cleared from the Lower Chesapeake: September, 20; October, 40; November, 28

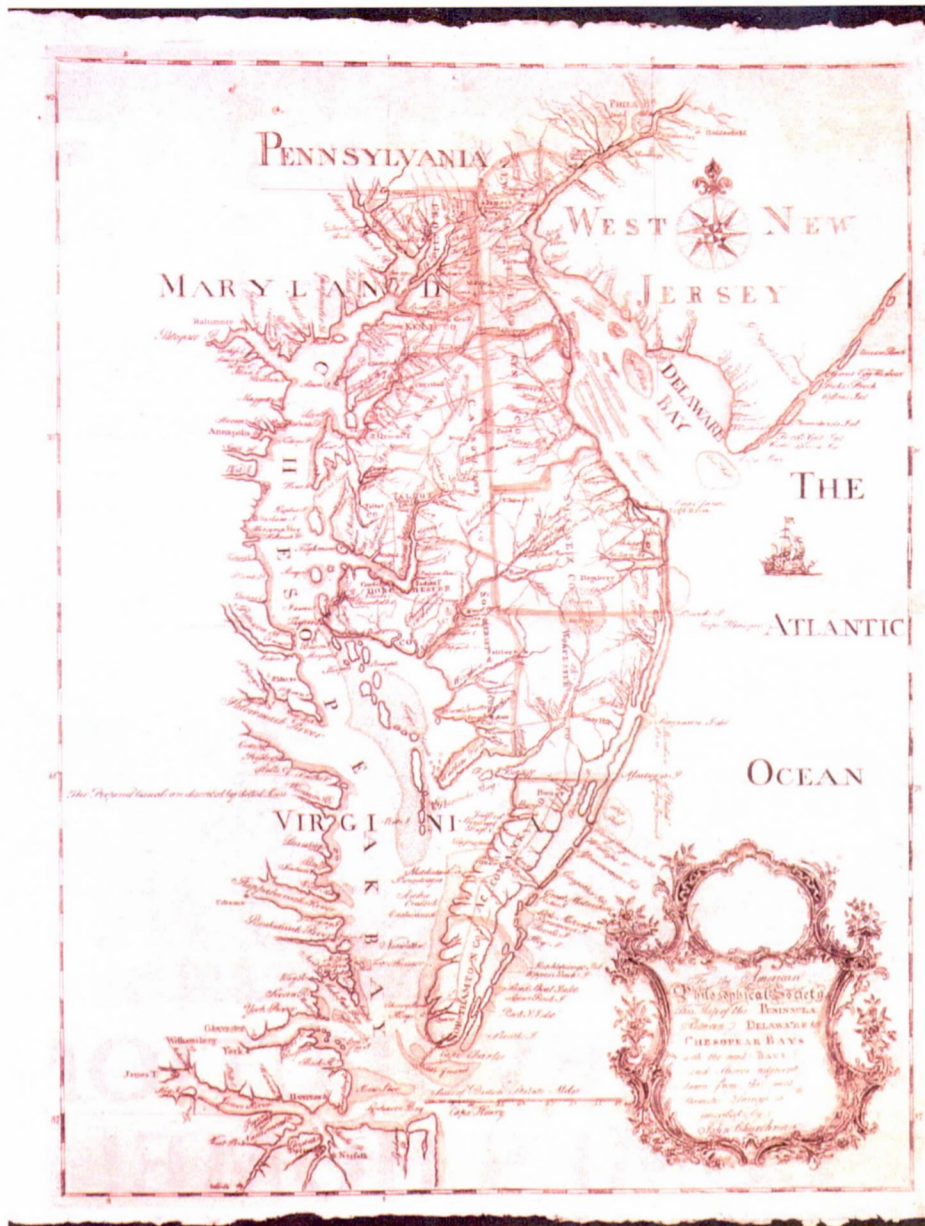
NUMBER OF SLAVES TRANSPORTED TO VIRGINIA 1765–1775

