Gloucester County, Virginia, in the American Revolution

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GLOUCESTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Joanne Wood Ryan
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Approved, August 1978

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine Gloucester County's role in the American Revolution. By 1776, the county was a plantation society that raised tobacco and cereal crops and had a stable, if not stagnant, population, of which a majority was probably blacks.

A small number of men, selected disproportionately from the largest landholders and slaveowners, were leaders of the county from the time of the protest over the Townshend duties and the Intolerable Acts through the colony conventions of 1775 and 1776. From the formation of the first county committees in 1774, Gloucester residents enthusiastically supported Revolutionary economic protest and organized resistance to British authority. The men who led the county's Revolutionary activities remained in power throughout the years of war.

The first years of independence in the county were characterized by frequent raids into the county and the continued presence of enemy troops nearby. Dunmore's "Emancipation Proclamation" in November 1775 and his landing at Gwynn's Island in June 1776 encouraged the fear of slave uprising, which remained a major source of anxiety for the county's inhabitants during the war. The fears of additional British raids and the flight of slaves were reinforced by the presence of British ships and troops in the tidewater region from 1776 to 1781. Consequently, many of the county's men were reluctant to leave the county and serve in the Continental army. They did, however, actively serve in the militia and man and outfit Virginia's navy.

In May 1781, Lord Cornwallis's army reached Virginia, and Gloucester County was once again placed in the center of the war. By August, the county was occupied by a major British force. During the siege of Yorktown, Gloucester County suffered British foraging raids, the depredations of American and French troops, and the demand for continual service of its militia. By the end of the siege, the county had suffered widespread destruction and property damage. The continued presence of British prisoners and invalids as well as French troops hindered the county's recovery.

Throughout the Revolution, the county was distinguished by a fierce localism in the face of constant military threats and a resolute support of the patriot cause.
GLOUCESTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, IN THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION
CHAPTER I

COLONIAL GLOUCESTER: PLANTERS, SLAVES, AND TENANTS

Gloucester County was in the very center of events throughout the early history of Virginia. Its people suffered through the turmoil of Indian wars, Bacon's Rebellion, the American Revolution, and the Civil War. The latter conflict resulted in the destruction of almost all of the county records, a loss that only compounded previous destruction by a fire in the courthouse in 1820. As a "Burned Record County," Gloucester County has heretofore been neglected by most colonial and Revolutionary scholars, because of the obvious problems of source material. Although almost all deeds, wills, rent rolls, tax lists, court records, and election statistics have not survived, references to the county and its inhabitants in newspapers, family papers, and state records, and scattered tax lists nevertheless allow the researcher to understand Gloucester County's Revolutionary experience, while at the same time regretting that the colonial story will never be fully known.

Little is known about the early years of Gloucester County. Originally part of Charles City County, it suffered the problems of Indian attacks, which retarded the movement north of the colonial white population. The first recorded land grant was in 1635, but few had settled the land between
the York and Rappahannock rivers before the end of the 1640s. An Indian war in 1644 further impeded the spread of population. In 1648 Virginians returned to the region and land grants were issued. With the movement of people across the York River, the new county of Gloucester was unofficially established by May 21, 1651, and the election of two burgesses in 1652 completed its political formation. The county was divided into the four parishes of Abingdon and Petsworth on the York River, Ware on Mobjack Bay, and Kingston on the Piankatank River. Settlement focused around the churches of each parish, the first four of which were completed between 1660 and 1679. The courthouse, in Ware Parish central to all residents of the county, was also a center of settlement activity.

The most prominent features of Gloucester's early development were its rapid cultivation of cash crops, particularly tobacco, and its scattered settlement along the numerous creeks and rivers. Such phrases as "the richest county in Virginia," "most populous, prosperous, and wealthy," and "best lowlands in the Province" are some of the observations on the richness of its soil and the county's agricultural abundance. On the other hand, urbanization was slow. In 1707 a plat for Gloucester Town was laid out, with about ninety individual home lots surveyed for over fifty leading settlers. Situated across the York River from Yorktown, Gloucester Town provided contrast to Yorktown's growth, as is shown in sketches of the two towns in 1755. A "View of Gloucester Point" shows an irregular scattering of about
twenty buildings along the banks of the York, while Yorktown has several streets of large houses. In 1777 Ebenezer Hazard called it "a small town," and by 1796 an observer found only about twelve homes there. The courthouse, crossroads ordinaries, merchants' shops, and tobacco warehouses were the only other centers where the population clustered. Shipbuilding was perhaps the largest nonagrarian pursuit in the county, although there is also some evidence of home and shop industries.

For most seventeenth-century Gloucester settlers, the county had originally offered the pleasing prospect of a life as a prosperous planter. The newspaper advertisements of the late colonial period offering farms for sale are indicative of the retention of this planter dream. Most Gloucester farms being sold were over three hundred acres in size, with substantial dwelling houses, numerous outhouses, and often acres of timber, orchards, and meadowland for the grazing of horses and cattle. Viable commercial farming remained a large-scale operation, for few of these estates were offered for division.

The fortunate geography of Gloucester, with so many rivers and creeks, made settlement there equally attractive. Notices offering farms for sale emphasize their location on navigable waterways and the abundance of fish and oysters. For example, one notice claimed that "a sea vessel that draws 8 or 10 feet water may come within 40 yards of the house." Nearness to warehouses or to the roads to Yorktown and Williamsburg were also important considerations for the planter.
The notices of the 1760s and 1770s more and more frequently talk of a mixture of tobacco and grains being cultivated. The cultivation of corn and wheat and the raising of sheep and cattle were secondary, however, to the growing of tobacco for overseas markets. One observer of southern agriculture noted in 1775, "None of them depend on tobacco alone . . . since their grounds have begun to be worn out. They all raise corn and provisions enough to support their family and plantation, besides exporting considerable quantities."

The transitional nature of the late colonial agrarian economy in Gloucester can be glimpsed at in fragmentary fashion in the correspondence of John Page of Rosewell with John Norton & Sons, merchants of London. If Page is typical of the large Gloucester planter, then the years of the coming of the Revolution were difficult times. The declining production of the Gloucester lands, added to the vagaries of weather, necessitated that Page relocate some slaves on his Gloucester farm to fresher lands in Dumfries to raise more tobacco. He also wrote that he would have to sell some Negroes to pay debts contracted in the consignment of his tobacco crop. Page contracted for other imported items, but even these small debts remained unpaid before the Revolution. His father, Mann Page, had accumulated a very large debt from 1768 with the firm of Robert Cary & Sons of London that was also unpaid. The letters of Norton's agents picture a broad-based group of large landowners in the county who were involved in consignments of tobacco shipped by the firm from
Yorktown to England. These planters, and the Pages, were caught up in the problems of varying supply and fluctuating prices in the years before 1776. The net result was a gradual diversification into more stable cereal crops for local consumption and export to the West Indies. For example, Francis Willis advertised for sale in 1770 eight hundred acres of land that had been heavily mortgaged by his father to London merchants. By the date of the notice, Willis had taken to cultivating corn and wheat on this land. This shift in no way ended their interest or primary concern with the cultivation of tobacco or curtailed their debts to British firms.

The opening of rich lands for cultivation in the late 1640s had resulted in a dynamic period of population growth throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century. (See Appendix, Table I.) In a period of only thirty years, the population increased almost sevenfold. This spurt of growth had leveled off in the last two decades. The net increase in adult white males and adult blacks was much lower after 1700, suggesting that immigration of white settlers and black slaves may have slowed or, alternately, that the rate of mortality or geographical mobility had compensated for any wave of immigration. Given the lack of complete records, it is impossible to understand why the number of adult tithables increased at a much lower rate than did the population as a whole from 1701 to 1790. It is clear, however, in comparing the population figures of the eighteenth century
in Gloucester with that of the colony and state as a whole, that the county had a stable if not stagnant population. (See Appendix, Table I.)

The other factor that is only obliquely shown in Table I is the large number of slaves that had been imported into Gloucester County. In 1755 black adult males, estimated as one-half of the black adults, constituted 59 percent of the adult males in the county. By 1790 blacks were 54 percent of the county's population. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the York River was a major destination of many large ships carrying slaves directly from Africa, and Gloucester was, therefore, easily able to procure a servile labor force in the period of initial cultivation of tobacco. This trade went into a decline in the second half of the century, and most slaves that reached the New World were transported further inland via the James or Rappahannock rivers. Thus by the 1760s the major share of the slave population in Gloucester must have been Afro-Americans. This shift in a population from African blacks to assimilated blacks may account for the increasing number of notices of slave runaways that appeared in the Virginia Gazette. For example, several ran away presumably to be reunited with friends and family. A runaway, formerly of Gloucester, was reported to have escaped from Amelia County and was "lurking about the plantation . . . where he has a wife." Slaves in Gloucester were at times advertised for sale with the phrase "Virginia-born" to describe either their level of acculturation or potential for refractory behavior. The
heavy reliance on a disproportionate number of blacks did not pass unnoticed. In 1772, Lord Dunmore wrote of apprehensive Virginia planters' desire to end the importation of slaves. The pressure of the demographics of a majority of black males in counties such as Gloucester prompted Dunmore to remark: "At present the Negroes are double the number of white people in this colony, which by the natural increase and the great addition of new-imported ones every year is sufficient to alarm . . . this country." He predicted that the Virginians would be unable to stop an enemy from recruiting from a servile people with "no tie to their masters or to the country." Such words written in 1772, during a lull in the Revolutionary crisis, were truly prophetic given the events of the next ten years in Gloucester County.

If the information from the 1782 tax list, the first for the county that has survived, is representative of the entire Revolutionary era, then the incidence of slaveholding was widespread. Slaveowners in the county numbered 517, or 42.2 percent of all taxpayers in 1782. (See Appendix, Table II.) When the landless are excluded, the percentage climbs to 48.6. However, there were almost 200 tenants who did own a few slaves. The landless that owned slaves were the largest economic group in the county. (See Appendix, Table III.) That the average Gloucester planter owned fewer slaves than did his counterpart in York and Lancaster counties is limited confirmation that fewer large aggregates of slaves were needed.

An expanding population base and intensive commercial
agriculture greatly altered the pattern of landholding from 1704/5 to 1782. During that long period in which no records are available, large landholdings decreased gradually and the number of planters increased, so that the per capita amount of land declined. In 1704/5 the rent rolls recorded 66 men in the four parishes with landholdings of over 1,000 acres. The average for all 383 men on the rent rolls was 243 acres. By 1782 the pattern of sufficient land for all and great estates for some had changed, as Table III shows. (See Appendix, Table III.)

Speculative lands in the county and massive slave or tenant-run plantations were becoming less common by the time of the American Revolution. The wealthy planter with thousands of acres was far less prominent than those who had only enough land for their own farm. Tenants with slaves and middling farmers were the most numerous group, while the farm size of less than one hundred acres, untenable for commercial agriculture, was far less common. Aside from the strategy of fathers disbursing lands to sons, there is no documented reason for the small number of "self-sufficient" farms in Gloucester County. It is also apparent that the eighteenth century was a period of the gradual rise of a laboring, landless class in Gloucester. Neighboring counties were similar to Gloucester in this respect.

By the late 1760s Gloucester County was an older county with a prosperous and numerous middle class, a small aristocracy based on slaves and tobacco, and increasingly diversified agriculture. While the county was socially stable,
the political and social leadership faced the dangers of being a minority in a world of acculturated slaves and of attempting to gain a political consensus from a broad group of landless who were, at least legally, barred from participation in the electoral process. Despite potential for problems, Revolutionary events would prove that the white community found such a base for agreement through a mixture of protest against the usurpation of their colonial rights and of fear of racial unrest. The cumulative force of the latter is emphasized by the fact that most prosperous planters and a sizeable share of their tenants were slaveowners.
CHAPTER II
GLOUCESTER COUNTY AND THE
COMING OF THE REVOLUTION, 1768-1776

The Revolutionary story of Gloucester begins with the Townshend Acts, for there is no documentary record of the county's response to the Stamp Act. The Townshend proposals included the laying of customs duties on selected items that had to be imported from Great Britain and writs of assistance to enforce the duties. These proposals were embodied in the Revenue Act, which was passed in June 1767 and news of which arrived in America in September. Massachusetts initiated the dissent with a circular letter soliciting the support of the other colonies and urging united protest against the Townshend duties. The Virginia House of Burgesses responded on April 16, 1768, with memorials of its own to George III, the House of Lords, and Commons. In addition, the General Assembly dispatched to the other colonies its own circular letter, which, like the memorials, stressed the colonists' rights as British citizens and urged a "hearty Union" of the colonies to preserve those inherent rights. One of Gloucester County's burgesses, John Page, Sr., of "North End," served on the committee that drafted the memorials and no doubt represented his constituents' natural concern over Townshend's duties. Laws that might disrupt the importation
process would, with Gloucester's location on the Chesapeake Bay, insure negative effects on the county's shipping and mercantile activities. John Page, of "Rosewell," who would later become Gloucester County's most prominent representative in the Revolutionary effort, wrote to John Norton & Sons his feelings on the Townshend Acts: "Unhappy for us, unhappy for G-B, the rising prospect of that Glorious Empire is obscured if not the View entirely & forever intercepted, by the Gross Vapours of Ministerial Ignorance or Villainy. . . . Those disagreeable Measures taken by Parliament & Ministry Have been justly opposed by America, & are unconstitutional & absolutely impolitic." Six months later, Page was still concerned: "I hope before this that the Unconstitutional & impolitic Acts are repealed."^4

Relations between England and the colonies had not improved by May 1769, when the Virginia General Assembly met again. New elections had been held the previous November, and Gloucester County reelected Thomas Whiting. Lewis Burwell was elected to replace John Page, of "North End," who had been named to the executive council. The House of Burgesses unanimously approved resolutions reaffirming the colonists' rights as British subjects and the right of Parliament to tax them only with their consent. The royal governor, Lord Botetourt, then dissolved the assembly, as he had been unable to persuade it to alter its rebellious attitude. The House of Burgesses unanimously approved resolutions reaffirming the colonists' rights as British subjects and the right of Parliament to tax them only with their consent. The royal governor, Lord Botetourt, then dissolved the assembly, as he had been unable to persuade it to alter its rebellious attitude. ^6

Indicating the gravity of their distress over Britain's
and Botetourt's actions, many of the burgesses, including Burwell and Whiting, met soon thereafter as private citizens and, following the lead of other colonies, adopted a "regular Association." This association was a compact for the non-importation of any British goods taxed by Parliament as well as many other luxuries not then taxed. The agreement also prohibited the importation of slaves until the revenues were repealed. Eighty-eight former burgesses, including Whiting and Burwell, signed this association on May 18, 1769. Those who had signed were to take copies of the agreement back to their constituents and to urge merchants and citizens to sign the agreement, which would, it was hoped, force Great Britain to repeal the hated duties. Gloucester County's specific reaction to this agreement has not survived. The reelection of Burwell and Whiting to the House of Burgesses in September 1769 and to every session thereafter indicated at the very least the tacit approval of Gloucester's citizens of this association.

