

OUT OF MANY, ONE
MOBILE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

VA★250

VIRGINIA AMERICAN REVOLUTION 250 COMMISSION

**VIRGINIA'S HISTORY
IS AMERICA'S STORY**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

“Out of Many, One”	2
“Give Me Liberty”	3
Virginia: 1775	4
Independence: 1776	6
Virginia Goes to War	8
War for a New Nation	10
Toward a More Perfect Union	12
Citizenship	14
Word Search	15
Notes	16
Learn More	17

The VA250 Mobile Museum Experience tells the story of Virginia’s seminal role in the American Revolution. From Patrick Henry’s 1775 cry “Give me Liberty, or Give me Death” to General George Washington’s victory at the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, Indigenous Virginians, free and enslaved African Americans, men and women from all over Virginia played critical roles in the winning of American independence. “Out of Many, One: The VA250 Mobile Museum Experience” tells their histories—and America’s story.

Specials thanks to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Library of Virginia, Museum of the American Revolution, and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture.

“OUT OF MANY, ONE”

E Pluribus Unum: out of many, one. Americans encounter the phrase every day—on the great seal of the United States—but what does it mean? The phrase originally referred to the coming together of the thirteen original colonies to create a new nation.

Over time, it has come to refer to people coming together to sustain and improve a striving nation.

In the beginning, not everyone was included in the promises of the new nation. But 250 years into our nation’s history, the ideals put forth in the Declaration of Independence have progressively brought more of us into the story—the story we are still writing today.

WE ARE THE MANY; OUR
COLLECTIVE LEGACY IS THE
NATION, THE “ONE.”

“GIVE ME LIBERTY!”

On March 23, 1775, Patrick Henry’s stirring rallying cry echoed through St. John’s Church in Richmond: “Give me liberty, or give me death!”

Addressing delegates to the Second Virginia Convention, Henry’s words galvanized Virginians’ support for independence from Great Britain. Though no true transcription of Henry’s infamous speech exists, biographer William Wirt interviewed those in attendance to recreate his powerful words:



The war is inevitable and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come. It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God!

I KNOW NOT WHAT COURSE OTHERS
MAY TAKE; BUT AS FOR ME, GIVE ME
LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH!

VIRGINIA: 1775

“Citizens of the Land”

As many as 30,000 Indigenous people lived in Virginia when English colonists arrived in 1607. For generations they resisted, collaborated, negotiated, and sometimes fought back in the face of colonists’ attempts at control. By 1775 Virginia’s government acknowledged only a few tribes, but tribal communities and cultures survived—and still do. What do you think American independence would mean for Indigenous Virginians?

“The Builders”

On the eve of Revolution, almost half the population of Virginia were enslaved African Americans. They shaped many of the landscapes we still see today, though they lived as property without legal rights. A much smaller percentage of African Americans were free. The American Revolution presented both free and enslaved Virginians with new challenges, opportunities, and difficult choices. During the course of the war, both the British and Patriot armies offered enslaved African Americans a chance for freedom in exchange for service. What would you have done?

“Revolutionary Men and Women”

In 1775, free, property-owning men from wealthy families dominated Virginia politics, but the coming of Revolution gave smaller farmers and tradesmen opportunities to be heard. For many, the possibility of independence was an opportunity to create a more inclusive government. Women were excluded from the political process, but that didn’t stop them from being revolutionary. What are some ways that men and women demonstrated their patriotism on the eve of revolution?

What were you called if you supported American independence?

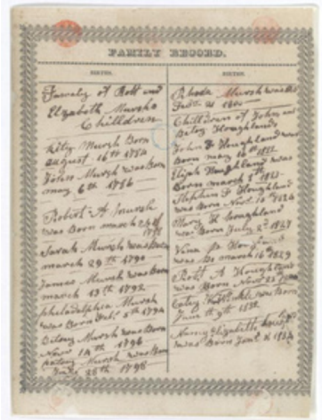
How did Virginians in Yorktown show support for Boston?

What did Lord Dunmore order to be seized in Williamsburg?

Indigenous Virginians had choices to make during the Revolution. Could they support—or fight for—independence of a colony that had broken their promises to them? What would winning American independence mean for Indigenous tribes in Virginia?

