



Virginia: The Key to America

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ABSTRACT

In a broad survey of the American founding, the author argues that Virginia was the indispensable state necessary to accomplish pivotal events like the American independence movement, successfully prosecuting the Revolutionary War, creating a government for the new republican nation, and maintaining her independence in the War of 1812. In order to make this argument, "Virginia: The Key to America" focuses on Virginia's unmatched contributions to articulating the principles and aspirations of American independence, its crucial location and participation in the revolutionary war effort, and finally, its cohort of talented political leadership ready to steer America's journey through the founding period.

KEYWORDS: Virginia; House of Burgesses; George Washington; Continental Congress; American Revolution; Battle of Yorktown; George Mason; Virginia Declaration of Rights; Thomas Jefferson; Declaration of Independence; James Madison; Bill of Rights; Patrick Henry; War of 1812

INTRODUCTION

In 1607, the first permanent English colony in the New World was founded. Named Jamestown, it was founded in what is now known as Virginia. Since then, in part due to mercantilism, Great Britain continued to fund the expansion of their power in the New World, conquering more land to create more colonies for the sake of enriching the motherland. Britain retained power in the New World for over a hundred years, placing royal governors in the colonies to retain their authority. Throughout the years, the generations upon generations in the colonies slowly started to gain a sense of pride and nationalism for the colonies rather than Great Britain itself.

In 1619, the first form of democratic government appeared in Virginia with the House of Burgesses. It "was the first English representative government in North America, established in July 1619 CE, for the purpose of passing laws and maintaining order."¹ From there, citizens in the colonies continued to grow more and more independent until it reached a boiling point with Great Britain passing acts — such as the Sugar Act, Stamp Act, and Townshend Acts — which outraged the colonists leading to acts of resistance; for example, the Boston Tea Party. When the Intolerable Acts were enacted, it was meant as a way to divide the resisting

1 Joshua J. Mark, "House of Burgesses," World History Encyclopedia, February 24, 2021, https://www.worldhistory.org/House_of_Burgesses/#citation_info.

colonies, but instead, served as the justification for the First Continental Congress².

The Revolutionary War began in 1775 until it officially ended in 1783. At the end of the war, the Union worked to create a government and articulate the independence of the new nations with documents which stem from ideas of prior documents. When America finally established a stable government, the Napoleonic Wars in Europe caused tension between Great Britain and France. As a result, Britain would take actions against America to prevent goods from reaching France, such as blockading American ports and declaring that American ships must first stop at a British port to impressment, the taking over American trade vessels and declaring the men aboard without papers as deserters of the British Royal Navy, forcing Americans into the war between Great Britain and France. In 1812, America declared war on Great Britain for the British refusal to yield neutral rights to America, starting the War of 1812, otherwise known as America's Second War for Independence³. Throughout America's history of the establishment of itself as a country, the key leading state in all of these events from the start to

2 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Causes and Effects of the American Revolution," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Causes-and-Effects-of-the-American-Revolution>.

3 Jeanne T. Heidler and David S. Heidler, "War of 1812." Encyclopedia Britannica, August 14, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/War-of-1812>.



end was Virginia. Virginia was a vital leader in America's journey of establishment as it led in the articulation of independence for the nation, the battlefield during the American Revolution, as well as the political leadership it took in the timeline as a whole.

SECTION ONE

Virginia was an integral part of the American Revolution because it brought unity to the Union, led on the battlefield, and articulated independence through its actions and written documents. It can be seen early on, all the way back in 1619, that Virginia already had a notion toward independence when it established the House of Burgesses, the first form of self government in North America. Given that it has had this notion of independence for a long time, the American Revolution was the perfect moment for the state to show its desire and progress on the articulation of independence through taking positions of high power during the Revolutionary War and the first proactive steps of action in government through documents.