Nonimportation and nonconsumption resolutions were adopted throughout the colonies. However, in the South and particularly in Virginia imports from England increased slightly in 1769 and 1770, indicating that the nonimportation resolves were not rigidly adhered to. Fortunately, the associations in the northern, more commercial, colonies were more effective and did curtail importation. This economic impact and radical activities within Britain, particularly those of John Wilkes, were among the factors that led to the Townshend duties' repeal in April 1770.
Parliament did, however, retain the duty on tea as a symbol of Britain's power to tax the colonies. The tea duty and its inherent meaning did not go unnoticed in the colonies. The House of Burgesses adopted a second nonimportation agreement, which contained more stringent measures to insure more faithful adherence to this than to the first association. On June 22, 1770, the association was signed by the burgesses and by many merchants and other citizens, including John Page of Gloucester County. The association reiterated the colonies' assertion that the arbitrary taxation violated their rights as British citizens, and those who signed it bound themselves to continue a boycott of British goods sold by Virginia merchants. To enforce the nonimportation resolves, the burgesses and other signers agreed to form committees in each county. The committees, which would consist of five associators chosen by a majority of the same, were authorized to publish the names of members of the association who had violated it and to examine the books and papers of suspect merchants. The only option available to the committees upon refusal of merchants or citizens to cooperate was publication of their conduct.¹⁰

The formation of such a committee in Gloucester County has not survived in the records. It is doubtful, however, that a committee if formed was active, for the association had failed to take hold anywhere in the colony. Virginia was not alone in tepid support and eventual abandonment of nonimportation, however, for by October the Philadelphia and Boston associations had both been abandoned. The Virginia
association was damaged when a meeting scheduled for December 1770 was adjourned because too few associators attended. With the exception of nonimportation of goods still taxed by Great Britain, the association was abandoned in July 1771.11

Early in 1773, relations between the colonies and England worsened with the Gaspée affair. In March 1773 the House of Burgesses, following the lead of Massachusetts, formed a committee of correspondence for Virginia that would maintain communication with the other colonies.12 In May 1773 the British ministry's actions created a crisis more tumultuous than any heretofore in the colonies. This crisis was occasioned by the Tea Act, which granted the almost-bankrupt East India Company a monopoly to deal directly with American merchants and which removed all duties on tea save the one symbolic Townshend duty. Boston responded with its "Tea Party" in December 1773. Parliament's answer to the "Boston Tea Party" was the first of the so-called "Intolerable Acts," the Boston Port Bill, suspending that city's trade, passed in March 1774. The news of Parliament's action arrived in Williamsburg in May 1774, and the General Assembly, then in session, called for June 1 to be a day of fasting, "to give us one Heart and one Mind firmly to oppose, by all just and proper Means, every Injury to American Rights."13 The royal governor, John Murray, earl of Dunmore, promptly dissolved the assembly when he heard of its action.

On May 27 eighty-nine of the former burgesses, including Gloucester's representatives, Burwell and Whiting, met at
the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg and, following the lead of several northern colonies, recommended that deputies from all the colonies "meet in general congress."^14 Three days later, letters were received from the Boston, Philadelphia, and Annapolis committees of correspondence urging a general association and boycott of exports to and imports from Great Britain. Burwell and Whiting and several other former burgesses who had remained in Williamsburg then invited all the former burgesses to meet on August 1, after "collecting the Sense of their respective Counties," to act on the proposed enlarged nonimportation agreement.^15

The "Sense" of Gloucester County was taken on July 14 at a "general and full meeting of the inhabitants" moderated by James Hubbard, justice of the peace. They resolved, after maintaining their "firmest attachment" to Great Britain and the Crown, that Parliament's effort to impose internal taxes on America was "arbitrary, unconstitutional and oppressive," and the "cruel and unjust" blockade of Boston harbor was "convincing proof of the fixed intention of parliament to deprive America of her constitutional rights and liberties." They stressed their kinship with other colonies: "We will firmly unite with the other counties in this colony, and the other colonies on this continent, in every measure that may be thought necessary on this alarming occasion."^16 The inhabitants resolved against the use of any East India Company products except saltpetre and determined not to import or use any imported British products. They expressed their willingness to stop exports of tobacco
if North Carolina and Maryland did likewise.

Showing the sincerity of their resolves, they vowed not to "deal with any person or persons in this county who will not sign this association . . . but will for ever despise and detest them, as enemies to American liberty." Gloucester County's inhabitants urged the continuation of the closure of the courts, which had been effected by the dissolution of the General Assembly by Lord Dunmore before the expired Fee Bill could be revived. Showing the economic hardship that already existed and which was further anticipated by extensive nonimportation and nonexportation, the county resolved that "immediately upon the non-exportation plan taking place, neither the gentlemen of the bar, nor any other person, ought to bring any suit for the recovery of any debt, or prosecute farther any suit already brought, during the continuance of these resolutions." The inhabitants demonstrated their support of the recent actions of Lewis Burwell and Thomas Whiting by appointing them the county's deputies at the August convention.

As compared with the resolutions of other Virginia counties also adopted that summer, Gloucester County's resolutions fall within the broad category of moderate Revolutionary sentiment. Neighboring Middlesex County adopted a set of resolves that clearly earn the distinction of most conservative. They conceived it "not incompatible with the Condition of Colonists to submit to commercial Regulations, in Consequence of the Protection that is given to our Trade by the . . . Mother Country." The Middlesex resolves did
not offer support to the people of Boston or closing of the courts and declared the general non-exportation and non-importation plan "impracticable." 19

Gloucester's resolves were, on the other hand, not as comprehensive as those of some other counties. With its large population of slaveowners, Gloucester did not propose to prohibit further importation of slaves or the purchase of imported slaves, as did Caroline, Culpeper, Fairfax, Prince George, and Hanover counties. 20 Nor did the county offer to provide aid for the suffering inhabitants of Boston, as did Essex County. 21 The county's awareness of economic hardships from non-importation and non-exportation with Great Britain is clear, for Gloucester is only one of eight counties, the other seven being in the Northern Neck, to support, or even allude to, continued court closure and suspended payment of debts. 22 The more outspoken and often lengthy remonstrances of such counties as Albemarle and Fairfax contain extended anti-British oratory and philosophical discussions of constitutional rights, while Gloucester's resolves are concise and to the point. 23 Though brief, the resolves leave no doubt of Gloucester's acceptance of the Revolutionary idea that the cause of the continually worsening relations between America and England was the mother country's refusal to recognize the colonists' rights as British subjects. In addition, Gloucester fully accepted the philosophy that would make the Revolution work -- the acceptance of another colony's cause as their own.
Thomas Whiting and Lewis Burwell, representing Gloucester County, attended the first Virginia Convention, held from August 1 through 6. The Convention drew up an association of twelve resolves, which was basically comprehensive non-importation of any British goods or manufactures after November 1, 1774, and nonexportation of Virginia goods to Britain after August 10, 1775, if grievances remained unchanged. It was also resolved not to import slaves or purchase imported slaves after November 1 nor to use even that tea already on hand. The representatives were to encourage the formation of county committees to supervise the boycott and to correspond with the general committee of correspondence. These county committees were to issue certificates to merchants who signed the association and to publish information about merchants who violated or refused to comply with the terms of the association or who raised prices.  

The Continental Congress began meeting in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, and by October 20 had formed the Continental Association, which incorporated much of the Virginia Association. It called for nonimportation of British goods after December 1, 1774, nonconsumption after March 1, 1775, and nonexportation after September 10, 1775, unless the protested acts of Parliament were repealed. Importation of slaves would also be suspended on December 1, 1775. Merchants who raised their prices in an effort to profit from the scarcity of goods were also to be boycotted.

The events that had transpired since the last association -- the Tea Act, the Intolerable Acts, the ominous events
at Boston -- and the overwhelming effect of an intercolonial alliance formed to promote American interests insured the rapid and enthusiastic formation of county committees in Virginia, for thirty-three counties and three towns had organized committees by the end of 1774. Gloucester was one of the first committees to be formed. The county had reassembled the same group that had participated in the election of delegates to the first Virginia Convention in August and had essentially ratified the Continental Association before early November.

By then, the Gloucester County Committee, among whose members were Sir John Peyton and John Curtis, was taking seriously its role as a firm supporter of the Association. Some citizens of Yorktown had heard that a shipload of tea was arriving, having been shipped to Williamsburg merchant John Prentis from John Norton & Sons. On November 7, some Yorktown citizens boarded the arriving ship and waited for the determination of a meeting of several members of the House of Burgesses on the disposition of the tea. They received no answer, however, so they "immediately hoisted the Tea out of the Hold and threw it into the River." Some residents of Gloucester had heard the same rumors of the arrival of the suspect cargo and that same day "twenty three Members of the Committee of Gloucester County, with a Number of the other Inhabitants, assembled at Gloucester Town, to determine how the said Tea should be disposed of." On arriving at the ship, they found that "the Tea had met with its deserved Fate," for it had been "committed to the
Waves" by the Yorktown residents. Not content with only dumping the tea, the Gloucester Committee met and "after mature Deliberation" resolved that John Norton had "lent his little Aid to the Ministry for enslaving America" and was guilty of a "daring Insult upon the People of this Colony, to whom he owes his ALL." And, John Prentis, who had ordered the tea, "has justly incurred the Censure of this County, and that he ought to be made a publick Example of."

To prevent further violations of the Association, the Gloucester Committee resolved that the Virginia should return to London within twenty days, that no tobacco from Gloucester County should be shipped on that vessel, and that residents of the county would not consign tobacco or any other product to Norton's mercantile house and would recommend that their sister counties do likewise. Norton, they claimed, "has forfeited all Title to the Confidence of this County." That the committee so quickly acted against a firm that had long been important to the leading planters illustrates the place of protest over economics. Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette of November 24, 1774, also published the "Publick Declaration" of John Prentis, who apologized for not countermanding his order for the tea. Prentis was, no doubt, concerned for the future of his business, as the extreme actions of the York and Gloucester committees emphasized the seriousness with which some tidewater Virginians enforced the Continental Association.

John Norton had anticipated trouble with the Virginia and her cargo and on January 5, 1775, before he had learned
of the Yorktown "tea party," sent an explanatory letter to Virginians. He claimed that after he had received the tea order from Prentis, "being uneasy at the order, did not give it out till the month of August, hoping and expecting they should have received countermanding orders." Norton had no sooner written this than he received the reports of the York and Gloucester County meetings and the bad news that his esteem was even lower than he had dared to imagine. On January 16 he added a postscript to his narrative of January 5 and submitted it "to the committees in particular, and the public in general." His intent in shipping the tea, he claimed was not in the least to raise revenue in America for Great Britain. Rather, he believed that Parliament "have not the least shadow of right to tax America" and hoped that he might be "acquitted from any evil intentions of prejudicing a people I have a great esteem for, and among whom I have lived (I may say) the happiest part of my life." Norton's letter and the postscript were both printed in the Virginia Gazette of May 6, 1775, an inopportune time. The Revolutionary crisis in Virginia had arrived at its most critical point to date -- the seizure of the gunpowder from the magazine in Williamsburg during the night of April 20-21 by Lord Dunmore's marines. The Gloucester County Committee met on May 2, after they had seen copies of Norton's letters, and resolved that "we deem the resolution of our committee, last November, not to ship any tobacco in future to Mr. Norton's house, as still obligatory; the ship Virginia having arrived without the concessions then required." That the
"tea party" occurred in tidewater Virginia, the center of the colony's commerce and mercantile activities and the area where the threat of resistance to the boycott was greatest, emphasized the intensity of Revolutionary sentiment to other Virginians, many of whom had far less to sacrifice than the people of Gloucester and York.

These activities had gone far from unnoticed by Lord Dunmore, who wrote in a letter of December 24, 1774, to the earl of Dartmouth, "The Associations . . . are now enforcing throughout this country with the greatest vigour." Dunmore documents the broad-based support of the Association: "There is not a Justice of Peace in Virginia that acts except as a Committee-man. The abolishing the courts of justice was the first step taken, in which the men of fortune and preeminence joined equally with the lowest and meanest." Dunmore was convinced that "the arbitrary proceedings of these committees likewise cannot fail of producing quarrels and dissensions which will raise partisans of government."35 The test of Dunmore's prediction would come in the ensuing year, when he was able to foster dissension, not among whites, however, but between the races.

As 1775 began, Gloucester County residents and their committee proved that their enthusiasm and support for the Continental Association had not waned. Pinckney's Virginia Gazette of January 9 reported that "Mrs. New of Gloucester County burned her tea."36 Before mid-January, two members of the Gloucester Committee, Sir John Peyton and John Curtis, were enforcing the Continental Association's resolve against
arbitrarily raising prices to take advantage of the scarcity of goods. Peyton went on board the sloop Liberty and questioned the high price of the goods on board, which had been shipped by John and George Fowler, Alexandria merchants, in the care of their apprentice, John Blatt, Jr. Charles Marshall, the Liberty's captain, told Peyton that "every man had a right to sell his goods for as much as he could get." Perhaps fearing reprisals, Marshall and Blatt wrote from Gloucester County on January 13 and had published admissions of guilt, "notwithstanding the caution given me by some of the committee for this county." What action the committee took beyond the on-board examination and the implicit threats of publication of the violations and of boycotting the Fowlers has not survived. The threat of public criticism was apparently enough to elicit the public apology.