1765: 180 Slaves [71 from Africa]
 1766: 445 Slaves [425 from Africa]
 1767: 155 Slaves [87 not identified]
 1768: 311 Slaves [207 from Africa, 90 not identified]
 1769: 363 Slaves [324 from Africa]
 1770: 740 Slaves [691 from Africa]
 1771: 738 Slaves [0 from Africa]
 1772: 1,761 Slaves [1,560 from Africa]
 1773: 57 Slaves [52 not identified]
 1774: 36 Slaves [0 from Africa]
 1775: 13 Slaves [0 from Africa]

SLAVERY AND THE ASSOCIATION OF 1774

In 1774 and 1775, there were a number of factors which led colonial leaders to propose abolishing the slave trade. To be sure, concerns about slave revolts and the widespread belief that the institution was in imminent danger of economic collapse combined with the challenge that emerging ideals of liberty and natural rights offered to chattel slavery to raise serious doubts about its future. Yet, as W. E. B. Du Bois argued in 1896, the most immediate issue was the fact that banning further imports of slaves might force the business-minded British government to the bargaining table once again. "The movement was not a great moral protest against an iniquitous traffic," Du Bois wrote, "although it undoubtedly had a strong moral backing, it was primarily a temporary war measure." The leaders of the Virginia resistance were particularly prominent in pushing the end to the slave trade, resolving in August of 1774 that "We will neither ourselves import, nor purchase any slave or slaves imported by any other person, after the first day of November next, either from Africa, the West Indies, or any other place." It was the Virginians as well who were the instigators and leaders within the Continental Congress of that body's measures against the slave trade. In September of 1774, Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee proposed a resolution in favor of non-importation, and the Continental Congress responded with a declaration on October 12 which included this provision: "We will neither import, nor purchase any Slave imported after the First Day of December next; after which Time, we will wholly discontinue the Slave Trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our Vessels, nor sell our Commodities or Manufactures to those who are concerned in it." This clause, along with the rest of the non-importation agreement, appears to have been upheld by the citizens of the new nation, at least in the beginning. In Norfolk, for example, the vigilance committee publicly censured a merchant named John Brown who had imported slaves from Jamaica on several occasions.

(*Enslaving Virginia Resource Book*)



BIOGRAPHIES OF VIRGINIA DELEGATION

The following biographies of the members of Virginia's delegation to the first Continental Congress, held in Philadelphia September 5 to October 26, 1774, describe their lives up through 1774. It is interesting to note that all members of the delegation were members of Virginia's gentry and slaveholders.

RICHARD BLAND (1710–1776)
 Place of Birth: Williamsburg
 Education: College of William and Mary
 Qualified for the bar in 1746
 Recognized as an authority on constitutional law
 Family: Married Anne Pothyress (died 1758), 12 children
 Married Martha Macon (died 1759)
 Married Elizabeth Blair (died 1775)
 Occupation: Planter and slaveholder
 Public Service: Vestryman
 Justice of the peace, Prince George County
 Burgess, 1742–1774
 Delegate to first Continental Congress, age 64

BENJAMIN HARRISON (1726?–1791)
 Place of Birth: Berkeley, Charles City County
 Education: College of William and Mary
 Family: Married Elizabeth Bassett, 7 children
 Occupation: Planter and slaveholder
 Public Service: Burgess, 1749–1776
 Delegate to first Continental Congress, age 48

PATRICK HENRY [1736 to 1799]
 Place of Birth: Hanover County
 Education: English Common School till age 10, then tutored by father
 Qualified for the bar in 1760
 Family: 1754: Married Sarah Shelton, 6 children
 Occupations: Lawyer, planter, and slaveholder
 Public Service: Vestry, Louisa County, 1766
 Burgess, 1765–1776
 Delegate to first Continental Congress, age 38

RICHARD HENRY LEE (1732–1794)
 Place of Birth: Westmoreland County
 Education: Tutors and Wakefield Academy, Yorkshire, England
 Family: Married Anne Aylett (died 1768)
 Married Mrs. Anne Pinckard
 Occupation: Planter and slaveholder
 Public Service: Burgess
 Delegate to first Continental Congress, age 42



