



The Summer of Discontent

How Lord Dunmore Unified Virginians for War in 1774

Jim Bish

On December 16, 1773 members of the Sons of Liberty in Boston destroyed tons of British East India Company tea, an event which later became known as the Boston Tea Party. News of the Boston Tea Party reached London in January 1774 and Parliament reacted decisively passing the Boston Port Act on March 31, 1774 and calling for the closing the port of Boston on June 1, 1774. News of the Boston Port Act reached Virginia before May 19th severely disrupting Virginia's House of Burgesses planned business.¹ After hearing the news about Boston, the burgesses primary focus and action was a response to the Boston Port Act. Virginia Burgess Richard Henry Lee, described his response to the news of the Port Bill to his brother, Arthur Lee, who resided in London:



1 The "old" Virginia capitol building as it appeared in 1774. (NYPL)

We had been sitting in Assembly near three weeks, when a quick arrival from London brought us the Tyrannic Boston Port Bill, no shock of Electricity could more suddenly and universally move—Astonishment, indignation, and concern se ized on all. The shallow Ministerial device was seen thro instantly, and every one declared it the commencement of a most wicked System for destroying the liberty of America, and that it demanded a firm and determined union of all the Colonies to repel the common danger.²

By May 24th the burgesses had drafted their response. According to Thomas Jefferson, "We were under conviction of the necessity of arousing our people from the lethargy into which they had fallen as to passing events; and thought that the appointment of a day of general fasting and prayer would be most likely to call up and alarm their attention. No example of such a solemnity had existed since the days of our distresses in the war of (17)55. since which a new generation had grown up. With the help therefore of Rushworth, whom we rummaged over for



the revolutionary precedents and forms of the Puritans of that day, preserved by him, we cooked up a resolution, somewhat modernizing their phrases, for appointing the 1st day of June, on which the Port bill was to commence, for a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, to implore heaven to avert from us the evils of civil war, to inspire us with firmness in support of our rights, and to turn the hearts of the King and parliament to moderation and justice. To give greater emphasis to our proposition, we agreed to wait the next morning on Mr. Nicholas, whose grave and religious character was more in unison with the tone of our resolution and to solicit him to move it. We accordingly went to him in the morning. He moved it the same day; the 1st of June was proposed and it passed without opposition.”³ The Resolution of May 24, 1774 designating the Day of Fasting and Prayer is shown below.

Tuesday, the 24th of May, 1774
14 Geo. III.

This House being deeply impressed with Apprehension of the great Dangers to be derived to *British America*, from the hostile Invasion of the City of *Boston*, in our Sister Colony of Massachusetts Bay, whose Commerce and Harbour are on the 1st Day of *June* next, to be stopped by an armed Force, deem it highly necessary that the said first Day of *June* be set apart by the Members of this House as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, devoutly to implore the divine Interposition for averting the heavy Calamity, which threatens Destruction to our civil Rights, and the Evils of civil War; to give us one Heart and one Mind firmly to oppose, by all just and proper Means, every Injury to *American Rights*, and that the Minds of his Majesty and his Parliament may be inspired from above with Wisdom, Moderation, and Justice, to remove from the loyal People of *America* all Cause of Danger from a continued Pursuit of Measures pregnant with their Ruin.

Ordered, therefore, that the Members of this House do attend their Places at the Hour of ten in the Forenoon, on the said 1st Day of *June* next, in Order to proceed with the Speaker and the Mace to the Church in this City for the Purposes aforesaid; and that the Reverend

Mr. *Price* be appointed to read Prayers, and the Reverend Mr. *Gwatkin* to preach a Sermon suitable to the Occasion.

Ordered, that this Order be forthwith printed and published.

By the HOUSE of BURGESSES.

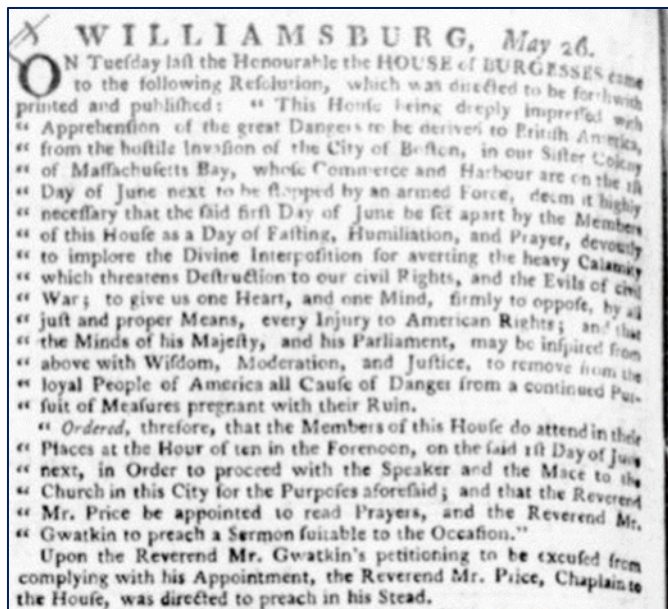
GEORGE WYTHER, C. H. B. ⁴

On May 26th, Purdie and Dixon’s *Virginia Gazette* published the House of Burgesses resolution and as ordered, broadsides of the resolution were also published and probably preceded the newspapers printing. Governor Dunmore referred to the broadside printing on May 26th when he summoned the burgesses to the council room and thus addressed them:

I have in my hand a Paper published by Order of your House, conceived in such Terms as reflect highly upon his Majesty and the Parliament of Great Britain; which makes it necessary for me to dissolve you; and you are dissolved accordingly.⁵



Royal governors had certainly dissolved the House of Burgesses before when there were grievances by the burgesses to either Parliament or the Crown. In 1765, Governor Fauquier dissolved the House of Burgesses when it passed a resolution against the Stamp Act. In May 1769 the House of Burgesses passed several resolutions condemning Britain's stationing troops in Boston following the Massachusetts Circular Letter of the previous year and as a result, Governor Botetourt abruptly dissolved the General Assembly.



2 Purdie's Virginia Gazette, May 26, 1774 (CW)

This time, the dissolution of the House seemed more worrisome. When the House of Burgesses was dissolved in 1769 much of the disagreement was about sending royal troops to Massachusetts. By 1774, troops had been in the Boston area for five years and now there was the deeper threat of the use of those troops to cease the livelihood of all Bostonians by closing down their means of trade, the harbor. It became clearly evident to the Virginia burgesses that if the Crown could take actions like this against Bostonians, they could also be used against Virginians.

To many of the burgesses, the dissolution of the House was surprising. This sentiment is revealed in a letter by George Washington to George William Fairfax on June 10, 1774 in which he states, "this Dissolution was as sudden as unexpected for there were other resolves of a much more spirited nature ready to be offered to the House wch. would have been unanimously adopted respecting the Boston Port Bill as it is calld but were withheld till the Important business of the Country could be gone through"⁶

Like earlier burgesses had done after being dissolved, most of the them agreed to meet at Raleigh Tavern. At least 89 of the previously assembled 120 Burgesses reconvened their extra-legal session in the Apollo Room at Raleigh Tavern a few blocks away as it was the largest facility to hold such a group.

On the following day these "former burgesses" agreed to an association, and attacked the executive (Dunmore) for taking away the ability of giving their countrymen the advice to them in a legislative capacity. They condemned Great Britain for taking away their just, antient, and constitutional rights stating that the Boston Harbor bill is a most dangerous attempt to destroy the constitutional liberty and rights of all North Americans. The former burgesses charged that parliament was at fault for the purpose of raising a revenue, without the consent of the people and



3 A postcard illustration of the reconstructed Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg. (Author's collection)

particular blamed the East India Company for attempting the ruin of America, by setting a precedent in favor of arbitrary taxation and as a result they called for a boycott of the East India Company. They concluded by instructing the committee of correspondence to propose to the corresponding committees of the other colonies to appoint deputies to meet in

Congress at such place, annually, as should be convenient to direct, from time to time, the measures required by the general interest: and they declared that an attack on one colony should be considered as an attack on the whole.

This “Former Burgesses Association” document was signed by 89 former burgesses and printed in Williamsburg for all Virginians to read. There was rarely a more unified effort by deprived lawmakers in colonial Virginia. Fifty-five (90%) of Virginia’s 61 counties had members who signed the document. Before heading home to their respective counties, Virginia’s former burgesses were moving in a singular direction ignited by the Boston Port Act and now brought to a strong flame by the actions of Governor Dunmore.⁷

On May 30th, Peyton Randolph, who represented Williamsburg in the House of Burgesses, received correspondence from the Boston, New York, and Annapolis committees concerning their request for action. Randolph was able to locate 25 former Burgess members who had not yet returned to their home counties and they served as members of the Committee of Correspondence for Virginia. They met at Peyton Randolph’s home and carried out the desire of those who issued the Association document three days earlier.