Robert Mursh (1758-1837).

Robert Mursh was a Pamunkey Indian who attended the Brafferton Indian School at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. In 1776, at age 18, he enlisted in the Continental Army. He fought with Washington’s army at Brandywine and Germantown. He also spent 14 months as a prisoner after the surrender of the American army at Charleston in 1780. After the war, he married a Pamunkey woman named Elizabeth and became a Baptist minister. The United States granted him a pension for his service in the Continental Army.



Mursh Family Bible



James Armistead Lafayette

In 1775 Lord Dunmore, Virginia’s Royal Governor, offered freedom to enslaved men owned by “Rebels” if they agreed to fight for the British. Later in the war, Patriot armies offered enslaved men opportunities for freedom in exchange for their service. Sometimes, enslaved people served with no promise for what might lay ahead.

James Lafayette (1748-1830).

From New Kent County, enslaved man James served as a spy for the American army as it approached Yorktown in 1781. Despite his contributions to the victory at Yorktown, James was returned to bondage. James petitioned the Virginia legislature for his freedom. In 1784, the Marquis de Lafayette wrote a testimonial declaring him “entitled to every reward his situation can admit of.” The legislature finally granted him freedom in 1787. Once free, James took the surname Lafayette in honor of the General.

INDEPENDENCE: 1776

By early 1776, calls for independence swept Virginia. The defiant words of Virginians from over 50 communities helped galvanize other American colonies around the idea of independence. Their resolutions or “resolves” instructed elected representatives on how to respond to British “tyranny” and “oppression.”



King George III

...all importation to, and exportation from, this Colony ought to be stopped, except with such Colonies or Islands in North America as shall adopt this measure.

Prince William County, June 1774

...To extort from us our Money without our consent...is totally incompatible with the Privileges of a free People, and the natural Rights of Mankind.

Fairfax Resolves, July 1774

...we declare that we are deliberately and resolutely determined never to surrender... to any power upon earth, but at the expense of our lives.

Fincastle County, January 1775

On June 7, 1776, Virginian Richard Henry Lee presented an important resolution to the Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia:

“Resolved: That these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.”

What did colonists want from Great Britain?

What Virginia document inspired the Declaration of Independence?

Who was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence?

THE VIRGINIA DECLARATION OF RIGHTS

Written by George Mason, the Virginia Constitutional Convention adopted the Virginia Declaration of Rights on June 12, 1776—weeks before Thomas Jefferson and the Committee of Five presented their Declaration of Independence to the Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia.

George Mason was born in present-day Fairfax County in 1725, the son of a wealthy planter. George established his own plantation at Gunston Hall and served in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Mason played crucial roles in subsequent Virginia Conventions including supporting the raising of independent militia companies.

Mason was the primary author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Constitution—both influenced subsequent foundational documents such as multiple state constitutions, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights.



George Mason

The Virginia Declaration of Rights enumerates Virginians' rights and the role of the government as “instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security” of the people. Among its 16 sections, the document declares a separation of government powers, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.

How did Mason's language influence the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights?

VIRGINIA GOES TO WAR

The coming of the American Revolution meant that Virginia had to mobilize for war. Communities raised militias and collected arms and supplies to support them, and scrambled to produce things that would help: iron, gunpowder, salt, food, guns, and ships. The industries that grew up around communities to support the war effort have left their marks on Virginia's landscape—some can still be seen today. Look at the map of war-time industries in Virginia. What was made in your region? What revolutionary-era sites have you visited in your hometown?

Revolutionary Women



A New Touch on the Times

In colonial America, women had few political rights—they could not vote nor hold office. However, that did not stop them from being revolutionary. Women were active participants in the American Revolution. Some women spun their own thread and wore “home-spun” clothing in protest of British policies. Some took jobs outside their traditional roles, managing farms and businesses in the absence of men who joined armies. Some women supported soldiers on the front lines and worked in army camps.

Loyalists

Not everyone supported the war effort. Some remained loyal to the crown. Virginia's legislature made life difficult for loyalists. Some chose to join the British army or loyalist militias. Others chose to leave the colony and start new lives in England and other communities that were more sympathetic to their views.