Virginia was an integral part of the American Revolution due to Virginians controlling some of the highest positions of power during the war. According to the Library of Virginia, "Virginians played a pivotal role in the struggle for American independence..."⁴. One example of how Virginians took on central roles that made Virginia being part of the revolution an integral to the success of the revolution was the general of the entire Continental Army.

On June 19, 1775, Virginian George Washington received a letter from the Continental Congress stating, "The delegates of the United Colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts bay, Rhode-island, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Castle Kent & Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina & South Carolina... appoint you to be General and Commander in chief of the army of the United Colonies..."⁵. George Washington was appointed to be the Commander-in-Chief of the army for the American Revolution giving him "full power and authority to act as [he] shall think for the good and Welfare of the service."⁶ However, it comes into question why they gave Washington such a high standing position. According to the Library of Congress, Washington was chosen over other

4 "Virginia Revolutionary War Records," Library of Virginia, last modified January 14, 2022, <https://lva-virginia.libguides.com/revolutionary-war#:~:text=Virginia%20Revolutionary%20War%20Records&text=State%20Government%20Records%20Collection,of%20military%20or%20public%20service>.

5 Continental Congress, "Commission from the Continental Congress," National Archives, June 19, 1775, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-01-02-0004>, (August 1, 2022).

6 Continental Congress, "Commission from the Continental Congress."

candidates, such as Massachusetts an John Hancock, due to prior military experience, but mainly in hopes that because he is a Virginian, he could bring Virginia into the revolution and help unite the other colonies⁷ (Library of Congress). Thus, Virginian George Washington was given one of the highest positions and responsibility in the war proving how Virginia being a part of the war was vital.

Should Virginia not have been a part of the war, Washington could not have influenced the outcome of the war as much as they did. In addition, Washington's appointment also indicates how others at the time of the war believed Virginia was a key player in the war. To cite the Library of Congress again, "Washington was selected over other candidates..." with "the hope that a leader from Virginia could help unite the colonies."⁸

Virginia was one of the oldest colonies and also one of the wealthiest. From the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, "Most elite white southerners were twice as rich as the other colonists—not only did they own slaves but they also owned twice as much land." In addition, "Virginians were the wealthiest. In 1780, Virginia's total population was 538,000; Pennsylvania and Massachusetts were next at 327,000 and 268,000. Unlike others, wealthy Virginians did not grow or make much of what they used but depended on British trade."⁹ Should an old, powerful, and wealthy colony that depended on the British join the independence movement, it would give the entire union and other colonies assurance that the war for independence was not half baked, but a genuine movement giving Virginia the role of being one of the most powerful colonies that's driving the war.

Virginia, in addition to its wealth and population, was also an essential part of the revolution because of its articulation of liberty—both the goal of and motivation for American independence. Virginia inspired the revolution for independence, helping America to "determine the values and aspirations of the new nation."¹⁰

7 Library of Congress, "George Washington's Commission as Commander in Chief," Library of Congress, last modified March 16, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program//bib/ourdocs/commission.html#:~:text=The%20Continental%20Congress%20commissioned%20George,could%20help%20unite%20the%20colonies>.

8 Library of Congress, "George Washington's Commission as Commander in Chief."

9 Virginia Museum of History and Culture, "1764 To 1824 - Causes of the Revolution," Virginia Museum of History and Culture, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://virginiahistory.org/learn/story-of-virginia/chapter/causes-revolution>.

10 Virginia Museum of History and Culture, "1764 To 1824 - The Revolutionary Era in Virginia," Virginia Museum of History and Culture, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://virginiahistory.org/learn/story-of-virginia/chapter/revolutionary-era-virginia>.

Virginia played a role in determining these values and aspirations through the documents Virginians wrote and presented. For example, the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Written by George Mason, an American patriot and statesman who believed in and advocated for the protection of individual liberties, the Virginia Declaration of Rights took the first step towards organizing independence. The declaration was composed of 16 sections and declared the inherent rights of man to life, liberty, and justice with stirring language. Mason wrote: . . . “all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights” which cannot be denied to them ¹¹. In addition, “These rights were ‘the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.’” ¹². In summary, it spoke of man’s unalienable rights and the duty and limitations of the government. With this document, it would lay the foundation for future declarations on America’s road to independence and provide a foundation that would later be used in the Declaration of Independence and American Bill of Rights.

