

You Be the Curator! Object Descriptions

1. Portrait of King George III (1989.4)
King of England at time of the American Revolution

2. "Stamp Act" silver spoon (1972.12)
Serving spoon inscribed "L.C. 1766 Repeal of the American Stamp Act." In order to help fund the expense of defending its American colonies, Great Britain instituted a tax on printed paper used by the colonists. Many in America opposed the Stamp Act, not because the tax was high, but because without representation in Parliament they had no voice in the decision. Among those opposed to the act was Landon Carter (1710–1778) of Richmond County. His form of protest was more personal. When he directed his agent in London to purchase several tablespoons for his home, he ordered that if the Stamp Act was repealed, the spoons should be made of silver. If the act was not repealed, the agent was to send him cheap bone or horn spoons. The act was repealed on March 18, 1766, and Carter's agent had the silver spoons engraved with Carter's initials, the date 1766, and the triumphant inscription "Repeal of the American Stamp Act."

3. "A Summary View of the Rights of British America" (RARE E211 J45 1774)
The Continental Congress assigned to Thomas Jefferson the task of drafting a Declaration of Independence and then cut one-quarter of what he wrote. Jefferson got the job because he essentially had already written the declaration in his 1774 *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, a landmark in Virginia history. In *Summary View*, Jefferson wrote that rights are derived from the laws of nature and are given by God to all people; that "free trade with all parts of the world" is a "natural right" that has been cut off by Great Britain; that "a series of oppressions" have been pursued by the king; that he has suspended colonial legislatures; that he has "laid his governors under such restrictions that they can pass no law"; and that he is "send[ing] over . . . mercenaries to invade & deluge us in blood." This copy was printed by Clementina Rind, the designated public printer for the colony of Virginia.

4. Bloody Massacre on the Streets of Boston (2000.110.35)
By 1770 tensions related to the failing relationship between colonists and the King had been rising. On March 5th, Bostonians began to throw snowballs and rocks at British soldiers – ultimately, the soldiers suppressed the attack, though multiple civilians died. This image, originally created by Paul Revere, lays the blame squarely on the English – showing their soldiers firing into a crowd of colonists, despite this not being an accurate representation of the event.

5. Bell from St. John's Church (1900.5)
The site of two important conventions in the period leading to the American Revolutionary War and is famously known as the location where Patrick Henry gave his closing speech at the Second Virginia Convention with the famous quotation "give me liberty, or give me death!"

6. Lord Dunmore's Proclamation (Library of Congress)

In April 1775 Lord Dunmore, last Royal Governor of Virginia, seized the colony's ammunition stores, and seven months later declared martial law and issued a proclamation that promised freedom to enslaved people who would fight for the king. Dunmore's proclamation sparked a flood of enslaved people who escaped to the British, raised widespread fear of a slave rebellion, and angered colonists who felt he was taking away their property.

7. Portrait of Lucy Randolph Burwell (1951.35)

Lucy Randolph was a member of the Virginia gentry class and married Lewis Burwell in 1764. Her husband was a Loyalist and her brother was a vocal Patriot. In October 1775, Lewis Burwell stabbed Lucy's brother at dinner, "but fortunately a Rib prevented it's proving Mortal. He was prevented by the Ladies from making a second stroke."

8. Portrait of Ralph Wormeley V (1951.22)

Wormeley attempted to remain passive during the Revolution, but he was accused of being a Loyalist and banished to Frederick County for the duration of the War. While he was away, his home was pillaged by a Tory privateer. He later accepted the break with England and continued his family's tradition of leadership in Virginia affairs.