When it became clear that Dunmore would not convene the General Assembly as usual in March 1775, Peyton Randolph, chairman of the first Virginia Convention, called in January 1775 for election of delegates to attend a second Virginia Convention, to meet March 20. Gloucester County's freeholders (as opposed to the "general and full meeting of the inhabitants" that had voted on the county's resolves of July 1774) met on March 2 at the courthouse and unanimously elected Lewis Burwell and Thomas Whiting. It is clear that Gloucester County saw these elections as a legitimate successor to the usual election of burgesses and that their representatives had made the transition from colonial burgess to Revolutionary representative. They surely saw the Con-
vention as an extra-legal body constituted to preserve their rights and liberties.

The second Virginia Convention convened on March 20, and Thomas Whiting and Lewis Burwell were among the delegates. Responding to the heightening Revolutionary crisis, the Convention appointed a committee to prepare a plan for "embodying, arming and disciplining such a Number of Men as may be sufficient" so that the "Colony be immediately put into a posture of Defence." Several days later, the committee presented their plan, which was unanimously agreed to. Each county was to form and train volunteer companies of infantry and light horse, and county committees were to collect and purchase gunpowder, flints, and lead. Thomas Whiting was appointed to a committee that would procure such articles for counties unable to get them. The Convention adjourned on March 27.

Gloucester County, continuing to support the actions of the Virginia Revolutionaries, was the first county committee to go on record and publicly approve the Convention's resolves. At that meeting, held on April 3, 1775, they also thanked Whiting and Burwell "for their faithful discharge of the important trust reposed in them." In addition, the committee members elected Warner Lewis chairman of the county committee. The county committee continued its day-to-day enforcement of the Continental Association, as shown by the advertisement of a sale of goods, "imported contrary to the Continental Association." Responding to royal instructions received by all gover-
nors some months earlier to limit the amount of arms and ammunition allowed to accumulate in the colonies, Lord Dunmore in the pre-dawn hours of April 21 had marines from the nearby H.M.S. Magdalen seize the supply of gunpowder in the magazine at Williamsburg. The Virginians responded quickly and forcefully, condemning the action and preparing to oppose Dunmore's implied threat of violence. The Gloucester County Committee met four days later, April 25, and thus was one of the first committees publicly and officially to condemn Dunmore's actions. They resolved that his answer to a protest by the citizens of Williamsburg was "unsatisfactory, disrespectful, and evasive," and that Dunmore "by this and other parts of his conduct, which have lately transpired, has justly forfeited all title to the confidence of the good people of Virginia." As historian Ivor Noël Hume has commented, "So unequivocal a statement from a county [Gloucester] close to Williamsburg and inhabited by some of the colony's most influential people can have left the governor with few illusions as to the reactions of the more distant committees."

Those "other parts of his conduct" the committee condemned no doubt included his order forbidding Virginians to elect delegates to the second Continental Congress and, particularly, his threats of freeing and arming the slaves against the rebellious colonists. Dr. William Pasteur of Williamsburg reported that Dunmore had threatened to "declare Freedom to the Slaves, and reduce the City of Williamsburg to Ashes." Dunmore himself told the earl of
Dartmouth in a letter of May 1, 1775: "I shall be forced and it is my fixed purpose to arm all my own Negroes and receive all others that will come to me whom I shall declare free," and that he "could raise such a force from among Indians, Negroes and other persons as would soon reduce the refractory people of this colony to obedience." \(^{47}\)

Well aware of the import of his threats, Dunmore reported to Dartmouth in a letter of June 25, "My declaration that I would arm and set free such slaves as should assist me if I was attacked has stirred up fears in them which cannot easily subside as they know how vulnerable they are in that particular, and therefore they have cause in this complaint of which their others are totally unsupplied." \(^{48}\)

In addition to responding to the "alarming" matters of the gunpowder and the threatened arming of slaves, the Gloucester County Committee handled business that had been engendered by the second Virginia Convention's resolves regarding the colony's defenses. The committee encouraged the making of gunpowder by offering £25 as a "premium" to anyone who produced to the chairman, Warner Lewis, before October 26, six hundred pounds of gunpowder made in Virginia. If the gunpowder was made totally of Virginia materials, the person would receive an additional £10. The committee was apparently anticipating the clothing of its Independent Company, the organization of which was required by the Convention, for it resolved to give £50 to anyone who produced sixty pair of wool and sixty pair of cotton cards before
October 25, "with an authentick certificate of their having been made in this colony." 49

On May 2 Dunmore summoned his council, noting that "Commotions and insurrections have suddenly been excited among the people, which threatens the very existence of his majesty's government," and requested their advice. 50 John Page, of Rosewell, who had been named to the royal council in May 1773, later recalled that meeting: "I boldly advised the Governor to give up the Powder and Arms, which he had removed from the Magazine. But he flew into an outrageous passion, smiting his fist on the table, saying, 'Mr. Page, I am astonished at you.' I calmly replied that I had discharged my duty, and had no other advice to give. As the other Councillors neither seconded or opposed me, he (the governor) was greatly embarrassed. As I was never summoned to attend another Board, I might well suspect I was suspended from my office; but as I cared nothing about that, I never enquired whether I was or not." 51 The resultant proclamation, drafted by the more conservative members of the royal council, made no apologies for seizing the powder and urged Virginians to suppress the "spirit of faction." 52

Dunmore, however, recognized that a mere proclamation would not restore peace to the troubled colony, as reports spread that Patrick Henry was leading a detachment from Hanover County to restore the gunpowder and seize Dunmore himself. Fearing for his personal safety, Dunmore on May 4 ordered Captain George Montagu, commanding the man-of-war Powey sitting in the York River, to lead a detachment to the
capital to protect him. Historian and journalist John Daly Burk later wrote that: "The people of Gloucester in particular, who lay contiguous, assembled to the number of 300, and came to a resolution of attacking Dunmore in his palace, and even of boarding the ships if they dared to put the threat of Montagu in execution." News of the battles of Lexington and Concord reached Williamsburg in the midst of this crisis, and the coincidental similarity of Dunmore's actions to General Gage's efforts to deprive those Massachusetts citizens of their arms and ammunition did not go unnoticed by the Virginians.

The seizure of the gunpowder and Dunmore's extreme reactions to Virginians' subsequent protestations prompted the Gloucester County committee to meet on May 2 at the courthouse. The members, expressing their disapproval of Great Britain's handling of the colonial crisis, resolved to continue not to "ship a single hogshead of tobacco to Great Britain until the determination of the continental congress respecting exportation be known." Five days later the county freeholders met and unanimously elected Lewis Burwell and Thomas Whiting as the county's delegates to the third Virginia Convention, which was to meet in two months.

On June 1, the first General Assembly to meet in over a year convened, and Dunmore's traditional opening speech urged the members to adopt measures to restore the public peace. Thomas Whiting, of Gloucester County, was the next day appointed to a committee to respond to Dunmore's address
and to the events of the past two months as well. While the members were considering their response, they were shocked to learn that Dunmore, allegedly fearing for his personal safety, had evacuated the Palace in Williamsburg and had joined his family on board the *Fowey*. The assembly then informed Dunmore that they highly disapproved of his actions in the "gunpowder affair," requested that he return the gunpowder, and urged his return to the capital so that the public business could be properly conducted. Dunmore's continual unsatisfactory responses prompted some of the more radical members of the assembly to threaten to seize him. Loyalist James Parker, a Norfolk merchant, reported that Thomas Whiting "made some foolish speeches to the Same purpose." The assembly was adjourned on June 24, after failing to enact a single statute, and another episode in Virginia's move toward total revolution ended.

Probably to provide provisions for Dunmore and the other passengers and troops on board the *Fowey* and its sister ship the *Otter*, both lying at the mouth of the York River, Captain Montagu sent a foraging party to an island at the lower end of Gloucester County early in July. The raiders had seized and made off with fourteen sheep and a cow before the owner and his neighbors could arm themselves. The reporter of this event assured his readers that such an occurrence would not happen again, for "the People, who are now well furnished with arms, &c. will be ready to give them a warm reception, should they [the British] favour them with another visit." Such raids created concern
among the inhabitants of Gloucester County, with Dunmore's ships sitting just off the county's shores.

The people's fears, however, did not end there. Dunmore's constant threats to free the slaves and then arm them to aid the British had encouraged runaway slaves to seek a sort of political asylum with the British forces. Quite a few slaves were being held on board the ships, despite the stated denials by some of the British. The reporter from Gloucester County expressed the age-old fear of slave reprisals against white citizens and slaveowners. Many of the slaves aboard the ships were no doubt from Gloucester County, from which flight to the British would have been easier than from almost anywhere else in the colony. The Gloucester County reporter asked: "Quere, Are not the negro slaves, now on board the Fowey, which are under the g----r's protection, in actual rebellion, and punishable as such? Is it not high time to shew administration how little they have to expect from that part of their bloody plan, by arming our trusty slaves against ourselves?" Further evidence of the fear of Gloucester County's citizens that their county would be a particular target of Dunmore and his armed slaves appears in the county committee's meeting of July 24. The committee then resolved that "the most cordial thanks of the people of Gloucester county are justly due to the worthy inhabitants of those counties who have generously offered their houses as a retreat to our wives and children, in case they should be obliged to abandon their habitations here." These fears may have subsided somewhat when in
mid-July the British ships moved down river to Portsmouth, where Dunmore and his staff set up headquarters.

The citizens' and the county committees' efforts to enforce the Continental Association continued as strong as ever throughout the summer. On July 17, 1775, the third Virginia Convention convened in Richmond, as it had in March, to be further from the threat of the British troops lying off Norfolk. Gloucester County's representatives, Thomas Whiting and Lewis Burwell, were there, with Burwell arriving on August 10. An ordinance enacted by the Convention "in the present time of danger" established two Virginia regiments and divided the colony into sixteen districts. Each district was to enlist from the county militia a battalion of five hundred men. Gloucester County, together with Middlesex, Essex, King and Queen, and King William counties formed a district. These battalions of "minute-men" were to be at instantaneous call in the event of invasion or insurrection. The remainder of the county militia not incorporated into the battalion was to continue to provide for the protection of the county. The minutemen in each county were led by a county lieutenant, colonel, lieutenant-colonel, and major and were divided into companies. "All free male persons, hired servants, and apprentices, above the age of sixteen, and under fifty years" were, with some exceptions, to be enrolled.

Before the third Virginia Convention adjourned on August 26, it provided for continued governing of Virginia by the Revolutionaries with a Committee of Safety. Among
the eleven members of this committee elected by the Conven-
tion was Gloucester County's John Page, one of Dunmore's
most outspoken critics. Indicating Page's high standing
among other Virginia Revolutionaries, only Edmund Pendleton
and George Mason, two patriots whose Revolutionary activities
were known and respected throughout the thirteen colonies,
had more votes than Page. 66

In compliance with the Convention's instructions the
Gloucester County Committee met September 13 at the cour-
thouse and nominated officers for the militia companies,
subject to the confirmation of the Committee of Safety.
Warner Lewis, chairman of the Committee, was appointed to
the highest post, that of county lieutenant. Sir John
Peyton was made colonel, Thomas Whiting, the county's out-
spoken delegate to the House of Burgesses and the conven-
tions, lieutenant-colonel, and Thomas Boswell, major. In
addition, captains, lieutenants, and ensigns were appointed
for sixteen companies. 67

The number of units being formed is evidence of the
committee's concern for the defense of the county's exten-
sive shoreline, which was particularly vulnerable to attacks
by Dunmore's forces located nearby at Norfolk. Early in
October, a company from Gloucester County joined their
regimental commander, Patrick Henry, at Williamsburg. 68 As
Virginians prepared their defense, Dunmore's policy was "to
pillage the plantations and entice away the slaves." 69
Virginians felt that Dunmore, with an undetermined number of
men and runaway slaves, many no doubt eager to strike back at their former owners, was in a perfect position to strike quickly at any number of populated areas along tidewater's rivers and inlets. John Page, apparently sensitive to the fear of people within close striking distance of Dunmore, became the leading spokesman for a strong defense of the lowlands. He told the Committee of Safety that "if the people of the lower country notwithstanding their known attachment to the cause of liberty were denied the aid to which they were entitled in their distresses, they would make a common cause with the invaders, and abandon a people, who had neither courage nor humanity to protect them."70

Writing on November 11 to Thomas Jefferson of his own and the other Gloucester citizens' loyalties, Page remarked: "We care not for our Towns, and the Destruction of our Houses would not cost us a Sigh. I have long since given up mine as lost, I have not moved many of my Things away. I feel such Indignation against the Authors of our Grievances and the Scoundrel Pirates in our River."71 Page no doubt echoed the fear of many other Gloucester County residents whose property was perilously exposed to Dunmore's threat. Page's arguments were persuasive, for Colonel William Woodford and his regiment were dispatched from Williamsburg when Hampton was threatened by Dunmore and when Dunmore's activities became more aggressive at Norfolk.72

After Dunmore's successful rebuff of patriot forces at Kemp's Landing on November 14, Dunmore made good his continual threat to free the slaves and arm them against the rebellious
colonists. His "Emancipation Proclamation," written November 7, offered freedom to any slave or indentured servant owned by the rebels who joined the British defense of the colonies.73 Tidewater Virginia and Gloucester County, with a black majority, took alarm. Edmund Pendleton, chairman of the Committee of Safety, reported to Richard Henry Lee, "Letters mention that slaves flock to him in abundance, but I hope it magnified."74

Gloucester County's outspoken patriot, John Page, decided to remain in Williamsburg with his family, rather than return to Rosewell. Page reported to Thomas Jefferson on November 24 the latest developments in the Norfolk area, with Dunmore formally occupying the town and the Americans preparing to drive them out: "You will see by the Proclamation [freeing slaves] that he has only spoken out and avowed what he has hitherto concealed. I hope the Convention will publish a Counter Proclamation, raise at least another Regiment, and instead of Minute Men, unless they can be put on a better footing, have the Militia compleatly armed as well trained as the Time they can spare will admit of, and make Draughts from it when Men are wanted. . . . Numbers of Negroes and Cowardly Scoundrels flock to his Standard."75

Page wrote on December 9 to Richard Henry Lee of the tidewater region: "So defenceless is it that I am persuaded that a couple of Frigates with a few Tenders & only one Regiment at this Time make as compleat a Conquest of all the lower Counties of Virginia as Ld. D. has made of Princess Ann & Norfolk." He continued, "it is said Ld. D. has for
some Time past employed several hundred Negroes." The fourth Virginia Convention, which had been meeting since December 1, took note of Dunmore's "proclamation declaring freedom to our servants and slaves, and arming them against us, by seizing our persons and properties, and declaring those who opposed such his arbitrary measures in a state of rebellion" and ordered six additional regiments to be raised. A committee appointed to answer Dunmore's proclamation reported on December 13. They reminded the Convention that the traditional penalty for slave insurrection was death without benefit of clergy and recommended that slaves who had been "seduced" to take up arms would be liable for punishment but that those who returned immediately would be pardoned and allowed to resume their duties in safety. The Convention then enacted by ordinance that slaves "taken in arms against this colony, or in the possession of an enemy, through their own choice" would be sent to the West Indies to be sold.