But the most important articulation of independence and its associated principles of liberty came from Virginian Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson drew a lot of influence from Mason’s Virginia Declaration of Rights, stating in the opening paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal & independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these ends, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...” ¹³. Jefferson continued to build upon this foundation, claiming how King George III had violated the colonies’ rights and then listed examples of King George III’s tyranny from refusing to assent to beneficial laws to imposing taxes and creating a monopoly without the colonies’ consent. Although Congress altered much of his original wording and cut out slavery from the

11 George Mason, “The Virginia Declaration of Rights,” National Archives, June 12, 1776, [https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/virginia-declaration-of-rights#:~:text=Virginia%27s%20Declaration%20of%20Rights%20was,Convention%20on%20June%2012%2C%201776,\(August 1, 2022\)](https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/virginia-declaration-of-rights#:~:text=Virginia%27s%20Declaration%20of%20Rights%20was,Convention%20on%20June%2012%2C%201776,(August%201,%202022).).

12 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Virginia Declaration of Rights.” Encyclopedia Britannica, July 20, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Virginia-Declaration-of-Rights>.

13 Thomas Jefferson, “Jefferson’s ‘original Rough draught’ of the Declaration of Independence,” Library of Congress, July 4, 1776, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/declara/ruffdrft.html>, (August 1, 2022)

Declaration (National Archives)¹⁴, Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence was ultimately signed. However, if Virginia was to never enter the playing field of the revolution, Jefferson may have never been given the chance to write the Declaration of Independence which would significantly change the development of America in history.

Finally, though Virginia’s final contribution to the language of independence came years after the United States won its independence from Great Britain, it serves to underscore Virginia’s enduring importance at the center of American independence. The Bill of Rights, written by Virginian James Madison, enumerates a concrete set of those inalienable rights to life, liberty, property, and happiness, this time not as an aspirational document, but as part of the highest law of the land. It “guarantees civil rights and liberties to the individual—like freedom of speech, press, and religion. It sets rules for due process of law and reserves all powers not delegated to the Federal Government to the people or the States.” ¹⁵. Madison borrowed ideas written in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, directly stating that men had freedoms of speech and religion as well as other additional rights. In addition, Madison also outlined the relationship between the government and the people; for example, he claims in the sixth amendment that people have the right to a fair trial. In the ninth amendment, he claims that while the Constitution may not mention some specific rights, that does not mean people do not have those rights. And in the fourth amendment, it protects the people from unreasonable search and seizure from the government ¹⁶. Thus, the Bill of Rights heavily influences the system of interactions between the government and the people. Should Virginia not have been a part of the revolution, James Madison may not have had such a prevalent role in writing the Bill of Rights which directly affects the day to day lives of Americans to the present.

Virginians took on many responsibilities during the entire process of America’s independence movement, playing a key role in interpreting independence and putting into words the government of the new nation and leading America into the future. Therefore, Virginia was a necessity during the revolutionary war due to how it moved America towards independence as it is known as today.

SECTION TWO

During the American Revolutionary War, Virginia was a major player in the war both socially and physically.

14 Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence,” National Archives, July 4, 1776, [https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript#:~:text=We%20hold%20these%20truths%20to,and%20the%20pursuit%20of%20Happiness,\(August 1, 2022\)](https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript#:~:text=We%20hold%20these%20truths%20to,and%20the%20pursuit%20of%20Happiness,(August%201,%202022).).

15 James Madison, “The Bill of Rights,” National Archives, December 15, 1791, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>, (August 1, 2022).

