

Virginians Contribute to the Revolutionary War Era

1. The first shots of the war rang out in Concord, Massachusetts in April of 1775. One year later, as the fighting continued, the Second Continental Congress met to declare that the colonies were free and independent states. The result of this meeting was a document called the Declaration of Independence, which expressed the reasons for colonial independence from England. Written by a Virginian named Thomas Jefferson, it declared that the authority to govern belonged to the people rather than to kings. It also stated that all people were created equal and had rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
2. In addition to Mr. Jefferson's political leadership, other Virginians made significant contributions to the Revolutionary War era. A Virginia plantation owner by the name of George Washington was chosen as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Washington's army was made up of brave men from all over Virginia and the other colonies. Farmers, merchants, craftsman, traders, and even ministers joined up. Washington provided much needed military leadership to the rough, inexperienced colonial troops.
3. Another Virginian by the name of Patrick Henry inspired patriots from other colonies when he spoke out against the unfair English tax laws. He believed that war was the only answer to the growing problems with England. In a famous speech in the city of Richmond, Virginia he stated, "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!*"
4. The Marquis de Lafayette, a French nobleman, volunteered his service to the Continental Army during the American Revolution. The king of France provided French troops, ships and money. The Marquis de Lafayette contributed to the colonial victory at Yorktown.
5. James Lafayette, a slave from Virginia, served in the Continental army as a spy. He became famous for delivering letters to other spies. After the war, he successfully requested his freedom with the support of Marquis de Lafayette.