On December 9, the same day that Page had lamented to Lee the defenseless state of the tidewater region, British forces advanced from their fortifications at Great Bridge, twelve miles outside Norfolk, against outnumbered Virginia troops under Colonel William Woodford. Lord Dunmore had ordered the move in response to reports that men and artillery were on their way from North Carolina to join the patriot forces. The Virginians successfully held off the British assault and suffered only one injury compared to seventeen casualties among the enemy. The British abandoned
their fort, thus leaving open the road to Norfolk. This American victory at the Battle of Great Bridge was significant for Virginia. Dunmore's hold on the Norfolk area was undermined, and he would soon be forced to withdraw to a "floating city" in Hampton Roads. The victory provided tangible support for the continuation of Revolutionary activities in Virginia. 80

The beginning of the year 1776 saw renewed conflict between the Virginia forces, now occupying Norfolk and the surrounding area, and the British forces lying offshore. Gloucester militia companies were among those who had served in the actions in and around Norfolk. In January the colony reimbursed various officers who had provided for ferriages of troops and provisions for their companies. Also, expenses of keeping a guard in Gloucester were reimbursed. 81

In addition to the constant military alarm of the county, Gloucester County's Committee quickly showed their support for the measures taken by the fourth Virginia Convention. On February 7, the Committee of Safety issued commissions, as the Convention had directed, for five members of Gloucester's committee who had been selected to constitute a Court of Commissioners to examine suspects and enforce measures against persons judged to be enemies of America. The ordinance enacted by the Convention prescribed that the estates of persons deemed enemies and the goods of merchants found in violation of the Continental Association were to be confiscated. 82 Warner Lewis, Sir John Peyton, and the
Reverend James Maury Fontaine are known to have been among those chosen. That same day the Committee of Safety approved Warner Lewis's efforts to arm the third company of militiamen raised there, which would be called into service when completely armed.

By February 1776, the Revolutionary crisis had deepened. Having just received a copy of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* from Richard Henry Lee, John Page wrote on February 3 to Lee that he would like to procure more copies of the incendiary volume, and that if he were not so busy with committee matters, he would "take grand Pleasure in saying much to you on the Subject of Independence." Tangible proof that tensions with Great Britain were worse than ever in Virginia came when the British man-of-war *Roebuck*, with 44 guns and bearing 400 sailors and 100 marines, sailed into Hampton Roads on February 9 to join Dunmore's forces there. It was followed a few days later by the *Mercury* with more transports and tenders. Expressing the alarm that spread through Gloucester as Hampton Roads filled with men-of-war, Page wrote on February 19 to Richard Henry Lee, "We have not a Force sufficient to oppose them if they have not brought a single Soldier -- for the 5 Man of War now here are able to land 6 or 700 Sailors & Marines exclusive of the Tories and Negros. Dunmore can furnish & we have not 300 Men at Hampton not 100 at York ... and the Country People & Militia are not only without Arms but are lulled into a Stupid Security by the Tales which flatter them with Peace. I moved on the arrival of the Roebuck that the Neighbouring..."
Militias should be ordered to hold themselves in Readiness to march out at an Hours Notice . . . but the Committee [of Safety] thought these Things quite unnecessary."

The next day, Page informed Lee of the Committee of Safety's response to Lord Dunmore's overtures to the committee for reconciliation. The committee responded that the determination of such matters must be left to the Continental Congress. The committee told Dunmore, however, that he could "manifest his good Intentions by suspending Hostilities" and "that his Ld. should deliver up the Slaves now with him immediately." This primary demand to Dunmore is evidence that the presence of an unknown number of slaves offshore with Dunmore, armed against their former masters, tormented the residents of tidewater Virginia.

The troops organized by ordinance of the fourth Virginia Convention were now actually being recruited and formed. And, as directed by law, the newly formed Seventh Virginia Regiment, recruited from Gloucester and neighboring counties, was ordered stationed at Gloucester Courthouse by the Committee of Safety on March 15, as Gloucester County was particularly susceptible to attack by the British men-of-war lying offshore. Meanwhile, the local militia companies continued on guard in the county, well aware of their precarious location.

Major General Charles Lee, who had been named to command the newly formed Southern Department, arrived in Williamsburg in late March. One of Lee's first orders was that the several Virginia regiments scattered throughout the
tidewater region should concentrate their strength at Williamsburg. He wrote to Richard Henry Lee, "I am apt to think that Williamsburg and York will be their [the British] object." He showed his awareness of the racial problems elicited by Dunmore's proclamation and the weakness of Virginia's defense, adding: "Your dominion over the black is founded on opinion, if this opinion falls, your authority is lost." On April 4, the Committee of Safety requested Lee to order 1,000 pounds of lead, 200 pounds of buckshot, and 500 pounds of powder for the use of the Seventh Regiment, then at Gloucester. Gloucester's John Page, whom General Lee had characterized as a decisive Whig, was at this critical time also concerned about the imminent military crisis as it affected his county. He wrote Richard Henry Lee on April 12 that "our People [are] . . . discontented . . . on Account of the removal of the Troops from their Neighbourhood, & in others at the Apprehension of being removed as the People of Norfolk & Princess [Anne] are to be into the interior Parts of the Country. In this State of Things God knows what will be the Consequence of a vigorous Push. . . . It is happy for us that General Lee is here." Page's assessment that people of Gloucester were "discontented" was correct, for on April 22, the Gloucester County Committee wrote to General Lee that their "expos'd situation" warranted his consideration. They remonstrated that their county was "surrounded almost by a large water, into which a variety of creeks and rivers (perpetually infested with tenders) lead, all of which head into the
Country; it is inconceivable with what facility our enemies might plunder, unless awed by the apprehension of armed men to oppose them. Our inhabitants for some years past accustomed to farming have their plantations in such conditions as cannot fail to allure a set of hungry ravagers. However willing to oppose incursions of this sort, they are too much dispersed & too indifferently furnished with arms & ammunition to act with proper effect. It will at once occur to you of how great importance the possession of so fertile & well cultivated a spot wou'd be to the ministerial robbers. . . . Our concern for the acquisition which our enemies wou'd make by the subduction of the county, wou'd be fully equal to that of our own private sufferings. For these reasons we request that you will not withdraw the seventh regiment from Gloster.” Their request was denied.

The fifth Virginia Convention that began meeting in May 1776 would prove itself significant not only for the colony but also for the new nation, for by its end Virginia's government would be founded on a historic Declaration of Rights and Constitution and would be led by a Council of State, House of Delegates, and governor. Lewis Burwell and Thomas Whiting were among the delegates attending that Convention. This Convention would also be important, because it was the first from among all thirteen colonies officially to direct its Continental Congress delegates to introduce a resolution for independence. John Page, along with many other Virginians, got his long-sought Declaration of Independence when Richard Henry Lee's resolution was
approved and the formal declaration issued.

The events of pre-Revolutionary politics in the House of Burgesses and in colonial and county committees showed that Gloucester had, as had most other counties, moved resolutely, though without a preconceived plan, toward independence, guided by their leaders.

For the next seven years the people of Gloucester would continue to support and elect men such as John Page, Sr., and Jr., Thomas Whiting, and Lewis Burwell to political office and high military posts. Even a brief analysis of the men who served in such offices shows the continuity of office-holding from the pre-Revolutionary period into the years of Confederation and peace. The dialogue between leaders and followers at the courthouse resulted in unanimity on a vigorous defense of property, real and servile, and political rights.98

Although one needed only twenty-five acres of land with a dwelling to vote or hold office, this liberality of the franchise was rarely a factor in the choice of leaders. In the selection of ad-hoc committee elections, colonial and state legislative elections, and local gatherings at the courthouse, there was a tendency to support and defer to the known and visible educated and wealthy who sought political power.99 In Robert Brown's analysis of turnover in the House of Burgesses from 1752 to 1781, Gloucester is noted for its perpetual reelection of Burwell and Whiting. Although only 20 of 361 burgesses in Virginia served for ten terms, two of these were Gloucester burgesses. Only 9 individuals
and 6 families were elected from the county in this thirty-year period. J. R. Pole's comment that the assembly "was dominated by the deeply entrenched gentry of the counties" would apply to Gloucester.

Most Revolutionary leaders continually elected by the people of Gloucester were large landholders and slaveowners. (See Appendix, Table IV.) Of the officeholders, thirty-six of forty-two landowners were also slaveowners. Having the greatest stake in their county, they generally represented the interests of their fellow residents. By radiating the concerns of the county, leaders such as John Page remained in power despite internal chaos and external threats. On July 20, 1776, Page wrote to Jefferson, "I am highly pleased with the Declaration. . . . We know the Race is not to the Swift nor the Battle to the strong. Do you think an Angel rides in the Whirlwind and directs the Storm?" The first of these storms was the invasion and occupation of Gwynn's Island in July 1776.
CHAPTER III
GLOUCESTER COUNTY, MAY-JULY 1776:
LORD DUNMORE AND THE LOYALISTS

While the fifth Virginia Convention continued meeting in Williamsburg, engaged in fashioning Virginia's new government, the anticipated outbreak of hostilities in Gloucester began. In the late spring of 1776, Lord Dunmore's small flotilla had become overcrowded, with inadequate provisions and many of its occupants diseased. Making the situation worse, the Virginia troops had constantly harassed British foraging parties attempting to obtain supplies along the creeks and rivers near the fleet. On May 26 Dunmore abandoned his post at Portsmouth, and General Andrew Lewis, whom General Lee had recently appointed to command the troops at Williamsburg, reported to his commander that fifty ships had departed in the morning and by afternoon were sailing up the Piankatank River. The commander of the Seventh Virginia Regiment, Colonel Dangerfield, then marched what men he had towards the fleet. Lewis continued, "I am not apprehensive of any other ill consequences attending from the present station of the Fleet, than their possessing themselves of what stock is upon Gwins Island at the mouth of Peanketank. Had I known of such Island and stock, which is said to be considerable, I should have (long e'er now)
ordered every Thing that could have contributed to the Support of the Enemy to be moved." In addition, the island was sufficiently large for a prolonged occupation. Another major reason for Dunmore's decision to occupy Gwynn's Island, where the men crowded on his fleet could safely land and establish quarters close by good food and water, was the rising disease, especially smallpox, threatening his entire force and particularly the blacks. Purdie's Virginia Gazette reported Dunmore's landing of five hundred men, black and white, and added that the British were welcomed "on the evening of their landing, with a promiscuous ball, which was opened, we hear, by a certain spruce little gentleman, with one of the black ladies." Dunmore's men, Dixon's Virginia Gazette reported, had constructed an entrenchment "guarded chiefly by the black regiment." The Gloucester militia and units from the Seventh Regiment assembled on the mainland. The artillery of Dunmore's fleet, guarding the channel, had the upper hand the newspaper reported, for "our men having no cannon, it was utterly impossible to intercept them."

The paranoid visions of a huge troop of freed slaves, languishing in Dunmore's good will, armed and ready to kill their former masters, now seemed to be confirmed to many Virginians. Historian Benjamin Quarles estimates, however,
that in all, from the issuing of Dunmore's "Emancipation Proclamation" until the British were forced from Gwynn's Island and other refuges along the Chesapeake, not over eight hundred blacks had succeeded in reaching Dunmore. And, by the time Dunmore's fleet sailed for Staten Island in August, only three hundred were healthy enough to go along. As Dunmore reported, the black regiment "would have been in great forwardness had not a fever crept in amongst them, which carried off a great many very fine fellows." The slaves in the surrounding area must have preferred the freedom of Gwynn's Island to their current situation, despite the reports of disease, for a British officer reported that six or eight slaves arrived every day to join Dunmore's troops.

General Lewis reported to General Lee on June 3, 1776, what Dunmore was doing and what Virginians were doing to oppose him. "All I could do," he lamented, "was to post Col. Dangerfield's Battalion so as to prevent as much as possible any connection between Lord Dunmore's Banditti and the disaffected & Negroes." Lewis's plans included setting up cannon, burning the vessels in the channel, and dispatching three militia companies to reinforce the troops of the Seventh Regiment already on duty.

The month of June was occupied with preparations to drive the British from Gwynn's Island. Tangible fear had replaced vague apprehension as a more forceful motivation to act. Troops from outlying counties marched to Gloucester, and supplies that had previously been hard to procure were
now available in great quantity for the use of the troops at Gloucester. Militia companies that had heretofore existed only on paper were filled up in the county, offering welcome relief and support to the companies that had been standing guard for over six months. On July 6, John Page wrote to Jefferson that the batteries being erected there "I think will be sufficient to drive the Fleet from their Station, silence the Batteries, and break up the Enemies Camp.... I think we may easily drive them out of the Island. But it is doubted by some People whether it is worth while to run any risque to do this since they will easily get Possession of some other Island, or perhaps some Place of more Consequence."  