16 James Madison, “The Bill of Rights.”

Socially, Virginia would keep morale and support for the war high with ideals of freedom and equality spread through powerful speeches that would echo throughout the hearts of the American people. To keep a war ongoing, the citizens must be convinced that the war is worth fighting and with speeches from strong Virginian leaders, it would have a profound impact on the American people to rebel against the “tyrannical” British government. In addition, successes from Virginian military leaders would prove that the war was not going to be brutally crushed, but possible to win, further convincing Americans of the war and keeping morale of the soldiers high. Therefore, Virginia played a pivotal role in keeping the American Revolution spirit alive with powerful speeches that spread ideals that many of the American people want after the British put limits on the American people through events, such as the Intolerable Acts of 1774 and the Proclamation Line¹⁷, and with success from war due to the military leaders that Virginia produces.



Physically, Virginia was vital as it was in the geographical center of the British North American colonies (see left map). Given its size and position, control over Virginia was essential for carrying out a successful wartime strategy, resupply, and intelligence operation.

Virginia was a key player in keeping the revolutionary spirit alive through keeping morale high with grand speeches about ideals. One major example of a grand speech that got the flame for the war going is Patrick Henry’s “give me liberty or give me death” at the Second Virginia Convention that occurred on March 23, 1775, in St. John’s Church, Richmond. Patrick Henry has always been a spokesperson, giving speeches and speaking out against acts passed by the British, such as the

17 Luke Tomes, “6 Key Causes of the American Revolution,” History Hit, January 14, 2021, <https://www.historyhit.com/causes-of-american-revolution/>.

Stamp Act of 1765, providing Henry with experience¹⁸. He would employ many techniques in his speeches, such as his use of ethos and powerful rhetorics, to speak out more to the people¹⁹.

In his famous speech at the Second Virginia Conference, he stated how war with Britain was inevitable and then presented resolutions that equipped the Virginia militia to fight against the British²⁰. His “fiery” speech would be one of the first sparks in the people of Virginia for the revolution. However, because his audience were Virginians, it could be said that it didn’t affect America as a whole during the revolution. On the contrary, his speech inspired actions from leaders including Washington and Jefferson, who were both in attendance at Henry’s speech, who would go on to shape American history as it is now. Therefore, it can be said that without Virginia as a part of the revolution, Patrick Henry’s speech may not have created the domino effect that inspired Washington and Jefferson into the leaders that moved the revolution along.

Other major events that kept American morale high during the revolution were the Battles of Trenton and Princeton. Led by Virginian George Washington, the battles lasted from December 26, 1776 to January 3, 1777; a total span of nine days. According to Britannica, “The battles... are notable as the first successes won by the Revolutionary general George Washington in the open field.” In addition, “The victories restored American morale...”²¹ In these battles, Washington put into action his famous crossing of the Delaware River. Using his wits, he won against the Hessian and British forces in New Jersey thus proving to the people that the war was winnable. Thus, Washington’s victories were able to keep morale in the war high.

As these examples demonstrate, much of the revolutionary momentum that sustained the war effort for the United States can be traced back to Virginia. Should Virginia not have taken part in the war or sided with the crown, Washington, a Virginian, may not have ever been given the opportunity to lead. Should he not have led, the victories in New Jersey may have ended up as losses which would have resulted in a crushing blow to the morale of Americans and possibly extinguishing the war effort. Therefore, Virginia was an essential part of the American Revolution due to how it was

18 History.com Editors, “Patrick Henry,” History, November 9, 2009, <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/patrick-henry>.

19 IPL, “Rhetorical Use Of Ethos And Logos In Patrick Henry’s Speech,” IPL, accessed August 8, 2022, <https://www.ipl.org/essay/Rhetorical-Use-Of-Ethos-And-Logos-In-PCXNJU26YV>

20 Meade, R. Douthat. “Patrick Henry.” Encyclopedia Britannica, June 2, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Patrick-Henry>.