EDMUND PENDLETON (1721–1803)
 Place of Birth: Caroline County
 Education: Apprenticed to Benjamin Robinson, Caroline County Court, age 14
 Clerk of Vestry to St. Mary's Parish, age 16
 Clerk of Caroline County Courts Martial, age 19
 Licensed to practice law in Virginia County Courts in 1741
 Family: Married Elizabeth Roy (died 1742)
 Married Sarah Pollard
 Occupation: Lawyer, planter, and slaveholder
 Public Service: Deputy Attorney General for Essex County, 1745
 Justice of Caroline County, 1752–1774
 Burgess, 1752–1774
 Delegate to the first Continental Congress, age 53



PEYTON RANDOLPH (1721–1775)
 Place of Birth: Williamsburg
 Education: College of William and Mary, ca. 1733
 Middle Temple, Inns of Court, London, 1739–1742
 Called to the bar, 1743
 Family: Married Elizabeth Harrison
 Occupation: Lawyer, planter, and slaveholder
 Public Service: Vestry, Bruton Parish
 Justice of York County
 Board of Visitors, College of William and Mary, 1752–1774
 Burgess, 1748–1774
 Attorney General: 1748–1766
 Burgess, 1748–1775
 Judge of vice admiralty courts, 1750s
 Chairman, Virginia Committee of Correspondence, 1773
 President, first Continental Congress, 1774

GEORGE WASHINGTON (1732–1799)
 Place of Birth: Westmoreland
 Education: Taught by father and older half-brother
 Family: Married Martha Custis, 2 step-children
 Occupation: Surveyor, planter, and slaveholder
 Public Service: Justice of Fairfax County Court, Colonel of Virginia forces 1755, Burgess 1758–1774



FORUM

APPROACH TO INDEPENDENCE

The Coercive Acts of 1774 provoked open rebellion in America. Not only had the abuses of the English government aroused the Americans' principles, but repeated expressions of English arrogance had finally worn out their tempers. Whatever royal authority was left in the colonies dissolved. Many local communities, with a freedom they had not had since the seventeenth century, attempted to put together new popular governments from the bottom up. Mass meetings that sometimes attracted thousands of aroused colonists endorsed resolutions and called for new political organizations. Committees of different sizes and names—committees of safety, of inspection, of merchants, of mechanics—competed with one another for political control. In the various colonies royal government was displayed in a variety of ways, depending on how extensive and personal previous royal authority had been. In Massachusetts, where the crown's authority had reached into the villages and towns through the royally appointed justices of the peace, the displacement was greater than in Virginia, where royal influence had scarcely touched the control of the counties by the powerful landowners. But everywhere there was a fundamental transfer of authority that opened new opportunities for new men to assert themselves.

By the end of 1774, in many of the colonies local associations were controlling and regulating various aspects of American life. Committees manipulated voters, directed appointments, organized the militia, managed trade, intervened between creditors and debtors, levied taxes, issued licenses, and supervised or closed the courts. Royal governors stood by in helpless amazement as new informal governments gradually grew around them. These new governments ranged from town and county committees and the newly created provincial congresses to a general congress of the colonies—the first Continental Congress, which convened in Philadelphia in September 1774.

Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library), 47–48

THE REVOLUTION COMES HOME!

NOVEMBER 3–10, 1774
COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG
HISTORIC AREA,
NOVEMBER 1–6, 2005

During the week of November 1–6, 2005, Colonial Williamsburg interpreters will bring back to life many of these events and represent the reactions and opinions of the town's residents in this time of revolutionary tension and conflict. Witness the raising and dressing of the Liberty Pole. Speak with ladies of the town as they attempt to gather provisions and money for the relief of the people of Boston. Hear the enslaved residents of Williamsburg interpret what this political upheaval might mean for their lives. Talk with local politicians about their hopes and fears for future relations with Great Britain as *The Revolution Comes Home to Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area*.

Becoming AMERICANS TODAY is a publication of the Department of Interpretive Training

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