9. George Mason's "A Declaration of Rights" (RARE O.S. JK3925 1776)

From May to July 1776, a Virginia Convention met in Williamsburg to declare independence, prepare a constitution, and document a statement of their rights. George Mason's Declaration of Rights drafted a document that outlined rights such as the right to confront one's accusers, to present evidence in court, the right to a speedy trial, and "that all men are created equally free and independent..." – sound familiar? This document was adopted in June 1776 and served as a guideline for both Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

10. Culpeper Minute Men Flag (copy) (1948.3)

This Culpeper Minute Men flag features a rattlesnake and a combination of "Liberty or Death" and "Don't Tread On Me" – all symbols of American patriotism in the mid-1700s. The Minute Men themselves formed in 1775 and declared themselves as Patriots. They are well known for their fighting in the Dec 1775 Battle of Great Bridge, which ultimately drove out Royal Governor Dunmore.

11. Letter, George Washington to Jacky Custis, June 19, 1775 (Mss1 L5114 a 2)

Washington writes to his step-son from Philadelphia announcing that he has been selected to lead the Continental Army and expresses concern about leaving his wife, Martha, during his service.

12. Stockings (1985.69.A-B)

Handwritten note in object file: "Miss Sallie Talbott knitted these stockings during the Revolutionary War. She was the daughter of Richard and Ruth Dorsey Talbott of Anne Arundel County, Md. In 1836 she gave them to Caroline Moore, wife of her nephew, Charles Talbott, who was the son of her youngest brother, John Lawrence Talbott. Her eldest brother, Richard, was an officer in the Revolutionary War. / Dictated by Adele Talbott Armistead."

13. Sword belonging to Daniel Morgan (1935.9.A-B)

Spanish blade engraved, "NO ME SAQUES SIN RASON" on one side and "NO ME ENBAINES SIN HONOR" on the other. The blade inscription is known as "The Spanish Motto" translated: "Draw me not without reason. Sheath me not without honor." Daniel Morgan (1736-1802) was born near Junction in Hunterdon, New Jersey and moved to Virginia in 1753. Morgan was a general in the American Revolution, who defeated the British at the Battle of Cowpens.

14. Pass for Travel During the War, June 26th 1776 (Mss2 P3743b)

"Isaac Hartman, Esquire, Francis Markoe, Esquire, with his Lady & daughter & three servants lately arrived in this Colony from the Island of Bermuda, are permitted to Travel through this Colony on their way to the City of Philadelphia" – Edmund Pendleton, President

15. Marquis de Lafayette & James (1993.178)

A French aristocrat, Lafayette served as a major-general in the Continental Army under George Washington. In the middle of the war, he returned to France to negotiate an increase in French support. After the war he helped to lead the French Revolution.

16. William Bolling slave register (Mss5 5 B6387:1)

One of the greatest hypocrisies of the American Revolution was the rhetoric of freedom while the practice of slavery existed. Bolling lived in Goochland County, Virginia and his register includes names of his enslaved workers along with their dates of births and names of mothers, dates of death, purchases and names of sellers and prices. The left page shows Betty's children born during the American Revolution.

17. Engraving of James Lafayette (1905.12)

James was an enslaved Virginian who served the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War as a spy. He pretended to escape to the British and support them, all while gathering information that he passed along to the Marquis de Lafayette and George Washington. With the help of the Marquis de Lafayette in 1784, James was able to successfully gain his freedom in 1787. James took the last name Lafayette as a thank you.

18. "Glorious News..." Broadside (1781:3)

This 1781 broadside served as a quickly printed announcement of Lord Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown and was circulated in Providence, Rhode Island.

19. Captain Benjamin Bartholomew Diary (Mss5:1 B2833:1 1871-82)

Eyewitness accounts of the American Revolution during battle, especially in Virginia, are rare. This diary contains short summaries of daily life during battle at Yorktown during 1781.

20. Brafferton School (2004.105.105)

The Brafferton School, built in 1723, was a school run by English colonists and meant to educate and convert indigenous boys to English language and customs. This school closed after the American Revolution, though it hadn't seen students for several years before its closing. During the war, students from the school supported both sides – with one notable individual being Robert Mursh/Marsh. Robert was a member of the Pamunkey who fought for the Continental Army