21 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Battles of Trenton and Princeton.” Encyclopedia Britannica, December 19, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battles-of-Trenton-and-Princeton>.

able to psychologically keep Americans in the war through moving speeches and victories that raised morale.

While Virginia was a vital part of the American revolution because it played an essential role in keeping Americans in the war, it was also a vital part of the revolution because of its geographic location. Previously shown with a map, Virginia is in the center geographically. As a result of being in the center, it would have access to both northern and southern parts of the Union, facilitating transportation, communication, and resources thus playing a large part in the revolution; especially during the second half of the American Revolution, when the British failed with the Saratoga campaign and they aimed their sights towards the south. According to the West Virginia Encyclopedia, in what was at the time part of Virginia, they supplied materials of war including food, clothing, and wagons²². American historian Frank E. Grizzard Jr. states that during the American Revolution, army supplies were scarce and there would be critical shortages of clothing along with unpredictable food rations for the soldiers²³. Given that Virginia has been one of the largest agricultural states, Virginia playing a role in providing the soldiers with the war efforts was an absolute necessity. Should Virginia not have been a part of the war, there is no telling how much harder the winters would have been for the soldiers of the war. Food shortages would be worse than they were leading to many more men starving to death.

In addition, while France was helped with clothing, France only officially came onto the scene in 1778, later in the war. Therefore, Virginia was pivotal in keeping the American forces as healthy as they were given Virginia's size and position on the map. In addition to supplying resources, Virginia would become a major facilitator in communications between north and south. Due to its large size and geographic location, if news were to travel from north to the rest of the southern states or vice versa, it would have to get through Virginia. Therefore, it was absolutely necessary that Virginia was part of the Revolution because if Virginia were not, then news and orders would get held up in Virginia, leaving Americans fragmented. With America fragmented, one example of how disastrous it could have turned out, when Washington needed to respond to General Henry Clinton's southern campaign in 1780 by sending Generals, such as General Nathaniel Greene, to lead Americans against the British Southern campaign, travelling to get to the south from the north with Virginia as an obstacle would delay the travel, resulting in possible British success in the south, causing a major change in history. Lastly, Virginia's geographic location was essential for the end of the American Revolution to end the way it did.

22 Ken Sullivan, "The Revolutionary War," The West Virginia Encyclopedia, May 8, 2015, <https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/70>.

23 Frank E. Grizzard, "Supply Problems Plagued the Continental Army from the Start," The American Revolution, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://revolution.h-net.msu.edu/essays/grizzard.html>.

The Battle of Yorktown took place in Yorktown, Virginia, and was the decisive victory the United States needed to win their independence. It took place in Yorktown due to Virginia having a deep water harbor on the York River that the British wanted to have a harbor for the British fleet. Using the element of surprise, the Continental army marched down from New York down to Yorktown. Meanwhile, their French allies would confront the British navy out on the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay forcing the British Navy to retreat and abandon Cornwallis in Yorktown. Once the Continental Army made it down to Virginia, Cornwallis' forces were surrounded and eventually forced to surrender after suffering heavy losses²⁴. With the American victory in Yorktown, the Americans won the American Revolution with an official recognition of independence with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. However, should Virginia not have been a part of the American Revolution, the mobility the Continental Army had to move through Virginia would not have been as it was and taking in considerations for other alterations in past events, the confrontation at Yorktown would have been in a more favorable situation toward Cornwallis and his British forces.

SECTION THREE

In the process of establishing America as a country, Virginia was a vital part of national politics, taking leadership roles that would influence the movement for independence.