The following day, those former burgesses were much more detailed and stronger in their messaging than in their earlier document. After hearing the sentiments from Boston, Philadelphia, and Maryland they thought that “we ought to adopt the scheme of Nonimportation to a very large extent.” They also defined a date and place, August 1, 1774 in Williamsburg, for the former burgesses to meet as a legislative body. The stated, “We fixed this distant Day in Hopes of accommodating the Meeting to every Gentleman’s private Affairs, and that they might, in the mean Time, have an Opportunity of collecting the Sense of their respective Counties.” Their correspondence to all of the Virginia counties is shown below.



Williamsburg, May 31, 1774.

Gentlemen

Last Sunday Morning several Letters were received from Boston, Philadelphia, and Maryland, on the most interesting and important Subject of American Grievances. The Inhabitants of Boston seem to be in a most piteous and melancholy Situation, and are doubtful whether they will be able to sustain the impending Blow without the Assistance and Co-operation of the other Colonies. By the Resolutions of their Town Meeting, it appears to be their Opinion that the most effectual Assistance which can be given them by their Sister Colonies will arise from a general Association against Exports and Imports, of every Kind, to or from Great Britain. Upon Receipt of this important Intelligence, the Moderator judged it most prudent immediately to convene as many of the late Representatives as could be got together, and yesterday, at a Meeting of twenty five of the late Members, we took the Business under our most serious Consideration. Most Gentlemen present seemed to think it absolutely necessary for us to enlarge our late Association, and that we ought to adopt the Scheme of Nonimportation to a very large Extent; but we were divided in our Opinions as to stopping our Exports. We could not, however, being so small a Proportion of the late Associates, presume to make any Alteration in the Terms of the general Association, and therefore resolved to invite all the Members of the late House of Burgesses to a general Meeting in this City on the first Day of August next. We fixed this distant Day in Hopes of accommodating the Meeting to every Gentleman's private Affairs, and that they might, in the mean Time, have an Opportunity of collecting the Sense of their respective Counties. The Inhabitants of this City were convened yesterday in the Afternoon, and most chearfully acceded to the Measures we had adopted. We flatter ourselves it is unnecessary to multiply Words to induce your Compliance with this Invitation, upon an Occasion which is, confessedly, of the most lasting Importance to all America. Things seem to be hurrying to an alarming Crisis, and demand the speedy, united Councils of all those who have a Regard for the common Cause. We are, Gentlemen, your most affectionate Friends, and obedient humble Servants,

Peyton Randolph, Moderator; Robert C. Nicholas, Edmund Pendleton, William Harwood, Richard Adams, Thomas Whiting, Henry Lee, Lemuel Riddick, Thomas Jefferson, Mann Page, junior, Charles Carter, Lancaster, James Mercer, Robert Wormeley Carter, George Washington, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Thomas Nelson, junior, Robert Rutherford, John Walker, James Wood, William Langhorne, Thomas Blackburne, Edmund Berkeley, John Donelson, Paul Carrington, Lewis Burwell⁸

Those 25 former burgesses in attendance represented 14 counties: Albemarle, Berkeley, Charlotte, Caroline, Fairfax, Frederick, Gloucester, Hampshire, Henrico, James City, Middlesex, Nansemond, Pittsylvania, Prince William, Richmond, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Warwick, and York, as well as the Capitol of Williamsburg. Those former burgesses, quite angered by the actions of the British Parliament in London and Governor Dunmore in Williamsburg, returned to their respective counties united with purpose.



Some historians claim that the inhabitants of Fredericksburg in Spotsylvania County were the first to adopt Resolves concerning the quest, “of collecting the Sense of the respective counties.” Their resolves were very limited compared to later written resolves, but it was a good early response. Fredericksburg’s inhabitants lone statement to the issues was, “Resolved, that it is the unanimous opinion of the meeting to concur in this every proper measure that may be thought expedient by our sister colonies, on this important occasion, respecting the hostile invasions of the rights and liberties of the town of Boston.” Mann Page Jr., represented Spotsylvania County in Williamsburg’s Committee of Twenty-Five.⁹

Fredericksburg’s inhabitants reacted quickly to the request determining the sense of the respective counties; however leaders from Dumfries, the courthouse town for Prince William County, had already penned their Resolves the previous day. Wasting no time, Dumfries leaders were the first to move for a meeting to draft a response to the actions of Governor Dunmore and Parliament. On May 31, 1774, leaders from the town of Dumfries in Prince William County assembled and issued the following statement:

At a Meeting of the inhabitation of the Town of Dumfries, in the County of Prince William, in the Colony of Virginia, on Tuesday, the thirty-first day of May, 1774 – RESOLVED, That it is the unanimous opinion of this meeting, that the Freeholders and others, inhabitation of this County, be invited to meet on Monday, the sixth day if June next, at the Court House of the said county to deliberate on measures the most proper to be taken to avert the dreadful calamities with which the Colonies in general, and the city of Boston in particular, are threatened from an unconstitutional act of Parliament lately passed, by which the town of Boston and its ports and harbours are to be blocked up by an armed force, which act, it is the opinion of this meeting, is fundamentally subsersive of out ancient, legal, and vital liberties, and that this resolve be published by the minister immediately after divine service on Wednesday, the first day and on Sunday, the fifth day of June next.

Resolved, that Messrs Cuthbert Bullitt, William Grayson, Foushee Tebbs, William Carr, Richard Graham, John Riddell, Cumberland Wilson, Andrew Leitch, and Do’r George Graham be a committee for this town, to correspond with the different committees of any colony or province within America. Resolved, That Evan Williams be appointed Clerk to this committee.¹⁰

It is important to note that both of Prince William’s burgesses, Henry Lee and Thomas Blackburn were among the 25 former burgess who attended the assembly at Peyton Randolph’s home. It is also important to note that Thomas Blackburn was the one of three signers of the “Committee” document who had not signed the earlier “Association” document. It is assumed that Blackburn arrived in Williamsburg at some point between May 27th and Mary 30th. He probably arrived late as he replaced former Prince William Burgess Foushee Tebbs, who had made himself ineligible as a burgess by accepting the office of tobacco inspector. Blackburn probably assumed



At a very full Meeting of DELEGATES from the different Counties in the Colony and Dominion of Virginia, begun in Williamsburg the first Day of August, in the Year of our Lord 1774, and continued by several Adjournments to Saturday the 6th of the same Month, the following ASSOCIATION was unanimously resolved upon and agreed to.

WE his Majesty's dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Delegates of the Freeholders of VIRGINIA, deputed to represent them at a general Meeting in the City of Williamsburg, avowing our inviolable and undivided Fidelity and Attachment to our most gracious Sovereign, our regard and Affection for all our Friends and Fellow Subjects in Great Britain and elsewhere, protesting against every Act or Thing, which may have the most distant Tendency to interrupt, or in any wise disturb his Majesty's Peace, and the good Order of Government, within this his ancient Colony, which we are resolved to maintain and defend, at the Risk of our Lives and Fortunes, but at the same Time affected with the deepest Anxiety, and most alarming Apprehensions, of those Grievances and Distresses by which his Majesty's American Subjects are oppressed, and having taken under our most serious Consideration the State of the whole Continent, find that the present unhappy Situation of our Affairs is chiefly occasioned by certain ill advised Regulations, as well of our Trade as internal Policy, introduced by several unconstitutional Acts of the British Parliament, and, at Length, attempted to be enforced by the Hand of Power; solely influenced by their important and weighty Considerations, we think it an indispensable Duty, which we owe to our Country, ourselves, and next Posterity, to guard against such dangerous and extensive Mischief, by every just and proper Means.

If, by the Measures adopted, some unhappy Consequences and Inconveniences should be derived to our Fellow Subjects, whom we wish not to injure in the smallest Degree, we hope, and flatter ourselves, that they will impute them to their real Cause—the hard Necessity to which we are driven.