On the night of July 8, General Lewis, accompanied by several other officers, visited the camp before Gwynn's Island to examine the enemy's position and report the same at a Council of War. They discovered that the Dunmore had changed position with the Otter and was in a particularly precarious position with regard to the American batteries. "They determined not to lose this good opportunity of beginning their Cannonade in which they might severely & principally chastise the noble Earl." At eight o'clock the following morning the attack on the fleet, works, and camp began, and in approximately one-half hour the Dunmore and the Otter, both damaged, sailed out to sea to avoid further fire from the American batteries. The patriots renewed their fire even more vigorously around noon, throwing the British camp into "the utmost Confusion." "Unhappily we
had not a Boat on the shore," Page reported to Lee, and the Americans were unable to cross the water and attack the island. Boats were procured the next day, and "Captain [Charles] Harrison, who had the direction of those field pieces [two six pounders brought to Lower Wind Mill Point] began playing upon the tenders, which he galled so much, that the schooner ran up a small creek, which inted the Island, where the crew abandoned her, and the sloop got aground in reach of our cannon; upon which the General [Lewis] ordered Captain [William] Smith [of Gloucester], of the 7th regiment, with his company to man the canoes, and board her, which was done with alacrity. However, before our men came up with her, the crew got into their boats, and pushed for the Island. But Captain Smith very prudently passing the tender, pursued them so close, that before they could reach the shore, he exchanged a few shot with them, and took part of them prisoners. The enemy's look-outs perceiving our men close upon the lower part of the Island cried out, 'the shirt-men are coming!' and scampered off.14 Two hundred men under Colonel McClanahan then crossed to the island and found that the enemy had evacuated in a great hurry, as there were a "number of dead bodies, in a state of putrefaction."15 Another description of the scene was more graphic: "Many poor Negroes were found on the island dying of the putrid fever; others dead in the open fields; a child was found sucking at the breast of its dead mother. . . . Dunmore's neglect of those poor creatures, suffering numbers of them to perish for want of common necessaries and
the least assistance, one would think enough to discourage others from joining him."16

Dunmore's crippled fleet, having sailed from Gwynn's Island and out into the Chesapeake Bay on July 10, proceeded up the bay and sailed into the Potomac River. He was routed from his base at St. George's Island at the end of July. Word then arrived that General Sir Henry Clinton's forces had been defeated in their attempt to take Charleston and were sailing directly to New York. Thus, Dunmore's belief that he could regain Virginia for the British was shattered by the news that the long-wished-for reinforcements were not coming. He then left Virginia and moved on to Staten Island, New York, then held by General Sir William Howe. By the end of the year he had returned to England.17

The British had lost one man, Lord Dunmore's boatswain, and the Americans also one man, Captain Dohicky Arundel. Several prisoners, both black and white, and fifty slaves of Loyalist John Grymes of the island, fell into the Virginians' hands. Perhaps more important to the vigorous preparations for defense in Virginia were the many supplies the British had left behind. Many valuable anchors and cables, as well as furniture, artillery, equipment, and livestock, including that of Grymes, were recovered by the patriots.18 One ingenious Gloucester County inhabitant, Samuel Eddens, "constructed a Machine and swep'd the Pianquetank River, and at his own expense and labor took up 17 Anchors and Cables, which were afterwards taken by the State, part for the use of the Armed Vessels and the remainder Sold for the public benefit."19
The landing at Gwynn's Island by Dunmore's British regulars, Loyalists, and runaway slaves helped to shape Gloucester County's response to all subsequent events during the long war. Fear of slave rebellion in a society dominated numerically by Afro-Americans had been part of the general anxiety of the colonial society. Dunmore's "Emancipation Proclamation" was not an empty rhetorical threat; it had called forth hundreds of blacks from tidewater Virginia and an undetermined number from Gloucester County.

The invasion and occupation of Gloucester County had increased that number. Returns of Negroes leaving New York City in 1783 include six Gloucester County slaves who had survived the illness at Gwynn's Island, the voyage to New York, and seven more years of service to the British in the hope of personal freedom. How many perished before the returns taken in 1783 is only speculation. It is, however, not speculation to understand that Dunmore's actions in arming the slaves and invading Gloucester County were tangible proof of the worst fears of the county's slaveowners, who were almost 50 percent of the white adult male population. That such slave runaways had a familiarity and often detailed knowledge of the county posed an additional threat. From this moment if not earlier, Gloucester citizens would view the presence of the disaffected and the proximity of British ships as a threat to renew the collective trauma that was the events of 1776.

Such a psychological fear of internal disunity and external invasion was expressed in the rapid and unremitting
punishment of the openly disloyal in the county. The county was aided in this matter by early and forceful legislation enacted by the provincial conventions. An ordinance of December 1775 provided for a court of commissioners in each county to examine suspected Loyalists. The property of those found guilty or of those who took up arms against the colony was to be sequestered, with the proceeds going to the colony. That act was expanded in May 1776 to include confiscation of all property of persons aiding the enemy in any manner and imprisonment of those persons. Oaths of allegiance were made requisite in May 1777. In October 1777 the process of sequestration and forfeiture of property was streamlined, with commissioners to be appointed for each confiscated estate. In addition, debts owed to British subjects or to those judged guilty of disloyalty were to be paid to the state rather than to the creditor, and suits brought by British subjects or Loyalists to collect debts were indefinitely suspended. In May 1779 the process of confiscation of property was completed, with the sequestered lands being formally escheated to the state, subject to public sale.22 In Gloucester County, this legislation was buttressed by firm local action from the pre-Revolutionary crisis onward.23

Gloucester's Court of Commissioners met as early as April 4, 1776, to examine John Wilkie of that county "touching on his conduct as being inimical to this Colony." A twelve-man jury of local residents was selected and sworn in. Evidence was presented, and the jury found Wilkie
"guilty of giving intelligence to our enemies, and going on
board the man of war intentionally." The commissioners
ordered Wilkie confined to the county jail until they received
further orders from the Committee of Safety. Meanwhile,
the Gloucester court confiscated Wilkie's possessions. The
commissioners sent a copy of their proceedings with the
information on Wilkie's effects to the Committee of Safety
in Williamsburg, adding that "one of Wilkie's vessels of
about 1,800 bushels burthen, is particularly calculated for
fast sailing, we mention this circumstance because we think
probable that the committee of safely may want such a
vessel."24 The Committee of Safety reviewed the Gloucester
County proceedings the following day and affirming the
county's verdict of guilt, ordered Wilkie removed from
Gloucester County under guard and placed in jail in Wil-
liamburg. The Gloucester Court of Commissioners was then
ordered to have an inventory made of Wilkie's possessions,
for determination of what to do with them.25 The estate
was appraised on April 18 for the commissioners. In addi-
tion to the usual household goods and provisions, Wilkie
owned "a schooner with sails and Rigging, £170" and "1/2
of a New Vessel on the stocks, 30£." His total worth was
£242.13.9.26 In May, the Virginia Convention ordered that
the property be sold for the benefit of the colony and appointed
Sir John Peyton commissioner to supervise the sale of the
goods.27 On June 11, the Virginia Gazette advertised the
public sale of the goods of John Wilkie, "a condemned Tory,"
which goods included one ship and another being built.28
The commissioners hearing in April may have been the one described in April 19's *Virginia Gazette*: "as the sheriff was opening the court of Commissioners in that county [Gloucester], to try a TORY, as usual, he was going to conclude with **God save the King**, when just as he was pronouncing the words, a *fire's ball*, struck by a soldier of the 7th regiment, entered the window, and knocked him in the mouth, which prevented him from being guilty of so much impiety." 29 The Gloucester commissioners also took charge of the property of Charles Neilson, judged an enemy to America, in June 1776. 30

From the moment of independence, the leaders of the county acted vigorously to punish and expel those who posed an internal threat. As John Page remarked, "Whilst they [Tories] remain amongst us the War will never end. It is impossible the British King & Parliament can with draw their Fleets & Armies whilst they are made to believe by these People that they have such Numbers of loyal Subjects in America." The country must be "rid" of the Loyalists, Page believed, because they supplied intelligence to the enemy and used supplies needed by the troops, and especially because they were "consistently encouraging their People, & discouraging ours disseminating amongst our unwary Citizens Doubts, Fears, Suspicions." 31

The small visible group of Loyalists in the county were threatened and prosecuted with legal action. Reverend Thomas Field of Kingston Parish resigned in 1778. According to later testimony of his widow, "her husband wished to have
been quiet but he would not take their oaths & they told him he must give up his Parish." The couple fled to New York in 1778. Reverend Thomas Price of Abingdon Parish took oaths of allegiance but apparently fled behind Lord Cornwallis's lines in 1781. Governor Benjamin Harrison ordered the state attorney in Gloucester to proceed against Price in 1782. Robert Bristow, a British subject, had his property sequestered and sold in 1779, and his estate, estimated at two thousand acres in 1782, was also sold. It had been managed after its seizure and before its sale by Francis Willis, a prominent patriot of the county. It was offered for sale in 1780 and was divided and sold to Peter Beverly, Whiting, Philip Tabb, and others. The small number of Gloucester County Loyalists interrogated and ultimately convicted is evidence of the domination of the patriot leadership as well as the unity of the people against the internal threat posed by the British under Dunmore.
CHAPTER IV

GLOUCESTER COUNTY AND THE COASTAL THREAT, 1776-1781

The hurried evacuation of Gwynn's Island by Lord Dunmore on July 9 moved the war away from Gloucester County's shores. For the next five years the county was spared British invasion and occupation. This period was less tumultuous than the days of June and July 1776 and those of the summer and fall of 1781. These years, however, did not see a return to peace and tranquility, for the people of Gloucester were continually called upon to respond to militia musters, the growing manpower demands of the American army, and British raids, real and imaginary. The need for provisions and for defense of the coastal regions for personal security and trade compelled the county to become a major center for naval activity. The possibility of a new British raid was always in the minds of the county's inhabitants, and the several incidents of British incursions only served to keep the memory of Dunmore fresh in mind.

The basic fears of Gloucester's residents that there would be new raids on their coasts and new appeals to their slaves to flee were noted by outside observers. The Chevalier de Fleury wrote in 1779 that in Virginia the English were feared, but "the Negroes are the intestine enemies of this Colony, but the number of white men is too small in propor-
tion to raise an outcry against the emancipation proposed by the English."¹ The exposed position of Gloucester and other coastal counties was noted in Loyalist Paul Wentworth's remarks to William Eden on January 10, 1778: "The Rivers of Virginia are large, deep, practicable to Ships of War & navigable a great way & that all the plantations of any note are on their Borders."²

The men of the Gloucester militia who repelled Dunmore and his Loyalist followers from Gwynn's Island remained on duty for several months after the royal governor's departure. The immediate concerns for family and unattended crops, however, depleted the ranks. General Andrew Lewis reported to the Council of State that his men on Gwynn's Island were suffering from a shortage of fresh water and that consequently many had left their posts. The Council immediately ordered fresh water sent.³ The tired men engaged in routine chores of salvaging several of Dunmore's ships with their valuable cannon. Thomas Whiting of Gloucester ordered Sir John Peyton, the county lieutenant, to search for this abandoned artillery on September 7, 1776.⁴ Other vessels captured were either condemned as prizes or returned to their original owners.⁵ Pay for the men who had served on guard in the spring under Captain John Billups was finally authorized on October 11, 1776.⁶

By October, however, the problem of keeping men on active duty without an immediate threat to their homes was apparent. Lewis was ordered on October 19, 1776, to make
a return of his men at Gloucester Town. When the Council of State received the returns, they became fully aware of the depletion of the militia stationed there. Of a possible 272 men serving under four captains from the county, "there are only eight and forty Men belonging to them Companies fitting for duty the remainder excepting five that are sick being absent on furlough, discharged or deserted." The Council ordered the men discharged and their weapons returned to the public magazine at Williamsburg. The men from Captain William Smith's company were to muster again in November to receive their pay. The war had also affected the civilian population. Six Gloucester farmers petitioned the General Assembly on November 7, 1776, that they lived near Gwynn's Island and their crops and homes had been destroyed by American units stationed there. Sir John Peyton and Philip Tabb confirmed that these farmers were "very poor." By December 1776, the immediate physical impact of the Gwynn's Island invasion had ended, when the county militia returned to their farms.

The county soon faced the realization that the wider war in the north and the battle for New York City would have a rippling effect there. John Page, for the Committee of Safety, received a letter from the Continental Congress of July 22 requesting that General Lewis order two Virginia Battalions north to join the Flying Camp, a mobile force raised by a congressional ordinance of June 14 to reinforce George Washington at New York. The Congress also asked that a similar number be raised in case of an invasion of
the state. Page, who knew well the conditions of his county and the region, replied to Hancock on August 3, 1776, that "from the dispersed situation of our troops, the number of navigable rivers, exposing our country to the ravages of the enemy's fleet . . . we have reason to apprehend an invasion." Virginia responded to the nation's need and sent two regiments north but ordered minutemen and militia into duty in the state to replace those regiments. Page may have accurately mirrored the apprehensions of the people of Gloucester and other coastal areas about sending their men away from their homes to aid the Continental army in the north. On August 6, the colonels of the militia of Gloucester and several other counties were ordered to equip their men and "to hold themselves in readiness to march whenever called upon." The Council explained that an invasion was expected and ordered ten companies raised, with Gloucester to furnish 40 percent of the total.