Starting with the House of Burgesses, to reiterate previously stated facts, it was "an assembly of elected representatives from Virginia that met from 1643 to 1776." The House was the first democratically elected legislative body in English North America representing people in Virginia, setting a model as the first democratic government with limited royal authority²⁵. As a House that was able to limit royal authority and maintain its own order through passing laws, it gave colonists a taste of self government. When the first notions of the American Revolution and true self government appeared, people in and under the House of Burgesses would be some of the first to take action to support the revolution. However, as a result of supporting the revolution, Virginia's royal governor John Murray, Lord Dunmore would end up dissolving the House. Even though the House of Burgesses dissolved, through the creation of the Virginia Constitution of 1776, it would live on through a senate and House of Delegates replacing the governor's council and House of Burgesses respectively, continuing as a model for democratic self government. In addition, the House of Burgesses was the "training grounds" for many important future political leaders, such as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington²⁶.

24 American Battlefield Trust, "Yorktown - Siege of Yorktown," American Battlefield Trust, accessed August 8, 2022, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/yorktown>.

25 Matthew Gottlieb, "House of Burgesses," Encyclopedia Virginia - Virginia Humanities, December 7, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.virginia.org/entries/house-of-burgesses/>.

26 Matthew Gottlieb, "House of Burgesses."

During the Revolution, a major part of the American Revolution were the First and Second Continental Congresses. The president of both Continental Congresses was Virginian Peyton Randolph who is the key person in the overall formation of the Continental Congress and its eventual accomplishments. In the First Continental Congress, 56 delegates convened from 12 of the 13 original colonies in Philadelphia. In this meeting, the major achievement was the Articles of Association which “initiated a boycott of British goods by the colonies.” During the Second Continental Congress, it became a de facto government for the union during the war resulting in the establishment of an army, navy, post office, issued currency as well as adoption of the Declaration of Independence ²⁷.

Other Virginian delegates in the Continental Congress’ who would be an influential leader included, but not limited to, George Washington, James Madison and George Mason. Peyton Randolph would be a driving factor in the results of the Continental Congress’ as other Virginian accomplishments in the Congresses would include much articulation of independence as spoken of in Section One. This is an example of how Virginia would politically take a leadership position in the American Revolution, taking charge in one of the most important aspects of the revolution, the Continental Congress’. If Virginia were not part of the revolution, the Virginian leaders in the Continental Congress may not have obtained the high positions that they did and the Continental Congress’ may not have accomplished what it had, drastically changing the entire course of American history.

Another example of how Virginia politically took charge, not during the revolution, but while trying to establish America as a country was its lineage of presidents. The first four out of five presidents of the United States after the revolution were all from Virginia, starting with arguably the most famous president, George Washington. George Washington was born February 22, 1732. As previously stated in other sections, he was the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution, winning some battles and ultimately leading America to victory at the decisive Battle of Yorktown. As such he played a major role militarily, but politically after the war, America was in chaos without order.

As such a Constitutional Convention was held “in Philadelphia.” And “on May 13, the day before the opening of the Constitutional Convention, and as soon as a quorum was obtained [Washington] was unanimously chosen...” as the president of the Constitutional Convention, (much like how Peyton Randolph was chosen as president of the Continental Congress)²⁸. The result of the Constitutional Congress was a

27 Becky Little, “What Did the Three Continental Congresses Do?,” HISTORY, August 25, 2021, <https://www.history.com/news/what-did-the-three-continental-congresses-accomplish>.

28 Allan Nevins and Henry Graff , “George Washington,” Encyclopedia Britannica, February 18, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Washington>.

form of government with more national powers, but it was to be separated between branches to keep the power even. Although Washington hoped to be able to retire to a private life after a framework for the new government had been set up, many people wanted Washington to become the first president of the United States. Washington ended up taking up that responsibility, setting a precedent for the future of America.

Under Washington’s leadership, he “[respected] the separation of powers...” and “...refrained from meddling in the legislative process... [using] his veto only twice. He guarded executive power, refusing a congressional request to share diplomatic instructions, declaring them to be privileged communications of the president...” ²⁹. Thus, Washington made sure that the separation of powers between branches would be put into action rather than it just be words on a page. In addition, Washington also set up the future of the government by appointing secretaries of war, state, and treasury. Washington created the role of secretary himself as a form of aid to himself and it continued into the future with the role of secretaries still a major part of the government. Another precedent-setting decision made by Washington was the two term system of which a President can be elected to a maximum of two terms in a row. Without Virginia, if America had won without Virginia, Washington may not have obtained his position rendering him unable to accomplish what he had politically and the precedents for the future may not have been set properly, leading to a possible failure of the great American experiment that established America.