That the good People of this Colony may, on so trying an Occasion, continue steadfastly directed to their most essential Interests, in Hopes that they will be influenced and stimulated by our Example to the greatest Industry, the strictest Economy, and Frugality, and the Exercise of every public Virtue, persuaded that the Merchants, Manufacturers, and other Inhabitants of Great Britain, and, above all, that the British Parliament will be convinced how much the true Interest of their Kingdom must depend on the Preservation and Continuance of that mutual Friendship and Cordiality, which so happily subsisted between us, we have unanimously, and, with one Voice, entered into the following Resolutions and Association, which we do oblige ourselves, by those sacred Ties of Honour and Love to our Country, strictly to observe; and further declare, before God and the World, that we will religiously adhere to and keep the same inviolate in every Particular, until Redress of all such American Grievances, as may be defined and settled at the general Congress of Delegates from the different Colonies, shall be fully obtained, or until this Association shall be abrogated or altered by a general Meeting of the Deputies of this Colony, to be convened, as is herein after directed. And we do, with the greatest Earnestness, recommend this our Association, to all Gentlemen, Merchants, Traders, and other Inhabitants of this Colony, hoping that they will cheerfully and cordially accede thereto.

1st. We do hereby resolve and declare that we will not, either directly or indirectly, after the 1st Day of November next, import from Great Britain, any Goods, Wares, or Merchandises, whatever (Medicines excepted) nor will we, after that Day, import any British Manufactures, either from the West Indies, or any other Place, nor any Article whatever, which we shall know, or have Reason to believe, was brought into such Countries from Great Britain; nor will we purchase any such Articles, or imported, of any Person or Persons whatever, except such as are now in the Country, or such as may arrive on or before the said 1st Day of November, in Consequence of Orders already given, and which cannot now be countermanded in Time.

2nd. We will neither ourselves import, nor purchase, any Slave, or Slaves, imported by any Person, after the 1st Day of November next, either from Africa, the West Indies, or any other Place.

3rd. Considering the Article of Tea as the detestable Instrument, which laid the Foundation of the present Sufferings of our distressed Friends in the Town of Boston, we view it with Horror, and therefore resolve that we will not, from this Day, either import Tea of any Kind whatever, nor will we use or suffer even such of it as is now on Hand to be used in any of our Families.

4th. If the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston, or any other Colony, should, by Violence or dire Necessity, be compelled to pay the East India Company for destroying any Tea, which they have lately by their Agents unjustly attempted to force into the Colonies, we will not, directly or indirectly, import or purchase any British India Commodity whatever, till the Company, or some other Person, on their Behalf, shall refund and fully restore to the Owners all such Sum or Sums of Money as may be so restored.

5th. We do resolve, that unless American Grievances are redressed before the 10th Day of August, 1775, we will not, after that Day, directly or indirectly, export Tobacco or any other Article whatever to Great Britain; nor will we sell any such Articles as we think can be imported to Great Britain with a Prospect of Gain, to any Person or

Persons whatever, with a Design of putting it into his or their Power to export the same to Great Britain, either on our own, his, or their, Account. And that this Resolution may be the more effectually carried into Execution, we do hereby recommend it to the Inhabitants of this Colony to refrain from the Cultivation of Tobacco as much as conveniently may be, and in Lieu thereof that they will, as we resolve to do, apply their Attention and Industry to the Cultivation of all such Articles as may form a proper Basis for Manufactures of all Sorts, which we will endeavour to encourage throughout this Colony to the utmost of our Abilities.

6th. We will endeavour to improve our Breed of Sheep, and increase their Number to the utmost Extent, and to this End, we will be as sparing as we conveniently can in killing of Sheep, especially those of the most profitable Kind; and if we should at any Time be overstocked, or can conveniently spare any, we will dispose of them to our Neighbours, especially the poorer Sort of People, upon moderate Terms.

7th. Resolved, that the Merchants and other Venders of Goods and Merchandises within this Colony ought not to take Advantage of the Scarcity of Goods that may be occasioned by this Association, but that they ought to sell the same at the Rates they have been accustomed to for twelve Months last past, and if they shall sell any such Goods on higher Terms, or shall in any Manner, or by any Device whatever, violate or depart from this Resolution, we will not, and are of Opinion that no Inhabitant of this Colony ought, at any Time thereafter, to deal with any such Persons, their Factors, or Agents, for any Commodity whatever, and it is recommended to the Deputies of the several Counties that Committee be chosen in each County by such Persons as accede to this Association to take effectual Care that these Resolves be properly observed, and for corresponding occasionally with the general Committee of Correspondence in the City of Williamsburg. Provided, that if Exchange should rise, such Advantage may be made in the Prices of Goods as shall be approved by the Committee of each County.

8th. In order the better to distinguish such worthy Merchants and Traders, who are Wellwishers to this Colony, from those who may attempt, through Motives of Self-Interest, to obstruct our Views, we do hereby resolve that we will not after the first Day of November next deal with any Merchant or Trader who will not sign this Association, nor until he hath obtained a Certificate of his having done so from the County Committee, or any three Members thereof. And if any Merchant, Trader, or other Person, shall import any Goods or Merchandises after the said first Day of November, contrary to this Association, we give it as our Opinion, that such Goods and Merchandises should be either forthwith re-shipped or delivered up to the County Committee, to be stored at the Risk of the Importer, unless such Importer shall give a proper Assurance to the said Committee that such Goods or Merchandises shall not be sold within this Colony during the Continuance of this Association; and if such Importer shall refuse to comply with one or the other of these Terms, upon Application and due Caution given to him or her, by the said Committee, or any three Members thereof, such Committee is required to publish the Truth of the Case in the Gazette, and in the County where he or she resides, and we will thereafter consider such Person or Persons as inimical to this Country, and break off every Connection and all Dealings with them.

9th. Resolved, that if any Person or Persons shall export Tobacco, or any other Commodity, to Great Britain, after the 10th Day of August, 1775, contrary to this Association, we shall hold ourselves obliged to consider such Person or Persons as inimical to the Community, and as an Approver of American Grievances; and give it as our Opinion that the Public should be advertised of his Conduct, as in the 8th Article is desired.

10th. Being fully persuaded that the united Wisdom of the general Congress may improve their Endeavours to preserve the Rights and Liberties in British America, we decline enlarging at present, but do hereby resolve that we will conform to, and strictly observe, all such Alterations or Additions, assented to by the Delegates for this Colony, as they may judge it necessary to adopt, after the same shall be published and made known to us.

11th. Resolved, that we think ourselves called upon, by every Principle of Humanity and brotherly Affection, to extend the utmost and speediest Relief to our distressed Fellow Subjects in the Town of Boston, and therefore most earnestly recommend it to all the Inhabitants of this Colony to make such liberal Contributions as they can afford; to be collected and remitted to Boston, in such Manner as may best answer to defensible a Purpose.

12th, and lastly. Resolved, that the Moderator of this Meeting, and, in Case of his Death, Robert Carter Nicholas, Esquire, be empowered, on any future Occasion, that may in his Opinion require it, to convene the several Delegates of this Colony, at such Time and Place as he may judge proper; and, in Case of the Death or Absence of any Delegate, it is recommended that another be chosen in his Place.



they had been dissolved. There is little doubt that both Lee and Blackburn returned to Prince William shortly after signing the May 30th document.

However, even if Lee and Blackburn left Williamsburg on the morning of May 31, there is little chance that they could have arrived in Dumfries to alert the Dumfries townspeople, along with the county residents, about the urgent necessity of gathering them for their sentiment on the important issues of the day. Going at a very quick pace, averaging about forty miles each day it was at long three day journey from Dumfries to Williamsburg. Most likely, Lee and Blackburn arrived back in Prince William County about June 4, a couple of days before the planned June 6th county freeholders' meeting. It appears likely that Dumfries, Alexandria, and Fredericksburg Committees of Correspondence had received the same information from Boston, Philadelphia, and Maryland about the same time as Peyton Randolph, did in Williamsburg. Not having yet heard from their elected officials in Williamsburg, they began to act accordingly. There is little doubt however, that both former burgesses, Henry Lee and Thomas Blackburn were there for the freeholders meeting on June 6.¹¹

As advertised, the Prince William County freeholders and county leaders met, debated, and issued the first county resolves in Virginia. As a county with legal authority, Prince William became the first in Virginia to pass, and then publish Resolves. Above is the text of the first Virginia county resolves passed by Prince William County on June 6, 1774 and published in Williamsburg on June 16, 1774.