Loyalists Escaping to Canada

What was produced in Virginia's Piedmont region to support the war?

What became a patriotic activity for revolutionary women?

Who were called “enemies of liberty?”

Across Virginia, women played essential, often surprising roles in the Revolution. Women acted heroically. Many had difficult choices to make. Some had a chance to change their lives forever. What would you have done?

Frontier Legend: Betty Zane

In October 1782, Elizabeth Zane volunteered to retrieve gunpowder from a nearby cabin to support patriots at Fort Henry in Wheeling, on Virginia's western frontier. "You have not one man to spare; a woman will not be missed in the defense of the fort," she declared.

Trans-Atlantic Freedom: Mary Perth

Mary Perth was enslaved by a loyalist in Norfolk and had a difficult choice to make—stay home, or seek freedom with the British? Mary decide to risk everything, running to Dunmore's camp for Loyalist refugees. Smallpox raged, but Mary survived. At the war's end, she received freedom papers from the British army. She immigrated to Nova Scotia and then, in 1792, to Sierra Leone, on the West African coast. There she and her husband helped settle a new town, Freetown—today the capital of Sierra Leone.

Shawnee Warrior and Chief: Nonhelema

Nonhelema was a warrior, chief, diplomat, and interpreter for the Shawnee people. During the Revolution, she concluded that the survival of the Shawnee demanded neutrality. She warned white settlers of impending attacks and acted as a translator in negotiations between the Americans, the British, or hostile tribes. After the war, when she petitioned for a grant of 1,000 acres as compensation for her services, Congress awarded her daily rations and an annual allotment of blankets and clothing.

WAR FOR A NEW NATION

The Declaration of Independence was a revolution of ideas, but the American Revolution was also a war, and Virginia needed to do its part to raise troops for the cause. Some men chose to join the Continental Army. Others served in local militias. Some enslaved Virginians served as substitutes for their owners, and some petitioned for (and sometimes won) their freedom at war's end. Indigenous Virginians fought too, in local militias, the Continental Army, and by acting as scouts and intermediaries.



The View at Great Bridge

On December 9, 1775, British troops and members of Dunmore's "Ethiopian Regiment" clashed with patriot forces at Great Bridge. It was Virginia's first significant land battle. Billy Flora, a free African American militiaman from Portsmouth, was the last sentinel to yield to the British advancing across Great Bridge.



Black Hoof (Catecahassa)

On August 8, 1780, patriots attacked a Shawnee settlement, Peckuwe (Piqua), near what is today known as Springfield, Ohio. The battle forced the Shawnee out of their traditional hunting grounds. Shawnee warrior Black Hoof (Catecahassa) may have been present at the Battle of Piqua. After the Revolution, he fought to resist American efforts to remove the Shawnee from their lands.

What type of soldier was trained to "march at a moment's notice?"

What Patriot victory essentially ended the American Revolution?

Who was Virginia's last royal governor who commanded the Ethiopian Regiment?

VICTORY AT YORKTOWN

We have got [the British] handsomely in a pudding bag.... I am all on fire. By the Great God of War, I think we may all hand up our swords by the last of the year in perfect peace and security!

American General George Weedon to Nathaniel Greene
Fredericksburg, September 5, 1781



Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown

In the fall of 1781, the war abruptly turned. After six years alternating victories and defeats, the Americans' dramatic triumph at Yorktown ensured American independence. In September 1781, George Washington's army—aided by more than 7,000 French soldiers—trapped a British army under Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. On September 5, the French Navy drove away a British fleet off Cape Henry, Virginia. The British navy's defeat meant Cornwallis could not escape by sea.

On September 28, the American army and French allies moved from Williamsburg and pinned the British into their lines around Yorktown. For three weeks, Washington's army besieged the British. American and French cannon fired as many as 1,500 shells a day. Foot soldiers sniped at British lines. As the British ran low on supplies, they forced civilians—mostly enslaved refugees, many of them sick with smallpox—out of their lines.