As the situation in the middle states deteriorated, with American losses at Long Island, Harlem Heights, and Manhattan, more men were needed in the Continental service. In October 1776, the first Virginia General Assembly passed a law to raise six new battalions for the Continental army. They held out cash bounties and the promise of land to induce men to enlist immediately. With the fall of forts Washington and Lee in November and the precipitate retreat of the American army across New Jersey, the demand for reinforcements for the Continental army was pressing. On December 7, 1776, all available forces were requested to march "to the
assistance of General Washington."\(^{14}\) John Page reflected his constituents' concern for news that the army was not defeated or disbanded. In a letter to Richard Henry Lee on December 20, 1776, Page remarked that the lack of intelligence was a major problem, for "the Tories propagate what Lies they please to invent." Page feared that the unconfirmed reports were true and that "Many People here were greatly alarmed at the Letters . . . & seem to think all is lost."\(^{15}\) On December 26, 1776, all county lieutenants were urged by the Council to form volunteer companies.\(^ {16}\) Although the victories at Trenton and Princeton alleviated the immediate fears of the collapse of the American war effort, the critical situation in the fall of 1776 illustrated the chronic problem of compelling Gloucester men to serve in the Continental army when the county was exposed to British threats and the imagined possibility of slave revolt.

During the war the General Assembly passed numerous laws to replenish the Continental army. A law was passed in May 1777 to complete Virginia's quota. The act was ineffectual, so beginning in October 1777 men were drafted from the militia. In May 1778, the draft was replaced with offers of freedom from personal taxes for life. In October 1778, bounties of eighteen months pay were included with pensions. The failure to fill up quotas remained, however, and in May 1780 drafting of men to serve until December 1781 was resumed.\(^ {17}\)

This lack of desire to leave home despite numerous inducements is evident in the rapid desertion of men called...
north by January 1777. Captain Charles Tomkies reported the desertion of 17 men who had not returned from furlough from the Continental army. He noted, "I expect they are in Gloucester, where the company was raised, and are all natives of that county."¹⁸ One study found that the incidence of desertions was greater when the soldiers' homes were closer to the tidewater area.¹⁹ The number and percentage of soldiers from Gloucester who served in the Continental army confirms that a disproportionately small group enlisted at any time in the war. In a county with an estimated 1,600 men over age sixteen and available for service, only 89 men from Gloucester, including the 17 deserters, can be firmly identified as serving between 1776 and 1783.²⁰ If this estimate is compared to the men who served from Virginia in the fifteen Continental regiments, estimated at 5,000 men at the lowest point of strength, then Gloucester furnished only .02 percent, compared to the 1.4 percent that would have been its proper proportion. On the other hand, there is little evidence that Gloucester failed to fill up its militia rolls, estimated at 850 to 900, when danger threatened at home.²¹

The concern with the protection of the exposed coastline prompted Gloucester residents, who were familiar with the sea and shipbuilding, to become involved in the construction and manning of naval vessels. On March 29, 1776, the Committee of Safety ordered Captain Thomas Lilly of Gloucester County to command the brig Liberty and cruise the York River. In May 1776 Thomas Whiting was appointed chairman of the
newly formed Navy Board that was to "direct the building of all vessels" and in general supervise the organization and operation of a state navy. The Henry was built in Gloucester County and was on duty by July 1776. Captain Robert Tomkies of Gloucester County supervised the construction, was appointed commander, and served with the galley until 1781. His crew was composed of officers and men primarily from Gloucester. Francis Hobday acted as a pilot, Francis Horn as a sailing master, and Francis Read as midshipman.

The brig Liberty was the most prominent naval vessel of the first years of the war. Lilly employed dozens of carpenters in May and June 1776. The brig's crew and carpenters included artisans and seamen from Gloucester. On August 6, 1776, Lilly was ordered to Hampton Roads with other ships: "As your Cruiser was fitted out principally for the protection of York River, Vessels trading in that River, and the Inhabitants of its Shores should be Objects [of] your peculiar Attention." Gloucester citizens served on other privateers as well. John Anderson served on the Raleigh in 1776 and 1777. That ship was captured in April 1777 while on a voyage to the West Indies, and Anderson died in captivity. George Maughon was captured on board the Dragon and not released until the end of the war. Other Gloucester residents assisted the navy by loaning their private ships, helping to outfit vessels, or lending their expertise in construction. Although the navy was reduced in ships and men in October 1779, Gloucester continued to aid in several ways. Construction of vessels for privateering
and for commerce continued there throughout the war. Appropriately, a prison ship that was built in 1776 and served until after 1779 was named the Gloucester. It was later commanded by Captain Thomas Lilly.

Given the county's instinctive fear of imminent internal and external attack, it is not surprising that most Gloucester residents remained at home and were involved in frequent alarms and military service from 1777 until the arrival of Cornwallis in 1781. The pension claim of William Armistead illustrates the demands of defending the county and the tidewater region. He claimed one month service in 1776, two months in 1777, and two and one-half months in 1778, when he participated in a naval engagement. In 1779 he served for four and one-half months, and for five months in 1780. In the absence of complete militia records, this claim may be representative of most men who responded to the increasingly frequent alarms as the war continued.

In first few months of 1777 the British made the first of several forays into the Chesapeake area during the year. Three British warships, of 60, 50, and 36 guns respectively, entered the bay and captured American shipping. They were reported to have stopped two vessels carrying salt and one with tobacco. Captain Edward Hughes of Gloucester, who owned a ship, was captured on January 24. The British officer in charge of the Preston allowed Hughes to contact the county lieutenant, Sir John Peyton, to arrange an exchange of prisoners. Peyton communicated the size of the British force to John Page, president of the Council, in a
letter of January 28. These same ships then ran a vessel bound for Maryland with army clothing and gunpowder up the East River in Gloucester County. Upon receipt of Peyton's message, the Council, citing "the March of the Continental Troops from this state," resolved that one hundred men from Gloucester be stationed at Yorktown to protect the port. Peyton was ordered to secure the cargo of the ship in the East River with militia guards and send the supplies to Fredericksburg. Peyton accused Hughes of trading with the enemy and ordered him to stand trial in Gloucester for treason. Hughes was subsequently cleared of the charge.

The incident brought a new appreciation of the constant threat the British navy posed to the people of Gloucester. Page wrote Richard Henry Lee shortly after the event and affirmed the need for a number of large galleys to defend the coast. The men sent to York probably remained until September. The men manned the cannon at York and the three or four on the Gloucester side. A new wave of slave runaways to the British ships offshore only increased the British threat to the region. Three hundred former slaves from the coastal counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, and Gloucester were reported to be on board the British ships. The specter of a new Dunmore-style invasion and the loss of more Gloucester slaves was raised and may have heightened the fear already produced by the presence and naval superiority of the British ships.

The Howe brothers' decision to reach Philadelphia by sailing up the Chesapeake increased the anxiety of Gloucester's
residents. The fleet carrying the British army was sighted when they passed Cape Charles on August 14. The Council of State then directed that two companies from Gloucester muster and rendezvous at Gloucester Town until further orders.

The fear that the enemy soldiers would invade Virginia abated when the fleet continued northward. The Council nevertheless ordered the county lieutenants along the coast to secure all vessels to prevent "the escape of our internal Enemies or Slaves to the Enemy." The prompt turnout of the local militia was hastened by a May 1777 militia law to provide rapid response "against Invasions and Insurrections." Under this act, county lieutenants or other officers were permitted to call out their men upon any alarm and to impress needed provisions. The Gloucester militia was dismissed on September 3, 1777.

The dismissal did not mean that the British ships in the bay were forgotten. On September 2, the Navy Board ordered Captain Robert Tomkies of Gloucester and the Henry to Mobjack Bay. Supplies were sent to provision the ship while on duty. John Page, writing from his Gloucester plantation Rosewell, expressed to Richard Henry Lee his view that "some People here are greatly afraid that Howe when forced to abandon his Designs against Philada. will through Vexating Revenge lay waste Maryland & Virginia." A report in the Virginia Gazette of October 3, 1777, reinforced the people's anxiety from a British fleet anchored nearby. Two Virginia navy vessels captured a tender, commanded by "a certain Dunbar of Gloucester county ... who acted as a
pilot for the enemy," leaving the bay. Dunbar was captured with five sailors and five Negroes. The uneasiness engendered by an often unprotected coast that cut miles inland toward tobacco-rich plantations with a large slave population continued.

This presence of British ships near the entrance of Chesapeake Bay remained the most serious threat to Gloucester County in the next few years. These ships, unopposed by American warships, were able to menace the shoreline and maintain trade and intelligence with Loyalists along the coast. And, while the alliance with France was concluded by ratification of the Continental Congress in May 1778, no French ships would protect the Virginia coastline until 1780. In response to this continual threat, Thomas Whiting announced in September 1778 that the Navy Board had ordered three ships immediately to put out to sea, "cruising backwards and forwards within fifty Leagues of the Land" to protect the inhabitants and to prevent communication with the enemy. Concerned with the presence of the British, the General Assembly passed a law in October 1777 to remove suspected Loyalists away from the militia posts and shorelines. The stationing of three British ships, one of 64 and two of 24 guns, including the St. Albans, near Hampton Roads in January 1778 stimulated slave runaways and the spread of disaffection. Thirteen slaves of Major Thomas Smith of Gloucester along with others from the county escaped by sea and were taken on board the British ships. Smith applied to the Council for a flag and was granted permission to
board the enemy ships to recover the runaways. To compound the problem, several Loyalists used the opportunity of British control of the bay to operate as privateers. In May 1778 a schooner commanded by a Captain Bird captured Samuel Eddens of Gloucester who was in a canoe. Bird, a Loyalist officer of the St. Albans man-of-war, asked the captive to take information of his whereabouts to his wife in Urbanna.

By 1779 the British had shifted their major operations to the lower South. This foreshadowed the eventual involvement of the coastal counties in more than raids of harassment. British raids grew in duration, scope, and magnitude from May 1779 to May 1781. On May 8, 1779, Admiral Sir George Collier and General Edward Mathew with eighteen hundred men attacked Portsmouth and routed militiamen there. The return of the 64-gun St. Albans and sixteen other warships presented a great threat to trade and coastal communities. Four slaves of William Armistead of Gloucester fled to freedom on the British ships at this time. On May 13, 1779, Governor Patrick Henry and the Council permitted Captain Peter Bernard of Gloucester to board the British ships at Hampton Roads to "obtain restitution" for the runaways. Bernard and two other men were taken on board the Raisonable and detained for a time as spies. Collier wrote Henry that "the business of his sovereign's ships in Virginia was neither to entice negro slaves on board nor to detain them if they were found there." The force sailed off on May 24, however the brief raid had reinforced the defenselessness felt by Gloucester inhabitants, particularly slaveowners. In
December 1779, the Board of War resolved to move military stores inland and to send six hundred rifles to Gloucester for its militia and that of neighboring counties to defend the north side of the York River.\textsuperscript{51}

In 1780 the familiar pattern of British threats did not change. Galleys were ordered from the Eastern Shore to prevent such raids from penetrating the rivers elsewhere in the tidewater area.\textsuperscript{52} They were also used to prevent or capture runaway slaves.\textsuperscript{53} On October 20, 1780, General Alexander Leslie landed at Portsmouth to establish a permanent base of communications with Cornwallis's army in South Carolina. The 5,000 men and 54 ships threw the state into a panic. A letter from the Commissioner of the Navy, James Maxwell, informed Sir John Peyton, county lieutenant of Gloucester, that the Diligence or Accomack galleys would be given "for the protection of Gloucester."\textsuperscript{54} Governor Jefferson planned to call up 805 men from Gloucester, but for reasons unknown did not include them in a general call-up of a proposed 10,000 men.\textsuperscript{55} William Evans reported that a slave he had purchased from "a widow Gregory in Gloucester County" had fled to the British and become a pilot for them.\textsuperscript{56} Leslie's army left the tidewater region late in November when they moved south to reinforce Cornwallis.

Brigadier General Benedict Arnold entered the Chesapeake on December 30, 1780, in a surprise move. His push up the James River toward Richmond seriously alarmed an even greater number of Virginia citizens than had the previous coastal raids by Leslie and Collier in 1779 and 1780. General Thomas
Nelson learned on January 3 that Arnold had landed at Westover and called out "the whole strength" of the militia of Gloucester and several other counties to rendezvous at Bacon's Ordinary on January 4. The destruction of Richmond's public buildings and the flight of the state government compelled John Page to write to Colonel Theodorick Bland from Rosewell on January 21 that he was ashamed "to call myself a Virginian." He gave credit, however, to the Gloucester militia, of which he was colonel: "The same noble spirit actuated above 300 of our Gloucester Militia, who live much exposed to the enemy, they readily turned out and joined Nelson." Arnold retreated to the safety of Portsmouth on January 20, and slaves joined him on his return to that town. Philip Moody testified that he had bought three slaves from the estate of a Gloucester Loyalist, two of whom fled to Arnold.

The immediate threat of a major British force in the bay stimulated the state to strengthen naval defenses and call up new troops. Confusion over its operations, compounded by the presence of Continental commanders such as Baron von Steuben, resulted in inefficiency. Gloucester County's militia, however, no doubt operated with vigor, and its citizenry acted to help in the crisis. Two state legions were created in March 1781, because, as the act stated, "the enemy have made this state the object of their vengeance." There were continual demands for men for the Continental battalions, and the draft, with the resultant taxes to pay the bounties, was renewed in October 1780. A quota for
Gloucester of fifty-two men imposed a drain of manpower for the militia on the county. 61

Another problem encountered by the militia was the supply of weapons to defend the county. Those arms the men had were often taken from them after they were dismissed from duty, leaving the county without the means to protect itself in the event of an insurrection or British raid. Baron von Steuben wrote to Thomas Jefferson on February 23, 1781, that he wished to take the weapons from Gloucester to arm the militias of Elizabeth, Warwick, and York "from any incursion of the enemy." 62 Colonel James Innes of the state troops and militia under General Thomas Nelson at Williamsburg wrote Jefferson on March 7, 1781, that he had requested two hundred weapons to be sent from Gloucester "as soon as they can be collected from the hands of the militia, among whom they have been distributed." 63 Colonel John Page answered von Steuben's request for 100 men of the Gloucester militia to be sent to Yorktown. He commented, "But as I yesterday disarmed above 100 Militia, & issued orders for collecting the Arms of 200 more in Consequence of Orders from the Executive to send 200 stand to York Town, I much fear I shall not be able for several Days to collect & march to York any tolerable Number of Men armed." 64 Such confusion and contradictory orders limited the effectiveness of Gloucester's response to the Arnold alarm.