It should be noted that neither the towns of Fredericksburg or Dumfries had political standing other than making their voices heard, however the counties in which they did exist, Spotsylvania and Prince William, were authorized to have participation and a voice in Virginia's colonial body. The only non-counties which were allowed representation in Virginia's House of Burgesses were the College of William and Mary, the borough of Norfolk, the city of Williamsburg, and the ancient town of Jamestown. The Prince William County Resolves reinforced support for most of the items pointed out in the former-burgesses "Association" document, while adding new content in their own Resolves. Prince William's inhabitants were the first to support "that the Court of Justice in this Colony ought to decline trying and civil Causes until the said Acts (Coercive) is repealed." Their citizens also were the first to state that our late Representatives, "to take such proper and salutary measures as will essentially conduce to a Repeal of those Acts."¹²

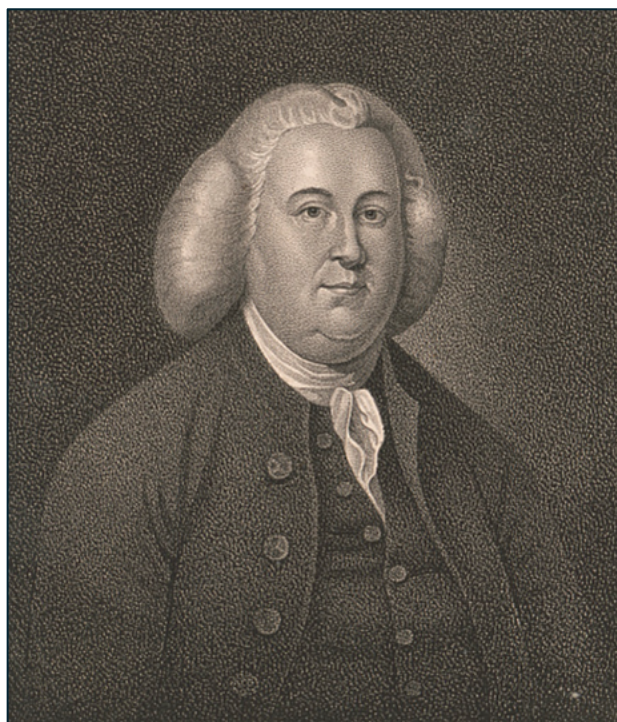
By the end of June 1774, eight Virginia counties had drafted resolves, growing to 45 Virginia county resolves by the first week in August 1774. The only other county to have produced Resolves within the first ten days after the committee's communication was Frederick County. James Wood, then former burgess from Frederick County, signed both the "Association" document and the Committee of Correspondence document. The Frederick Resolves supported statements made from the "Association" document including the right to be governed and taxed by themselves; that Parliament acted unconstitutionally; agreed to stop imports from and exports to Great Britain; to the boycott of East India Company Tea and other items, and they supported



the call for a Committee of Correspondence, and a General Meeting of Virginia Counties. Items that Virginians did not before declare included the clear differentiating between the King and Parliament in the wrongful actions by blaming parliament for the ill while claiming “Submission to King” and also was the first county in Virginia to tell that the “Enforcement of Coercive Act could bring on Civil War” which was a bold, but realistic assertion.¹³

Loudoun, Dunmore, Westmoreland, Spotsylvania, Richmond and Prince George Counties held county meetings during June 1774. Of those counties, Loudoun endorsed Frederick County’s strong statement of supporting Boston exclaiming that the “Act of Parliament by a military power must have a necessary tendency to raise a civil war.” Loudoun County made the first equally strong statement that they would support actions, “with our lives and fortunes, assist and support our suffering brethren.” Very few counties would predict at that time, let alone write them down, that this political struggle was heading toward Civil War which the citizens thereof would support with their “lives and fortunes.” Like their adjoining county, Frederick, Loudoun freeholders, and shortly after Dunmore County freeholders, used those same sentiments of expressing their worries about a civil war, but Loudoun was the first to mention the upcoming cost of their lives and fortunes. Over the next several years many Loudoun residents paid that ultimate price of both life and fortune to secure the United States of America.

By July the majority of Virginia’s counties started to organize and meet. During the first two weeks of July, at least eleven counties penned resolves. Eight of those eleven counties swore submission to King George III with only James City County, Norfolk County, and Fauquier County not expressing submission. This became a clear trend in the various resolves as most of the blame for the conflict clearly was seen as coming from Parliament and some of the ministers over American affairs. The counties probably also wanted to form a schism between parliament and the king to gain some royal relief. The right of self-government and self-taxation by only Virginia’s governing body was supported by all of the counties with the exception of James City and Norfolk. Both of these counties developed very basic resolves, mostly supporting some sort of an import or export ban while showing support for those suffering in Boston. Six of the eleven counties specifically blamed the East India Company and the tax appropriated for their tea as a major reason for the upheaval and clearly stated that an embargo on every item from the East India



5 An engraved portrait of Peyton Randolph by Goodman and Piggott, after a painting by Charles Wilson Peale. (LOC)



Company should be undertaken. Every single county mentioned the hardships facing Boston and its inhabitants resulting from the Port Act.

One of the important new resolves to appear was that of ending the slave trade made by Culpeper County's Freeholders. Earlier, the Prince George County's Resolves on June 30th stated, "that the African Trade is injurious to this Colony, obstructs the Population of Freemen, prevents Manufacturers and other useful Emigrants from Europe from settling amongst us, and occasions an annual Increase in the Balance of Trade against the Colony" but they did not outright call for its ending. Culpeper's freeholders on July 7th stated, "that the importing of slaves and convict servants, is injurious to the colony, as it obstructs the population of it with freemen and useful manufacturers, and that we will not buy any such slave or convict servant hereafter to be imported." Only Culpeper and Essex County joined Loudoun County's earlier sentiment using the terms of lives and fortunes. Culpeper County probably said it best, "that we will at all times, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, oppose any act imposing such taxes or duties."¹⁴

Essex County also became the first county to resolve "that the Parliament have no Right to pass and Act to remove our Persons to Great Britain, or any other Place whatsoever, to be tried for any Offenses; and that we are determined not to submit to it." Clearly the news of Parliament's passing of the Administration of Justice Act had reached Virginia by July 9 when the Essex Resolves were penned. The Administration of Justice Act was passed in London on May 20, 1774 and it took place immediately after being approved by King George III. News began to reach the American colonies sometime in early July as the Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts) began to strengthen against the colonies. The Administration of Justice Act allowed colonial governors the ability to remove any acquisition placed on a royal official by a member of the public, if the governor did not believe the official would have a fair trial. Also, to ensure that trials were more favorable to the Crown the Act granted a change of venue to another British colony, or to Great Britain, in trials of officials charged with crimes. This Act was quickly referred to as the "Murder Act", as many American colonists believed it would allow British officers to get away with murdering colonists. News of the passage of the Massachusetts Government Act was also learned of in the colonies at this time. This Act passed on May 20, 1774 with the Administration of Justice Act and it also took effect immediately.

The majority of Virginia's county resolves were written on July 15th or later. At least 26 resolves were written from that date until the First Virginia Convention began on August 1, however the text has only survived from 13 of those resolves. Of the 45 known resolves only the text of 32 have survived. Overall, 16 counties are not known to have produced resolves, with ten of those counties being in the far western frontier area of Virginia. Reasons for those western counties not producing resolves at that time will be discussed later. However, six of the counties for which no resolves are known to exist, may have produced resolves without every getting officially published. Those counties include Cumberland, Goochland, Louisa, King and Queen, Northampton, and Southampton. Cumberland, Goochland, and Louisa, were in the Blue Ridge surrounded by counties which had passed Resolves. Northampton was on the eastern shore and



only King and Queen and Southampton were in areas in eastern Virginia, again surrounded by counties which passed Resolves.

On August fourth Rind's Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette* stated, "The Northumberland, Orange, King George, Amelia, Frederick, Lancaster, Mecklenburg, Lunenburg, Accomack, King William, Warwick, and a few other resolves, we have received, but could not possibly insert them. They profess the great loyalty and affection towards his majesty, but at the same time, are spirited and determined in the pursuit of their just rights and privileges." Some of those counties of which we have no record may have been some that Rind mentions as "a few other resolves we have received, but could not possibly insert them." Likewise, on the same day Purdie and Dixon's Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette* stated, "The Resolves of the Counties of Fairfax, Mecklenburg, Prince Edward, Brunswick, Lancaster, Sussex, Accomack, and Charles City, are come to Hand; which we should with much Pleasure have inserted in our *Gazette*, had it been possible. We had neither Time, nor Room enough, for them." There is hope that at some point, copies of other resolves may be found in their individual county records or other colonial newspapers. However, from the 32 resolves which have survived we can make some pretty clear assessments. It should be mentioned that those counties which published resolves after July 15 had the significant advantage of being able to study earlier county resolves, primarily published in one of Williamsburg's *Virginia Gazette's* newspapers. The earliest counties to produce clear, influential, and thorough resolves were Prince William, Frederick, Loudoun, Prince George, and Culpeper as those counties either introduced important statements, or made a strong listing of varied resolves. After the first week of July, most certainly the strongest resolves came from Caroline, Chesterfield, Essex, and Fairfax County.