On October 14, the Americans and French mounted a nighttime assault that captured the last of the British outer defenses. The British had no more ground to give. On October 19, Cornwallis surrendered 7,247 soldiers, 840 sailors, and 244 cannon—the largest surrender of the war.

TOWARD A MORE PERFECT UNION

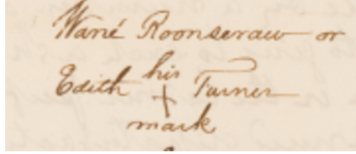
The founders who wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776 left much undone. America's founding documents did not include everyone in their promises. While the founders were imperfect, their words changed the world forever and have been used across the globe as individuals seek freedom.

The founders gave us ideals and values, a Constitution, and a system of government. They also knew the freedom they espoused and the democratic government they created would require thoughtful, hard work every single day.

AND, THEY KNEW, THE NATION
WOULD CHANGE WITH TIME.

CHANGEMAKERS

The founders knew that the nation would change over time, and the work of improving our nation connects us to each other and connects generations. Learn more about these Virginians who have worked to forward a more perfect union.



Pick a Changemaker from the wall. Write what you've learned about them below.

Who is a changemaker in your community? What makes them a changemaker? Share more below.

CITIZENSHIP

Citizens of the United States support and defend the Constitution, give up allegiance to other nations, and can vote. The Fourteenth Amendment states that all persons born in the United States are citizens—citizenship is automatic. Those born outside the country who wish to become citizens must go through a process to do so, including passing a test that demonstrates their knowledge of American history and civics. Some of the questions on the test are below. Do you know the answers?

1. What is the supreme law of the land?
2. We elect a president for how many years?
3. When was the Constitution written?
4. Who was the first president?
5. Why does the flag have 13 stripes?
6. How many Justices are on the Supreme Court?
7. What are the rights in the Declaration of Independence?
8. The House of Representatives has how many voting members?
9. What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?
10. The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are they?

Reflect on your experience taking the citizenship test. What did you learn that you didn't know before?

Why do you think it's important for citizens to participate in the democratic process by voting?

WORD SEARCH

Have you found the answers to the questions in this booklet throughout the exhibit? Find them in the word search below.

T F U U I T K Z J D Z D J O P J U Z Q H
T S P I N N I N G J M E S L R W M H U E
A Z T S B D U Z K N Q C L F W O V O Z M
L K H Q P K M M F B C L R D M O I U O P
X S O N E A S M C O S A F U S T N Z G E
V M M B D U T S A T O R F N H C Y D U L
X P A D X I Z R D E N A G M S L Y S N U
U R S M E N I I I H G T S O M A T F P U
F W J X G D X T W O Q I Z R Q R E R O X
J N E C Z E P Q F T T O V E F C A X W C
N Y F E U P D X L H H N W G K G P O D L
Y J F K I E Y N P N G O P V L Z A Y E R
M N E E Y N E Z D C W F P L O V R O R D
X E R T E D A B F B L R P N Y K T R P D
S Z S I K E Y H L E A I I L A E Y K K Q
D L O T X N S R R S L G Y X L M Y T Y O
U H N O Z C K U G F F H I R I M Z O T K
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J Q H E E I O U M D L S F Y S A O F Y V

PATRIOT TEA PARTY GUNPOWDER INDEPENDENCE
DECLARATION OF RIGHTS THOMAS JEFFERSON
HEMP SPINNING LOYALISTS
MINUTEMEN YORKTOWN DUNMORE

Answers to the citizenship test sample questions:

(1) The Constitution (2) Four (3) 1787 (4) George Washington (5) Because there were 13 original colonies (6) 9 (7) Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (8) 435 (9) The Bill of Rights (10) We the people

NOTES



VA250

Virginia's History is America's Story.

The **Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250)** was established to commemorate Virginia's role in the 250th anniversary of American independence. Virginia's semiquincentennial is about more than just our past; it reflects how our founding continues to shape our present and future. This is why VA250 has chosen "*To Form a More Perfect Union*" as its theme. VA250's mission is to **educate** Virginians, including our students, about our history, our founding ideals and our system of government; to **engage** every community and all regions in events that tell a complete story; and to **inspire** Virginians to recommit to the values inherent in American citizenship.

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