After Washington, the third president of the United States was another Virginian, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was born April 13, 1743. Jefferson’s major accomplishment during his presidency was the Louisiana Purchase with the French. The Louisiana Purchase was a major advancement for the United States, doubling the size of America at a cheap price. As a result, America was strengthened materially and strategically allowing for the country itself to further establish itself on the world stage ³⁰. This purchase done under Jefferson may not have come to be if Virginia was not a patriotic state. If Virginia never joined the cause for independence, Virginians may not have been as welcome into higher positions of power. Considering the fact that Jefferson bought the Louisiana Purchase without going through the full democratic process because at the time there was opposition to the proposed purchase, the United States may have lost its chance at major growth should Jefferson not been in office. And that would not have been possible if Virginia was not a part of the revolution, establishing itself as a patriotic state.

29 Henry Wiencek, “George Washington (1732–1799),” Encyclopedia Virginia - Virginia Humanities, December 22, 2021, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/washington-george-1732-1799/>

30 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Louisiana Purchase,” Encyclopedia Britannica, May 10, 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Louisiana-Purchase/additional-info#history>.

The fourth president of the United States was James Madison. Madison was born March 16, 1751. During his presidency, America engaged in the War of 1812 in an attempt to end British suppression of American maritime trade³¹. The War of 1812 ended in 1815 with the Treaty of Ghent, bringing peace between America and Britain. Although the treaty did not signify a clear winner, the signing of the treaty showed to the world that America was willing to fight back if “attacked.” This contributed to the establishment of America as an independent state, proving to other nations that America can stand on its own and the victory of Great Britain during the revolutionary war was not a fluke. Everything can be related back to Virginia. Should Virginia not have been in support of the American Revolution, its leaders would not have been able to show their brilliance among all the other people. In addition, should Virginia have been a part of the Union at the end of the war, people from Virginia would not have been trusted enough to be given high standing positions in the government. As a result, the actions taken by Virginian leaders in high positions of power after the war would have not happened and the establishment of the United States as a country to the world would not have been as sound as it was.

CONCLUSION

All in all, Virginia was undoubtedly the most integral factor to the success of the establishment of the United States of America. It produced leaders of the highest quality that moved America along its road to independence, whether it be through battle with George Washington, vocal inspiration like Patrick Henry, or impactful documents used for the foundation of the state written by Jefferson, the establishment of America would not have been the same without any of the leaders Virginia had. The battles that were won under Washington could have been lost, the inspiration from Henry could have not been there, resulting in less support for the war, and the country’s foundational document, the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Jefferson could be entirely different. Additionally, Virginia was the oldest state in colonies with the wealthiest families in all the thirteen colonies. Should Virginia not have been a part of the revolution, the support for the war would have been considerably lower as Virginia joining the Union was one of the factors in the unification of the Union. Seeing the oldest and wealthiest state join the cause gave assurance to many other states to join the Union and fight for independence. If support for the war was lower, the success in battles and eventual French aid would not have come to be the way it was.

Not only was Virginia joining important to the overall unification of the Union, but it was also essential in providing food, clothing, and wagons as being one of the biggest states,

31 Irving Brant, “James Madison,” Encyclopedia Britannica, June 24, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-Madison>.

should Virginia not have contributed food, the food shortages that had already been going on during the war would have been much worse than it was leading to more deaths due to starvation. In conclusion, Virginia was indispensable to the process of the establishment of America due to its leadership in many aspects of the establishment from the articulation of independence and political leadership to military accomplishments.

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