It should be mentioned that the former burgesses from those counties most likely played a significant role in the drafting of their individual county resolves. Some of the leaders of Prince William and Frederick County have already been mentioned. Henry Pendleton Jr. and Henry Field were Culpeper County's local leaders. The most important of these was Culpeper's senior burgess Henry Pendleton, son of James and Elizabeth (Coleman) Pendleton and nephew of Edmund Pendleton (discussed below). Henry served as moderator at the Culpeper Resolves meeting of Freeholders and Inhabitants who met on July 7 "to consider the most effectual methods to preserve the rights and liberties of America."¹⁵

By far the most senior and influential member from Chesterfield County was Archibald Cary, one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Virginia before, during, and after the American Revolution. Cary probably attended the College of William and Mary, and later served in the House of Burgesses, representing first Goochland County (1748–1749) and then Chesterfield County for twenty years, 1756–1775. Chesterfield County endorsed the resolves supporting to be governed and taxed by themselves; stopping imports from and exports to Great Britain; boycotting of East India Company Tea and other items; recognizing support for Boston suffering; and supporting the defying of the unconstitutional acts by Parliament; stopping Courts of Justice until Repeal of Acts is made; to be self-sufficient economically, and calling for the colonies to unite. Most



of those resolves were later found in the First Virginia Convention Association Resolve of August 6, 1774.¹⁶

Although Essex County had some of the least experienced burgesses in 1774, the freeholders for the county developed a strong set of resolves. William Roane Jr. was the son of William Sr. and Sarah (Upshaw) Roane, of Essex county. William Jr. had served as an Essex burgess since 1769. He previously had served as King's deputy attorney in 1768. Former Burgess James Edmondson had also served for only five years representing Essex County. Their resolves were very similar to those of Chesterfield County with the exception of Essex becoming only the third county to use the phrase "lives and fortunes." They stated, "That the inhabitants of this county will firmly join with the other counties of this Colony and the other colonies on this continent, or a majority of them, to stop all exports to and imports from Great Britain and the West Indies, and all other ports of the world, except the colonies of North America and that we will use our utmost endeavor to support and maintain such general agreement, at the expense of our lives and fortunes."

Other than Fairfax County, the county which had the most detailed set of Resolves was Caroline County. Caroline Burgess James Taylor earlier served with George

Order of the 1774 County Resolves

June 6, 1774 – Prince William County Resolves *†§
 June 8, 1774 – Frederick County Resolves †§ | |
 June 14, 1774 – Loudoun County Resolves ¶
 June 16, 1774 – Dunmore County Resolves *†§
 June 22, 1774 – Westmoreland County Resolves *†§
 June 24, 1774 – Spotsylvania County Resolves ††§
 June 29, 1774 – Richmond County Resolves *†§
 June 30, 1774 – Prince George County Resolves *†§
 July 1, 1774 – James City County Resolves *†§
 July 7, 1774 – Culpeper County Resolves *†§
 July 8, 1774 – Buckingham County *†§
 July 9, 1774 – Norfolk County Resolves †§
 July 9, 1774 – Essex County Resolves *†§
 July 9, 1774 – Fauquier County Resolves *†§
 July 11, 1774 – Nansemond Co. Resolves ††§
 July 12, 1774 – New Kent County Resolves *†§
 July 14, 1774 – Chesterfield County Resolves *†§
 July 14, 1774 – Gloucester County Resolves *†§
 July 14, 1774 – Caroline County Resolves *†§
 July 15, 1774 – Henrico County Resolves *†§
 July 15, 1774 – Middlesex County Resolves †§
 July 15, 1774 – Dinwiddie County Resolves *†§
 July 16, 1774 – Surry County Resolves *†§
 July 18, 1774 – Fairfax County Resolves *†§
 July 18, 1774 – York County Resolves *†§
 July 20, 1774 – Hanover County Resolves *†§
 Late July 1774 – Stafford County Resolves *†§
 July 23, 1774 – Isle of Wright County *†
 July 25, 1774 – Elizabeth City County/Hampton *†§
 July 26, 1774 – Albemarle County Resolves *†§
 July 27, 1774 – Accomack County Resolves *
 July 27, 1774 – Princess Anne County Resolves *†§
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Mecklenburg County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Northumberland County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – King George County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Amelia County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Lunenburg County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – King William County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Warwick County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Lancaster County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Orange County Resolves *
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Charles City County Resolves †
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Prince Edward Co. Resolves †
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Brunswick County Resolves †
 Before Aug. 4, 1774 – Sussex County Resolves †

Sources:

*Virginia Gazette (Rind), June-Aug. 1774
 †Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), July-Aug., 1774
 ‡Force (ed.), American Archives, ser. 4, vol. 1, pp.384-643.
 §Van Schreeven and Scribner, Revolutionary Virginia: Road to Revolution, pp.109-168.
 ¶William & Mary Quarterly, vol. 12, pp.231



Washington at Braddock's defeat. Taylor later served as High Sheriff of Caroline County before beginning service in the House of Burgesses in 1774. By far the most important colonial politician in Caroline County, and throughout colonial Virginia was Edmund Pendleton. Pendleton was the more famous cousin of James Taylor as Pendleton's maternal grandfather, James Taylor, was a large landowner in Caroline and nearby Rappahannock County.

Pendleton received a license to practice law in April 1741. From 1752 to 1776, Pendleton represented Caroline County in the House of Burgesses. He was selected by the Virginia Delegation to the Continental Congress in 1774 and later presided over the May 1776 Virginia Convention which authorized Virginia's delegates to propose a resolution to move for the break from Britain and create a Declaration of Independence. In the autumn of 1776, Pendleton became the first Speaker of the new House of Delegates and he later served as president of the Convention of 1788 that ratified the Constitution of the United States.

Caroline County freeholders, with undoubtedly Pendleton leading, embraced the general resolves of taxation, self-rule, attacks upon Parliament, and calling for a halt to imports and exports from Great Britain. They endorsed the less frequent resolves of ending the Courts of Justice until the Coercive Acts were repealed and opposed the idea of allowing trials to take place in Great Britain. Caroline was also one of only five counties to support the ban of the slave trade by stating, "that the African Trade is injurious to this Colony, obstructs our Population by Freemen,

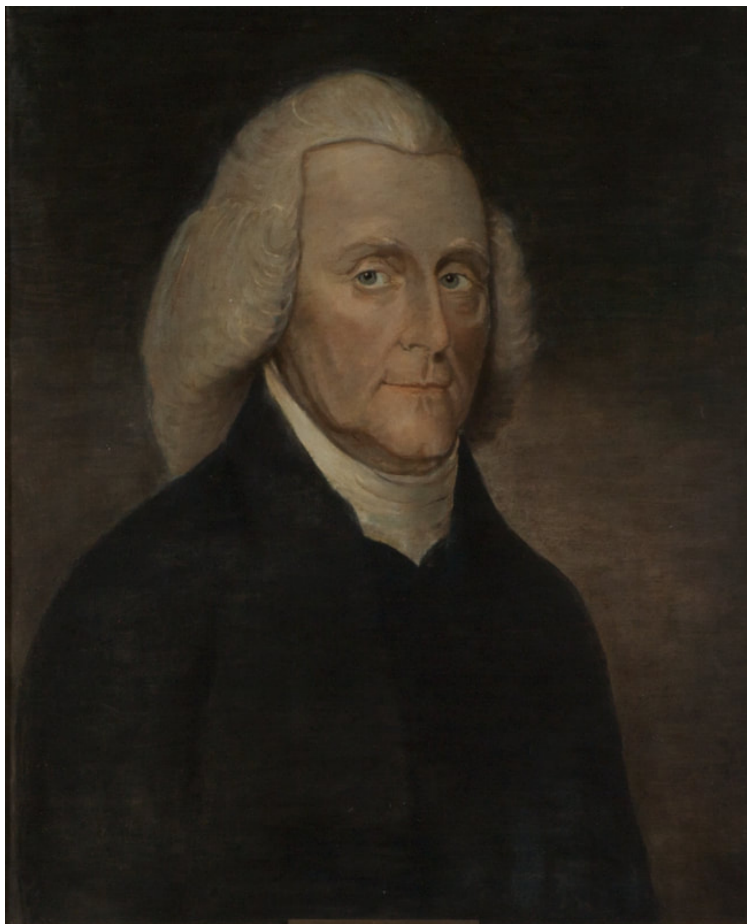
Resolves Made by the Association, Counties, and the First Convention