Despite such administrative problems, there can be little doubt that Gloucester willingly participated in preparations for defense of Virginia. John Dixon of Gloucester
wrote Jefferson on March 2 that he had formed a company of horse with thirty-two men "exclusive of Officers ... with Men of Property and repute," who would equip themselves and serve without pay. This action was taken, Dixon stated, because of "the exposed situation of Gloster County from the extensive water courses, and the frequent depredations of the Enemy in small plundering parties."65 The state discouraged Dixon in this plan, but von Steuben later asked Dixon and his men to join him.66 Sir John Peyton and Captain Robert Cary of the Gloucester militia undertook a mission to Baltimore on behalf of General Nelson to purchase weapons. Cary told the merchant that "they [arms] were much wanted, as five hundred militia have been discharged for want of them."67

With the arrival of a French squadron under Captain Arnaud de Tilly in February 1781, Gloucester was looked to for help in piloting and supporting the French. Jefferson saw Yorktown as a base for allied ships and wrote General Nelson that Gloucester could furnish laborers for the building of a facility there.68 Pilots and other watermen were especially needed. The arrival of a major French force in March added to the need. General George Weedon wrote to Page and to Sir John Peyton on March 19 to send skilled seamen to aid the allies' efforts. Citing the "want of men" in the marine department, Weedon requested five hundred men "& know of no other dependance but from Kingston & the other parts of Gloster."69 The French fleet encountered a British force off the Virginia capes in March and sailed
north after the engagement, taking with them any hope that an allied naval effort would dislodge Arnold. General William Phillips arrived in late March with 2,600 men and took command of the British in Virginia. Gloucester's militia were discharged in early April from service near Williamsburg and left their weapons behind. Phillips and Arnold commenced a raid on April 18 to capture Williamsburg, and the resulting destruction of ships, shipyards, and courthouses created a new crescendo of destruction in Virginia. John Page wrote Jefferson that men should not be drafted to serve elsewhere, for "our County is at present in a very defenceless State and daily exposed to the Ravages of the Enemy." Jefferson replied that the men were needed to reinforce the southern army under General Nathanael Greene.

By early May, the large British force had moved to Petersburg and would soon be joined by Lord Cornwallis's force. No naval or land forces, Continental or militia, seemed capable of stopping the British wherever they wished to strike. The crisis created equally dismal conditions in Gloucester. John Dixon wrote Jefferson on May 1 that even the order to dissolve his volunteer light horse company would not dissuade several of his group, who "have been for some weeks on duty endeavouring to put a stop to the daily ravages committed by the Enemy since the Arms have been taken from our Militia." Sir John Peyton pleaded for the suspension of the draft of men from the county to serve elsewhere: "the County haveing upwards of two hundred miles navigable water courses, altho' our guards are small, yet it
takes a number of men to act as guards, and in spight of all our efforts, the enemy take the Inhabitants, even out of their beds. A Capt. of the militia & a man who was active in collecting the guards to the Capt's. assistance was taken off last night." The only indirect answer to the complaints of the Gloucester officials was a new call-up of militia on May 2 to help man and refortify the batteries at Gloucester and York.

With the linking of all British forces in the upper south at Petersburg on May 20, and reinforcements from New York, the major theater of conflict had become tidewater Virginia. For almost five years, the people of Gloucester had experienced a growing anxiety over British raids, which came with greater frequency. Fears for their lives and the destruction of their crops and homes were amplified by the incidents of slaves fleeing to join the British at every opportunity. Such a local situation explains the men's reluctance to join the Continental army in great numbers. The lack of an available state or Continental force to protect the county meant to most Gloucester men that the war was very much on the home front. This localism bred of anxiety and fear was a major determinant of their actions before the summer of 1781.
CHAPTER V
THE OCCUPATION OF GLOUCESTER AND THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

With Lord Cornwallis's arrival in Virginia in May 1781, Gloucester County once again became a battleground. As in the occupation of Gwynn's Island in July 1776, localism and national defense became mutually reinforcing incentives for spirited support of the American cause. Cornwallis's combined forces numbered about 7,200 men. American forces preparing to oppose him were 3,000 Continentals and militia under the Marquis de Lafayette at Richmond and 500 Continental soldiers with Baron von Steuben at Point of Fork. In June 1781 Cornwallis skirmished with American units and maneuvered his way toward Portsmouth and Yorktown, although Sir Henry Clinton had recommended Baltimore or Delaware. General Washington had not decided between a combined French-American offensive against the British at New York or an attack on the British southern army under Cornwallis. The news that the Comte de Grasse's fleet was heading toward the Chesapeake Bay from the West Indies was one factor that led Washington to choose an offensive against Cornwallis.¹

In late May, the presence of the British and Continental troops less than one hundred miles away began having an impact on Gloucester County. Lafayette designated Gloucester as the headquarters for collection and storage of supplies.
received from tidewater counties.\(^2\) Captain Thomas Baytop's company of Gloucester militia was placed on duty in the county in late May and early June.\(^3\) Loyalist activities and coastal raids, encouraged by the presence of a large British force needing supplies and providing support, continued as the imminent combat approached. The **Hero's Revenge**, which had been taken from one Hughes of Gloucester County, was captured in mid-June in the Chesapeake Bay near the county. Among the prisoners taken with the ship were many deserters from the American army and blacks, among whose owners were John Page.\(^4\) General George Weedon, commanding the Virginia militia, received information that the enemy had once again occupied Gwynn's Island and sent Major B. Edgar Joel to survey the actual situation. Joel found that the danger from Loyalists was greater than the British threat, as Middlesex Loyalists in private vessels had been harassing the residents of Gwynn's Island. Sir John Peyton asked Joel for more men to guard the shore and reported the recent events to Weedon. The British ship **Bonetta** had sent a foraging party onto Gwynn's Island and had taken cattle, whereupon Peyton had all the remaining cattle moved to the mainland. However, he writes, "Some of their vessels are continually in the mouth of that river [Piankatank]. . . . Nothing has happened in this county except a number of negroes going to them -- nothing I believe has saved us from sharing the fate of the Tories but the vigilance of our Guards."\(^5\) Joel praised Peyton's activities as county lieutenant in preparing the defense of the county: "I have found on minute observation the Gloucester
militia better provided & their coast guards better posted than any other county." 6

Following Cornwallis's move to Williamsburg in late June, Lafayette had ordered Virginia troops, arms, and artillery toward that city. County militia colonel John Page pleaded that cannon not be removed from Gloucester, for "if the Cannon are moved from G-town the Enemy will immediately send up their Ships, Privateers & Boats & plunder not only Gloster, but the whole Coast of York River on both Sides, & this before we can possibly remove our Negros, Stock or even Furniture out of their way." The whole militia, he confirmed, was prepared to muster on the news of Cornwallis receiving reinforcements by sea. Page feared that if Lafayette ordered the Gloucester militia's arms removed to West Point and the inhabitants' stock driven off, the people would be dispirited and would "look upon our Affairs as in the situation the Tories represent them. . . . I would with Submission propose to remove only all the public Stock of Beeves & Grain, & prevail on Individuals to remove their Familys, Negros & Stocks, without attempting to compel them to it, as they seem so well disposed to defend their Property." 7

Cornwallis's trip to inspect Yorktown on June 18 heightened the apprehensions of the county, and the Gloucester militia traded shots with the British on that occasion. 8 Cornwallis reported after that visit that strong defensive posts at both York and Gloucester would be necessary to protect the British fleet in the York River. 9
Lafayette's army was augmented in late June by a troop of about thirty volunteer cavalrymen raised in Gloucester County by Captain John Dixon. Lafayette lamented the difficulty of getting local troops to report to Williamsburg in the harvest season and proposed penalties for counties that did not meet their quota. Possibly because of the pleas of John Page, Lafayette decided that the "Gloucester County [militia] had better be kept for its own defence." The battery at Gloucester Point was complete at this time, except for inadequate powder supplies. The Council of State designated "the lower end of Gloster County" as a point from which a rider was regularly to be sent to Lafayette with intelligence of the enemy's movements. The troops quartered at Williamsburg were in desperate need of supplies, and Colonel James Innes ordered the Gloucester County commissioners for provisions to procure certain supplies and to send beef immediately for the hungry men. In May 1780 the General Assembly had passed legislation authorizing the appointment of county commissioners to purchase supplies and to seize goods for public use if the owner refused to sell.

Cornwallis moved his headquarters to Portsmouth in mid-July, awaiting further orders from Clinton. He decided independently, however, to occupy York and Gloucester, because the river there could harbor large warships and could be protected against an enemy fleet. When the first division of British troops arrived at Yorktown, Cornwallis instructed that a "chain of redoubts" be built to cover Gloucester Point. British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre
Tarleton arrived there on August 1 and found about a dozen houses on the point of land with a marshy creek to the right. The ground was "clear and level" for about a mile, where forest began. Beyond the woods, the country was "open and cultivated." Among the men building the works at Gloucester Point were the Eightieth Regiment under Colonel Dundas, Prince Hereditary's Hessian regiment, and a black corps of nearly five hundred. In response to Cornwallis's move, Lafayette transferred his forces to the Pamunkey River to keep a closer watch on the British. He sent Colonel Innes with a militia force to Gloucester to harass the British and impede the construction of the works there. Innes was also charged with hiring civilians to infiltrate the British camp to gather intelligence. Before and during the siege of Yorktown, Gloucester County inhabitants visited the British camp and provided accurate information to the allies.

Military preparations intensified in Gloucester with this massive enemy force on its very shores. Captain John Billups's Gloucester militia company was called on duty on August 2 and remained on duty until October 8. Even before the final destination of the British was known, Governor Thomas Nelson had called on Sir John Peyton, because of his "Situation, Influence, & constant Attention to the Interests of your Country," to procure two "swift sailing Boats" able to cross the bay. On August 3, Governor Nelson reported the British occupation of Yorktown and Gloucester to the state's congressional delegates, adding that "these
sudden Incursions into different parts of the State are Calamities which the Geography of the Country and their possessing the Water make it impossible for us to guard against."23 The next day, the Council of State ordered the commissioner of the war office to furnish the Gloucester County militia with five hundred pounds of powder and lead.24 Colonel Innes wrote on August 6 to Sir John Peyton, whose militia forces were encamped at Whiting's Mill, that he had urged Lafayette to reinforce the Gloucester militia and that he needed a full account of the enemy's depredations and movements in the county to convince the marquis. He added, "It is sometimes absolutely necessary and politic to make use of a small deception and finesse, you may therefore circulate in Gloster, that the Marquis has cross'd 5000 men over at Ruffin's Ferry to sustain your little armament and annoy the enemy."25 John Page, encamped with a militia company at Hubbard's field, gave a full report to Governor Nelson on August 7 of the recent activities in Gloucester: "After the Enemy had landed about 700 of their Troops at Gloucester Town, & we had waited in vain til 10-0-clock at night for Reinforcements of militia, we retreated with 102 men, exclusive of Officers, chiefly the militia of Ware & Petsworth. . . . We retreated as far as Duvalls, before we halted . . . proceeded on to the Hill on the King & Queen side of Whiting's Mill, where we encamped & determined to wait for Reinforcements." They were joined by Captain Samuel Eddens's force of artillery and militia. Colonel Peyton had ordered all horses below the Courthouse brought
to his camp to prevent the enemy from seizing them, "but we were able to get but few out of the way of the Enemy." The arrival of the Kingston militia enabled them to gather many horses from that parish and from Ware parish. Colonel Dixon's cavalry force was ordered to "Mr. Whiting's Quarter" to prevent the enemy from foraging. They had been successful in keeping the British within three miles of Gloucester Town. One enemy party went into the county as far as "Mr. Burwell's Church-Quarter," drove off all the livestock, and took several Negroes. 26

Clearly the militia was engaged less in repelling the British landing than in preventing personal havoc for the residents. Once again, however, the proximity of British troops induced slave runaways and anxiety among slaveowners. Page wrote, "Those unhappy, deluded People are continually going over to them, to the ruin of many of us, & the Enemy continue their diabolical Practice." 27 One runaway slave formerly of Gloucester was arrested there while operating as a spy and pilot for the British. 28 Page wrote of the militia's "readiness to stay & oppose the Enemy or to march out of their County, leaving their wives, their children & their all behind them, at the mercy of their cruel & revengeful Enemy, despising every thing in comparison of their country, & executing every order with Cheerfullness & alacrity, showed that they were well worth our endeavours to preserve them." Page was distressed with Innes's instructions to Colonel Peyton to spread false reports of reinforcements. Colonel Baytop had complied, but Page warns, "Judge,
Sir, what will be the People's sentiments, when they shall, as they soon must, discover that it was all a Delusion. 29

The situation in Gloucester did not improve, for on August 12, the formidable Queen's Rangers, a group of hussars under Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe, joined the enemy forces at Gloucester Point to provide forage from the county for the troops. Although Simcoe feared the "danger" from "the militia of the enemy, now assembling in numbers," Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton recalled that Simcoe "met with trifling interruption." 30 On August 20, when Simcoe dispersed an advanced guard led by Captain Weeks, he recalled, "this check, together with the country being constantly ambuscaded, prevented the foragers from receiving the least interruption." 31

By the end of August, the British works at Gloucester were nearly completed and supplies were collected from the countryside. These fortifications were crucial to Cornwallis to prevent American or French ships from passing the York River, to protect British shipping in the harbor, to maintain a possible means of escape, and to facilitate the collection of forage and supplies from the surrounding countryside. 32 The completed works at Gloucester consisted of a line of fortifications completely blocking access to the area. The British erected redoubts and batteries on natural elevations. Also, the British probably cleared the area in front of the works for a distance of at least one thousand yards, the usual firing distance of much of the artillery. Gloucester Town was within the works, and British
officers lived within the available houses there. The men
were housed in tents above and below the cliffs.33