Resolve	89 Former Burgesses Association May 27	County That First Iterated	Included in First Va. Convention Resolves Aug. 6
Right to be governed and taxed by themselves, Parliament acted unconstitutionally	Yes	Prince William, June 6	Yes
Stop Imports from and exports to Great Britain	Yes	Prince William, June 6	Yes
Boston suffering for disobeying the unconstitutional acts by Parliament	Yes	Prince William, June 6	Yes
Stop courts of justice until Acts are repealed	No	Prince William, June 6	No
Submission to King, but not to Parliament	No	Frederick, June 8	No
Enforcement of Coercive Acts could bring on civil war	No	Frederick, June 8	No
Boycott of East India Company tea and other items	No	Frederick, June 8	No
Call of general meeting of counties	Yes	Frederick, June 8	No
Expense of "our lives and fortunes"	No	Loudoun, June 14	No
Resolved to be economically self-sufficient	No	Westmoreland, June 20	Yes
Call for the colonies to unite	No	Prince George, June 28	Yes
Call for end to importation of slaves and convicts	No	Culpeper, July 7	Yes
No trials of Americans to take place in Great Britain	No	Essex, July 9	No



Manufacturers, and others, who would emigrate from Europe and settle here, and occasions and annual Balance of Trade against the Country; and therefore, that the Purchase of all imported Slaves ought to be associated against.” Only five counties called for an outright ban of the African slave trade, with three other counties, Prince George, Nansemond, and Hanover, recognizing it as a substantial problem.

It is interesting to note that even with less than 25 percent of the known county resolves stating that slave importation was a problem, it does become one of the Virginia Convention Association resolves of August 6, 1774. The second resolve passed by the Virginia Association states, “We will neither ourselves import, nor purchase, any Slave, or Slaves, imported by any Person, after



6 Edmund Pendleton by William L. Marcy Pendleton, ca. 1897. (Supreme Court of Virginia)

the 1st Day of November next, either from Africa, the West Indies, or any other Place.”¹⁷

Fairfax County resolves have been celebrated as the most important of the resolves passed in June and July 1774. They certainly were the longest and most detailed of all the county resolves written. As mentioned earlier, Fairfax leaders and freeholders had many Resolves examples at their disposal when they approved their Resolves on July 18th. Their Resolves spread to seven pages and asserted that Virginia could not be treated as a conquered country, and demanded the application of the British constitution in Virginia. Practically all of important resolves that were passed by members of the First Virginia Convention appeared earlier in the Fairfax County Resolves. Those of most importance include: the inherit right to be governed and taxed by themselves; that Parliament has acted in an unconstitutional manner; severely limiting imports from and exports to Great Britain, and recognizing the tremendous suffering of Bostonians due to disobeying the unconstitutional acts by Parliament.

The Fairfax Resolves presented an excellent composition detailing the history of the relationship between the American colonials and England from the establishment of the American Colony in Jamestown and how that relationship had dramatically changed because of the recent



actions taken by Parliament. The Resolves stated that the, “Ancient heritage of Civil-Constitution and Form of Government of the Country they came from which have descended to us their Posterity Duty of these Colonies, on all Emergencies, to contribute, the necessary Charge of supporting and defending the British Empire.” The Resolves also affirmed support in England by stating, “Thanks be given to the Patrons and Friends of Liberty in Great Britain, for their spirited and patriotick Conduct in Support of our constitutional Rights and Privledges.”¹⁸

It has been stated many times that the principal authors of the Fairfax County Resolves were George Washington and George Mason, which could be true, but the signatures to the Resolves reveals insight that slightly expands that story. John West, who lived at West Grove Plantation just north of Mount Vernon, signed the Resolves before George Mason and just after George Washington. Beginning in 1755, West spent eighteen of the next twenty years, (1755-1758, and 1761-1774) as a Burgess representing Fairfax County, and he was the senior burgess from Fairfax when Governor Dunmore dissolved the House of Burgesses. For ten of those years, from 1765 to 1774 John West served alongside George Washington as burgesses representing Fairfax County. His only break from being a burgess was when John West served as Fairfax County Sheriff from 1759-1761 as one could not serve as sheriff and burgess at the same time. As the senior burgess and one who signed the 89 former burgess association in May 1774, it would seem that West probably had significant influence over the text of the Fairfax Resolves as its longest sitting burgess, especially since his name was ahead of Mason in the official names listed with the 25th Resolve of the document.¹⁹

While we have focused on those counties which were strongest in their resolves, let's take a quick look at those counties which did not make many demands against Great Britain. Both Accomack and Albemarle County penned few statements other than those which were most reoccurring including aid to the citizens who were suffering in Boston, condemning Parliament for their suffering, and clarifying who had the ability to tax Virginians. While Accomack County remained silent on stopping imports and exports, Albemarle mentioned them, and spelled out import items which should be excepted. It is somewhat surprising that their Resolves were so limited in scope compared to many others, especially as they were penned in late July after most other counties had established their resolves and that former Burgess Thomas Jefferson must have been involved as he was selected to the First Virginia Convention. Dinwiddie and Middlesex County were also very narrow in scope and offered only a very general resolve from their freeholders.

As mentioned earlier, only 16 of Virginia's 61 counties are not known to have published resolves in the summer of 1774. Concerning the six counties in central or eastern Virginia where no known resolves records exist, it might prove insightful to look at the actions of the leaders from those counties. John Burton and John Bowdoin from Northampton, Edwin Gray and Henry Taylor from Southampton, William Fleming of Cumberland, John Woodson of Goochland, and Thomas Johnson of Louisa, signed the 89 former-burgesses association document at Raleigh's Tavern. It seems reasonable that those counties, especially Northampton and Southampton



7 George Mason. (Wikimedia Commons)

completed resolves that summer, but they are just not recorded and were among those mentioned in Rind's *Virginia Gazette* as "a few other resolves we have received, but could not possibly insert them."²⁰

However, the situation with King and Queen County appears different. Neither of their representatives to the House of Burgesses, George Brooke or John Tayloe Corbin, signed the Association document in Raleigh's Tavern. This may have been because they had not yet arrived at the legislative session, decided to leave early, or decided that the extra-legal meeting after dissolution was not something they wanted to be part of. The latter may certainly been the case, especially after looking into the actions of John Tayloe Corbin. He was the son of powerful landowner and member of the Governor's

Council, Richard Corbin. Richard Corbin remained a loyalist throughout the Revolutionary War and his two brothers served with the British during the Revolutionary War. John Tayloe Corbin also was a Loyalist, resulting in his being removed from power in King and Queen County in 1775. This insight leads one to believe that there was a good chance that no resolves were written in King and Queen County.²¹

A very complicated history involved Virginia's westernmost ten counties in 1774 and there is very little doubt that those counties; Amherst, Augusta, Bedford, Berkeley, Botetourt, Charlotte, Fincastle, Halifax, Hampshire, and Pittsylvania did not produce resolves in June and July 1774. In the spring and summer of 1774, Virginia's western frontier was an intricate social and political environment controlled by the two primary forces of the desire for land and American Indian conflict, which were intertwined. British policies and the suffrage of the Bostonians were secondary issues for Virginians on the 1774 frontier.



Reports in Williamsburg of attacks on white settlers and Indian uprisings on the frontier increased in late 1773 into the summer of 1774. In October 1773, Daniel Boone's son, James Boone and Henry Russel were killed by roving Native Americans in the frontier area known as Powell's Valley, Virginia. Violence and killings continued into the spring months as residents demanded better protection from the government in Williamsburg. Much of the conflict resulted from colonial treaties such as Fort Stanwix (1768) and treaty of Lochaber (1770) which ceded land to the British government. The Iroquois Six Nations also ceded their land claims in southern and western Virginia to the king of Great Britain. Other native tribes, such as the Cherokee and Shawnee complained that their claims had not been properly recognized. Throw into the mix, the reality of the dispersing of native tribes into the area whose traditional lands were to the east but who were forced west as a result of European settlement. This significant Virginia issue happened at the same time as the Boston Port Act and the dissolution of Virginia's house of Burgesses.

Lord Dunmore needed to act on the growing problems in Virginia's western frontier and possibly to boost support, goodwill, and loyalty among Virginians at this critical time. Dunmore decided to lead an army to western Virginia. He personally led one of two wings of the Virginia army against the Mingo and Shawnee in what became known as Dunmore's War. Dunmore left Williamsburg on July 10, 1774 and recruited men from the northwestern counties of Hampshire, Augusta, and Dunmore (later Shenandoah) and other areas. Andrew Lewis led a more southern wing recruiting men from Fincastle, Botetourt and other counties. Virginia militia companies came from as far east as Frederick and Culpeper Counties. Dunmore's war culminated in what became known as the Battle of Point Pleasant on October 10, 1774, which was fought by Lewis's troops as Dunmore and his army were just to the north. Virginians and Native Americans both suffered heavy casualties in a long difficult battle which resulted in the natives withdrawing. Eventually both wings of Dunmore's army advanced into modern-day Ohio before peace terms were agreed upon ending Dunmore's War. Dunmore arrived back in Williamsburg five months after his he left to many congratulatory addresses. Although, admiring support for his actions were felt, his close advisors must have felt that he could not have gone at a more trying time as in Philadelphia the First Continental Congress had convened, including representatives from Virginia. Before long however, the reality of British and Dunmore's political suppression began to dissolve support, even in the counties which supported him the longest on the western frontier. In early 1775 eight of the western Virginia counties of Amherst, Augusta, Bedford, Berkeley, Botetourt, Fincastle, Hampshire, and Pittsylvania selected delegates for the second Virginia Convention in March and in anticipation of the Second Continental Congress in May. Later Augusta, Botetourt, Fincastle, and Pittsylvania penned Resolves in early 1775 which some historians refer as Virginia's second wave of Resolves.²²

Although this work did not focus on the resolves produced in other colonies to the extent of those in Virginia, some basic comparisons can be made. In New England, Massachusetts resolves include Boston's passing resolves at Faneuil Hall on June 17, and later the County of Middlesex produced resolves on August 30, Suffolk County on September 9, and Cumberland County on



September 21. Of these, the most important was the Suffolk Resolves. These resolves were one of the First Continental Congress's first decisions to endorse which ordered citizens to not obey the Intolerable Acts, to refuse imported British goods, and to raise a militia. It is unknown if any other of Massachusetts' 13 counties published resolves that year. In other New England colonies, the Rhode Island city of Providence passed resolves on August 12 and the Connecticut's town of Stamford passed resolves on October 7.²³

Dates of County Iterations of Selected Resolves

Resolve	89 Former Burgesses May 4	Prince William June 6	Frederick June 8	Loudoun June 14	Dunmore June 16	Westmoreland June 22	Spotsylvania June 24	Richmond June 29	Prince George June 30	James City July 1	Culpeper July 7	Buckingham July 8
Submission to King (24 counties)			XX	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Right to be governed and taxed by themselves and that Parliament acted unconstitutionally (30 counties)	X	XX	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Enforcement of Coercive Act could bring on Civil War (5 counties)			XX	X	X							
Stop imports from and exports to Great Britain (29 counties)	X	XX	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boycott of East India Company Tea and other items (18 counties)	X		XX	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Call of a General Meeting of Counties (30 counties)	X		XX	X	X	XX	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boston suffering for disobeying and unconstitutional act by Parliament. (32 counties)	X	XX	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stop Courts of Justice until Repeal of Acts is made (12 counties)		XX				X		X				
Expense of Our Lives and Fortunes (4 counties)				XX							X	
No Trials to take place in Great Briain (7 counties)												
Call for an end to the import of Slaves or Convicts (8 counties made statements against while 5 counties called to end)									/		XX	
Resolved to be self-sufficient economically (17 counties)						XX			X		X	X
Call for the colonies to unite (13 counties)									XX			X

Various communities in the middle colonies passed resolves. In New York, a variety of towns, precincts, townships, and boroughs passed individual resolves in the summer of 1774. They include Easthampton on June 17, Huntington on June 21, Orangetown on July 4, Poughkeepsie and Rye on August 10, and the borough of Westchester on August 20. The Colony of New Jersey passed several local resolves including Bergen County on June 25, Morris County on June 27, Hunterdon County on July 8, Middlesex County on July 15, Sussex County on July 16, and Monmouth County on July 19. In addition several counties met at New Brunswick and produced resolves on July 21. Resolves for seven of New Jersey's 13 counties are known to exist.²⁴ Pennsylvania counties to pass resolves included Chester County on June 18 and Northampton County on June 21. A provincial meeting of several county deputies was held in Philadelphia on July 15. Maryland, citizens were among the earliest to pass resolves that summer. At a meeting of the inhabitants of the City of Annapolis resolves were



Finally, the southern colonies also passed some resolves that summer. South Carolina inhabitants from several counties met at Charleston and passed resolves on July 8. North Carolina's Wilmington Resolves were passed on July 21 and the more famous Mecklenburg Resolves, sometimes known as the Charlotte Town Resolves, were passed the following year after the shots of Lexington and Concord on May 31, 1775. Georgia's Sons of Liberty held a regional meeting at

Tondee's Tavern in Savannah on August 10 and passed eight resolves. There were no known resolves produced from Delaware, which was considered as the lower three counties of Pennsylvania at the time, or New Hampshire.²⁶

There is really no comparison between the unified voice of resolves from Virginians and the other colonies in 1774. It is true that Virginia had many more counties than most of the other colonies, but still producing at least 45 resolves representing roughly 75 percent of the counties of Virginia is very important. Also, when one considers the difficulties in travel and safety resulting from Native American troubles in the western frontier Virginia counties, they had legitimate reasons for not producing Resolves. Not counting those western ten Virginia counties, over 88 percent of Virginia counties produced resolves in June and July of 1774. Probably



only New Jersey, with over fifty percent of their counties producing resolves can be compared, but considering the total number of known resolves, 45 in Virginia to seven in New Jersey, the breadth of Virginia's call to action reigns supreme. All of the towns and counties in the colonies were united to write resolves resulting from their concerns surrounding Boston and the Coercive Acts the summer of 1774. However, Virginia degree of unification and initiative in writing resolves that summer is unique among the colonies. Virginian's determination that summer clearly results from Governor Dunmore's decision to silence the peoples voice in May by dissolving the House of Burgesses.

Dates of County Iterations of Selected Resolves

Resolve	Fairfax July 18	York July 18	Hanover July 20	Stafford late July	Isle of Wright July 23	Elizabeth City July 25	Albemarle July 26	Accomack July 27	Princess Anne July 27	Virginia Resolves
Submission to King	X	X	X		X	X		X		
Right to be governed and taxed by themselves and that Parliament acted unconstitutionally	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enforcement of Coercive Act could bring on Civil War	X				X					
Stop imports from and exports to Great Britain	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Boycott of East India Company Tea and other items	X	X			X					X
Call of a General Meeting of Counties	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Boston suffering for disobeying and unconstitutional act by Parliament.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stop Courts of Justice until Repeal of Acts is made	X		X	X						
Expense of Our Lives and Fortunes	X									
No Trials to take place in Great Briain	X			X						
Call for an end to the import of Slaves or Convicts	X		/						X	X
Resolved to be self-sufficient economically	X	X		X	X				X	X

Throughout June and July 1774, Virginians made it known that they were not willing to accept any restrictions of their rights and liberties. Virginian's were subjects of the British Empire and all freeborn Englishmen were protected by the English constitution. A very unique display of democracy emerged during the summer of 1774 to protect those rights. Freeholders displayed a pure form of democracy and direction to their county representatives for the upcoming Virginia Convention. Virginia's former burgesses, the leading representatives from each county, were moved to action after learning about the closing of Boston's harbor, and then were angered and galvanized by Governor's Dunmore's dissolution of their "peoples body." Those leading Virginians looked to what was happening in in the town of Boston, and they saw what soon could be occurring to them. In response, those former burgesses requested Virginia's leaders the "Opportunity of collecting the Sense of their respective Counties." That opportunity led to the most democratic actions known, before or after. Virginia county leaders, usually



the wealthiest and most powerfully elite in their communities, shifted their power and authority to Freeholders that summer. Practically every one of Virginia's thirty-three surviving resolves begin with something similar to, "At a meeting of the freeholder and other inhabitants of the county." Virginia's local leaders turned the power over to their citizens for both resolve and instruction, as they prepared for the First Virginia Convention. This democratic action was Virginia's first step to declaring independence two years later. In doing so, the county freeholders bought into the upcoming struggle while producing a purely democratic set of documents which show a united clarity of purpose. Their collective local actions and their statements, county by county, have rarely been duplicated, previously or since. In the end, Dunmore was the only Royal Governor to dissolve a sitting colonial legislative body during the period of 1774-1776. The result was that the counties of Virginia produced the most comprehensive set of resolves compared to anywhere in the colonies leading up to the Revolutionary War. Virginians' resolves fortified their commitment to the ever-strengthening common cause of America. Governor Dunmore, during the 1774 summer of discontent, unified Virginians for war, something that Massachusetts and the other colonies needed in the following years.

Below are the names of the Burgesses, and the County they represented, who attended the final House of Burgesses session of May 5-26, 1774. Those eighty-nine burgesses who stayed in Williamsburg and attended the "Association of Former Burgesses" session on May 27, 1774 are underlined. Those twenty-five Burgesses who were assigned to form Virginia's May 30, 1774 Committee of Correspondence are in **Bold**. Finally, those counties which are known to have produced "Resolves" in June and July 1774 are also **Bolded**. The three names which are (**Bolded** and in Parentheses) did not sign the 89 Former Burgesses Association document but did sign the May 30, 1774 Committee document indicating they probably arrived in Williamsburg late.

Accomack: Southey Simpson, James Henry.
Albemarle: **Thomas Jefferson**, **John Walker**.
Amelia: John Tabb, John Winn.
Amherst: William Cabell, Jr., Joseph Cabell.
Augusta: Samuel McDowell, Charles Lewis.
Bedford: John Talbot, Charles Lynch.
Berkeley: **Robert Rutherford**, John Hite.
Brunswick: Thomas Stith,
Botetourt: Andrew Lewis, John Bowyer.
Buckingham: Henry Bell, Charles May.
Charles City: Benjamin Harrison, William Acrill.
Chesterfield: Archibald Cary, Benjamin Watkins.
Charlotte: **Paul Carrington**, James Speed.
Cumberland: William Fleming, John Mayo.
Caroline: **Edmund Pendleton**, James Taylor Sr.
Culpeper: Henry Pendleton, Henry Field, Jr.
Dinwiddie: Robert Bolling, John Banister.
Dunmore: Francis Slaughter, _____
Elizabeth City: Worlich Westwood, Henry King.
Essex: James Edmondson, William Roane.
Fairfax: **George Washington**, John West.



Fincastle: William Christian, Robert Doak
Frederick: James Wood, Isaac Zane.
Fauquier: James Scott.
Gloucester: Thomas Whiting, Lewis Burwell.
Goochland: T. M. Randolph, John Woodson.
Halifax: Nathaniel Terry, Isaac Coles.
Hampshire: (James Mercer), Joseph Nevill.
Hanover: Patrick Henry, John Syme.
Henrico: Samuel Duval, Richard Adams.
Isle of Wight: Richard Hardy, James Bridger.
James City: Lewis Burwell, R. C. Nicholas.
King and Queen: George Brooke, J. T. Corbin.
King William: William Aylett, Augustine Moore.
King George: William Fitzhugh, Joseph Jones.
Loudoun: Francis Peyton, Thomson Mason.
Lancaster: Richard Mitchell, Charles Carter.
Lunenburg: Richard Claiborne, Thomas Pettus.
Louisa: Richard Anderson, Thomas Johnson.
Mecklenburg: Robert Munford, Matthew Marrable.
Middlesex: Edmund Berkeley, James Montague.
Nansemond: Benjamin Baker, (Lemuel Riddick).
New Kent: Burwell Bassett, Bartholomew Dandridge.
Norfolk: Thomas Newton, Jr., James Holt.
Northampton: John Burton, John Bowdoin.
Northumberland: Rodham Kenner, Peter P. Thornton.
Orange: Thos. Barbour, James Taylor Jr..
Pittsylvania: Hugh Innes, John Donelson.
Prince George: Richard Bland, Peter Poythress.
Prince Edward: Peter Le Grand, Paschall Greenhill.
Prince William: Henry Lee, (Thomas Blackburn).
Princess Anne: E. H. Moseley, Jr., Christopher Wright.
Richmond: R. W. Carter, F. L. Lee.
Southampton: Edwin Gray, Henry Taylor.
Spotsylvania: George Stubblefield, Mann Page, Jr..
Stafford: John Alexander, Charles Carter.
Surry: Allen Cocke, Nicholas Faulcon, Jr..
Sussex: David Mason.
Warwick: William Harwood, William Langhorne.
Westmoreland: R. H. Lee, Richard Lee.
York: Dudley Digges, Thomas Nelson, Jr..
Jamestown: Champion Travis.
Williamsburg: Peyton Randolph.
Norfolk Borough: Joseph Hutchings.
The College: Attorney General John Randolph²⁷



- 1 *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon: May 19, 1774 – pg. 1, 2
- 2 Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, June 26, 1774 – online at http://oldemc.english.ucsb.edu/imprint/warner/protocols/protocols_of_liberty_chapter_4_port_bill.html
- 3 “Resolution of the House of Burgesses Designating a Day of Fasting and Prayer, 24 May 1774,” Founders Online, National Archives,
- 4 *Virginia Gazette*. Purdie and Dixon: May 26, 1774 – pg. 2, col. 3.
- 5 *Journal of the House of Burgesses*, 1773–1776, p. 132.
- 6 John Clement Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, 1745-1799*, (U.S. Government. Printing Office, United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission, Washington D.C., 1931), page 223.
- 7 Virginia. *An association, signed by 89 members of the late House of Burgess Dated the 27th day of May, 89 names We the subscribers, clergymen and other inhabitants of the colony and dominion of Virginia, having maturely considered the contents of.* Williamsburg, 1774. Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2020768633/>.
- 8 “From George Washington to George William Fairfax, 10–15 June 1774,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-10-02-0067>; Also see *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie and Dixon), June 2, 1774, page. 2, col. 1.
- 9 Jim Glanville, “The Fincastle Resolutions,” *The Smithfield Review*, Volume XIV, 2010. Page 75. Fredericksburg being first to offer a Resolves is mentioned in William James Van Schreeven and Robert L. Scribner, *Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence*. Volume I, page 109.
- 10 *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts*, edited by H.W. Flournoy, Volume 8, (Richmond, 1890), pp. 53-54.
- 11 *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts*, edited by H.W. Flournoy, Volume 8, (Richmond, 1890), page. 53. James Bish, *I Can’t Tell A Lie: Parson Weems and the Truth about George Washington’s Cherry Tree, Prayer at Valley Forge, and Other Anecdotes.* (Kindle Direct Publishing, 2023), pp. 194-198.
- 12 *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, June 16, 1774, pg. 2
- 13 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 29, 1774.
- 14 Culpeper County Resolves found in Rind’s *Virginia Gazette*, July 14, 1774, page 2.
- 15 See Virginia Government website, <https://history.house.virginia.gov/members/2682>; <https://www.colonial-settlers-md-va.us/getperson.php?personID=1114456&tree=Tree1>.
- 16 <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/cary-archibald-1721-1787/>.
- 17 William J. Van Schreeven and Robert L. Scribner, *Revolutionary Virginia, the Road to Independence*, (Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, University Press of Virginia, [Charlottesville, VA], 1973), page. 232.
- 18 The Fairfax County Resolves manuscript can be seen at https://www.loc.gov/resource/mgw4.033_0270_0277/?sp=1.
- 19 James Bish, “Hugh West and the West Family’s Momentous Role in Founding and Developing Alexandria and Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, Virginia,” *The Alexandria Chronicle*. Spring 2010, page 16; Washington, George, 1732-1799. *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources*, Letterpress Edition, Colonial Series, Volume 9, Pages 144-146; Ross D. Netherton and Ruby Waldeck. *The Fairfax County Courthouse*, Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning, July 1977, Page 108; *The Papers of George Mason; 1725-1792*, edited by Robert A. Rutland, Volume 1, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, page 120.



20 Virginia. *An association, signed by 89 members of the late House of Burgess Dated the 27th day of May, 89 names We the subscribers, clergymen and other inhabitants of the colony and dominion of Virginia, having maturely considered the contents of.* Williamsburg, 1774. Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2020768633/>; *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, August 4, 1774 – pg. 2.

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22 Jim Glanville, "The Fincastle Resolutions," *The Smithfield Review*, Volume XIV, 2010, pp. 69-120; Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, *Documentary history of Dunmore's War, 1774*. (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin historical society, 1905).

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24 <https://archives.gnb.ca/exhibits/forthavoc/html/NJCouncilofSafety.aspx?culture=en-CA>; *American Archive* by Peter Force, 4th series: Vol. 1, Washington, December 1837, pages 384-643.

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