The French fleet, consisting of twenty-eight ships of
the line, six frigates, and three thousand land forces all
commanded by Admiral Comte de Grasse, sailed into the Chesapeake Bay on August 20. Among the Americans who helped pilot
the French into their positions blockading the entrances to
the James and York rivers was an experienced Gloucester County
waterman, Francis Hobday.34 The arrival of the French fleet
marked the intensification of the Americans' convergence on
tidewater Virginia. Lafayette's troops and de Grasses's
French force, led by the Marquis de St. Simon, positioned
themselves to prevent Cornwallis's escape, while Washington
and the Comte de Rochambeau hurried southward with their
combined forces.35 At Head of Elk, preparations were made
to transport the approaching troops to Virginia via the
Chesapeake Bay. On August 29, Donaldson Yeates, deputy
quartermaster general, asked John Page to procure "proper
craft to go down the Bay."36 The governor, in anticipation
of provisions needed for the massive force expected, initiated
a campaign to collect supplies at various locations, including
Gloucester.37 Also, all the militia of counties lying be­
tween the York and Rappahannock rivers were ordered to
rendezvous under the command of Colonel John Taylor at
Gloucester Courthouse.38 Taylor informed Lafayette that the
Gloucester battalion was reduced to 115 men, relieved by only
16 men from New Kent and a few stragglers from Middlesex.39
Lafayette ordered Taylor to send to his camp all the cattle
that had been saved from British raiding parties in Gloucester. John Page pleaded with Governor Nelson to countermand this order: "The People will not only be reduced to Beggary . . . if any more [livestock] be sent out of the county, after losing all their Grain, and their present Crop, which many of them have not been able to work, but they will be actually in Danger of Starving. . . . It will be hard upon the wretched inhabitants of these plundered Counties, if they alone should be compelled to feed both their Enemies and Friends, & then be reduced to give up a considerable Proportion of their shattered Fortunes to purchase even their daily Food from Speculators in the upper parts of the Country." Page, emphasizing the immediacy of the British threat to the families and homes of the militiamen, wrote Nelson that he was "now endeavouring to draw out every man of them [Gloucester militia] & hope to make striking Example of the Offenders so as to deter other Militia Men from staying at Home a Day after they shall be called out."^40

General George Weedon, who in early September had replaced Colonel Taylor as commander of the Virginia militia massed in Gloucester County, was desperately in need of supplies and reinforcements. His troops' primary concerns at this time were to confine the enemy's foraging parties to a small area and to protect the citizens of the county.^41 Sir John Peyton was ordered to secure beef and salt from the county "without distressing the People" for the troops.^42 Rochambeau, who had arrived in Williamsburg on September 14, ordered a cavalry troop to proceed to Weedon's camp at
Gloucester Courthouse immediately. On September 17, General George Weedon pleaded with Governor Nelson, "The wants of this Army are of such a nature as to induce me to request your utmost Exertions and influence in assending a supply of provisions of Spirits... the Invasion Law authorizing you fully to carry this Business into execution." That same day he ordered John Page to move his regiment to Poplar Spring Church to protect the inhabitants there from the British foraging parties and to keep a close eye on British activities on that quarter. Weedon had moved his men to Ware Church, closer to the British, and had moved Page's regiment within supporting distance. He had attempted to organize the "totally disarranged" men and to "circumscribe the Enemies Depredations... and if possible, to have struck some of the Forraging frontiers, but no sooner had I made them [organization of units] than near one fourth of the men's Times were out & no relief." Added to Weedon's problems were "repeated Complaints made by the Inhabitants of Depredations committed on their property, by the French Troops," which Weedon suggested might be alleviated by a general order preventing "the troops rambling out of camp." Weedon reports an unsuccessful attempt to prevent a grand foraging expedition on the night of September 21. In response to intelligence he had received, Weedon moved with three small battalions to near Abingdon Church. The enemy, however, headed right, down Sarah's Creek, and foraged in the Guinea area of the county.
Weedon soon had better news, for the six-hundred-man combined cavalry and infantry legion of the Duc de Lauzun began arriving overland from Head of Elk to Gloucester on September 23. Preparations for the investment of Yorktown began. The operations in Gloucester were crucial to the siege of the British army. To effect that siege, the allied forces in Gloucester had to cut off any avenue of escape for the enemy through Gloucester and to halt the flow of supplies and forage from Gloucester to the main British forces across the York. Realizing the need for a stronger force on the Gloucester side, Rochambeau detached 207 artillery and 800 marines to Gloucester and sent General Choisy there to command the allied forces, which now numbered around 3,400 men. Perhaps in response to the massive forces expected, Weedon and Lauzun conducted a large forage on September 28 near Abingdon Church, getting barley and corn. The British foragers were not faring as well. Simcoe's last forage had resulted in only a little corn, Weedon reported, for "our rifles were as thick as the stalks in the corn field."

The siege of Yorktown formally began on September 30, and Cornwallis responded to the buildup of troops in Gloucester by sending Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton and his cavalry legion there to intensify the foraging efforts to sustain the besieged forces. On October 3, Philip Taliaferro reported to Weedon that a party had gone up the York River and was plundering at Mrs. Whiting's, to the rear of the American forces. Weedon detached a battalion to that area and requested Governor Nelson to authorize an armed boat
to patrol that region and prevent further depredations. 53

The allies prepared to move closer to the British forces to eventually cut off any flow of supplies from the county. Two battalions of infantry and a battalion of grenadiers commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Mercer, Colonel Webb's cavalry, and Lauzun's legion, all commanded by General Choisy, moved out on the morning of October 3. Part moved down the Severn road and part down the York River road, which formed a junction about four miles from Gloucester Point. A foraging party under Colonel Dundas had gone out from the British camp that morning and was returning about three miles up on the main road with their wagons full of Indian corn about ten o'clock, when its rear guard made contact with the advance party of Choisy's force. The British called up additional troops from their post, and the advance guard of the allies warned the main body to hasten their advance. The British led by Tarleton were unable to break the American and French line and retreated to their works at Gloucester. 54 Contemporary accounts of the dead and wounded varied, with some reports listing 50 British dead and Tarleton among the wounded. One official count lists 13 British dead and 2 Americans dead and 11 wounded. 55

With the favorable conclusion of this skirmish, Choisy located his main camp on the field of the skirmish about one and one-half miles from the British and sent pickets as close as one-half mile from the British works. Choisy now "proceeded to cut off all land communications between the country and Gloucester." 56 While the Americans and
French were successful in preventing any effective British foraging and formed a solid blockade until the end of the siege, it was still, however, necessary that the troops be constantly supplied and the strength of the forces maintained and augmented. Governor Nelson ordered Sir John Peyton to engage from Gloucester "five or six good River pilots to go on board the French Ships" and particularly to get Captain Francis Hobday if possible. Peyton was also to procure vessels to maintain communication between the several camps. The American forces were also particularly in need of surgeons and medicine, arms for several militia companies that had arrived unarmed, horses, wagons, and harness in addition to provisions and ammunition to maintain the army's strength. The British at Gloucester tried to secure their position by placing chevaux-de-frise and sunken vessels in the river before their post to prevent an assault up the cliffs. The situation of the British garrison in Gloucester had worsened by October 10, for the "Duke de Lauzun kept them entirely in, and very frequently alarmed them." Sickness spread throughout the camp, and over one thousand horses had to be drowned because of disease and inadequate food supplies.

The Americans opened the second parallel before Yorktown at about three hundred yards on October 11. The next day, with the British situation at Yorktown critical, all the women and children were sent to the Gloucester garrison. The allied forces on the Gloucester side, anticipating a possible move by Cornwallis to that side to avoid "certain
Captivity," urgently attempted to procure arms, horses, and wagons.\textsuperscript{62} The British sick and wounded from Yorktown were transported to Gloucester on October 16, and that night Cornwallis sent a detachment there also, planning to break through Choisy's forces and retreat northward through Maryland. A sudden, violent storm, however, prevented any other troops from crossing the river. The morning of October 17, the light infantry that had gone over to Gloucester returned and reported, according to Stephen Popp, that "it was impossible to escape in that direction, for it was all closely surrounded by the enemy, -- French and American soldiers covering every outlet."\textsuperscript{63}

If Popp's account is accurate, the report of the allied strength, added to Cornwallis's belief that his position was untenable without great bloodshed for even one more day without reinforcements, led to the decision on October 17 to ask for terms of surrender. Agreeable with the terms of capitulation, the posts of Yorktown and Gloucester were each separately surrendered on October 19.

The British-American combat in Virginia had ended, but the war and the presence of two large armies was not over for the people of Gloucester County. Nor would the war's effect end with the departure of the British in 1782. After the surrender, in accordance with the articles of capitulation, the wounded and sick in the British hospitals at Yorktown and Gloucester were to remain there for the time being under the supervision of their own doctors and staff. The main part of the British prisoners began moving en route
to Winchester, Virginia, and Frederick, Maryland, while detachments remained behind until October 28 to supervise the hospitals. Governor Nelson on October 22 ordered Sir John Peyton, county lieutenant, to place a "sufficient" number of his militia to guard the sick and wounded British in the hospital at Gloucester Point. Anticipating, perhaps, friction between the Americans and the defeated British prisoners, Nelson advised Peyton to place them under a "discreet Officer."  

The terms of surrender included a provision in Article IV for the return of "any property obviously belonging to the Inhabitants." That may have meant impressed goods as well as slaves. An article was rejected that would have granted immunity from prosecution for "natives or inhabitants" who joined the British, as that was a civil matter. Nelson had specific orders for General Weedon in regard to the Loyalists, or "refugees," and Negroes who had accompanied the British army to Yorktown. Refugees, except notorious offenders, were to be paroled. The "least atrocious Offenders" were to appear before the governor and Council of State on November 20, while the others were to be sent to Nelson, still encamped at Yorktown, for imprisonment. Blacks whose masters lived south of the York River were also to be sent to Nelson's camp, while those of masters north of the river were to be immediately returned to their owners. Nelson warned Weedon that because of reports of Negroes secreting themselves on board ships, all vessels were to be searched. Despite these precautions, Colonel Richard Butler recorded,
Cornwallis's departure on his assigned vessel included runaways: "The sloop of war Bonnetta fell down the river, with her iniquitous cargo of deserters, stolen negroes, and public stores that the British officers had secreted, in violation of treaty and in breach of honor."68

The disposition of the military stores and the presence of the French army in Gloucester were other problems encountered after the capitulation. Many of the public stores were lost when the American and French troops took them before arrangements could be made for their removal by proper authorities. In addition, many supplies were stolen by the British soldiers and women remaining in the hospital. Adding to the problem, "the French have placed safeguards over the houses at Gloucester where the British officers are quartered, so that no American officer on duty there can obtain any shelter, unless in the vilest hovels." Timothy Pickering, Washington's quartermaster general, recommended that the French and militia guards be replaced by Continental troops to prevent further looting of the public stores.69 Even Rochambeau visited Gloucester along with other French officers, some of whom were looking for liquor; they "ranged through the whole town, but to no purpose."70 Rochambeau recalled, however, that the French officers did help after the siege, as they rebuilt houses in Gloucester that had been damaged or destroyed by the military occupation and siege.71

Early in November, over two thousand British sick and wounded still remained in hospitals in York and Gloucester. The Americans and the French were particularly anxious to
have these prisoners moved to allow the French troops remaining to use the buildings for winter encampment there. Washington ordered on October 31 that three hundred Gloucester militia-men should be called up to help transport the British to Fredericksburg and that river craft between Gloucester and Fredericksburg should be impressed to aid the task. Thomas Durie was appointed by Washington as deputy commissary of prisoners and reported on November 6 that he was unable to have large numbers of prisoners moved, as boats were not available. At that time there remained in Gloucester 1,387 British, 609 of whom were too sick to be removed. Three days later, Durie, who was aware that state and Continental officials were anxious to have these men moved, had 350 of the prisoners march on foot toward Todd's Bridge en route to Fredericksburg. The next day 260 more left on boats toward the same place, carrying all the baggage, and by the morning of November 14, 160 more had embarked: "The Prisoners now remaining at Gloucester, unadvisable to remove exceed 500, and for the present will be secured by Guards from the detachment of French Troops to be station'd at that place." Durie then left Gloucester and soon left Virginia altogether, apparently feeling his obligations were completed. Rochambeau, distressed with the situation of the remaining prisoners, had 200 more removed on November 21. In the spring of 1782, those British invalids who had survived the winter were exchanged by Rochambeau for captured French officers. Throughout the winter obtaining supplies for the prisoners and properly disposing of various public stores remained
problems in Gloucester. Captain John Pryor had collected all the arms from the disbanded militia and stored them at Joseph Seawell's ordinary in Gloucester. He had neither guard nor orders from the state as to their disposition. Pryor was anxious to leave Gloucester, as he was not permitted to augment his provision supply by forage, and "paper money being ruinously depreciated," he was unable to purchase even adequate supplies. The supply problem in Gloucester was made worse when in late November a "distemper" left "the cattle . . . dying daily in numbers; the fattest die first . . . Salt alone is wanting to secure a very large quantity of Beef." By December 7, there was no beef at all in the public stores, and the county officials charged with securing provisions were able to find none for the British prisoners. Salt and flour were also much needed.

Another lingering problem in Gloucester County after the surrender was the continuation of the county's defenses. In Governor Benjamin Harrison's address to the House of Delegates upon its opening in May 1782, he emphasized the need to defend the coast and trade. He told the House that a garrison would be needed for Gloucester Town and that a number of the county's militia should always be ready to be called on. In June, when the departure of the French troops who had remained in Yorktown to guard the stores and the town was anticipated, the Council of State ordered Virginia militia sent there. In addition, the county lieutenants of the militia of coastal counties, including Gloucester, were ordered to have six hundred militiamen
ready to be called out on the shortest notice. Sir John Peyton responded on June 29 and requested that Gloucester’s militia be provided with arms, as any arms in the possession of militiamen following the surrender had been taken and sent to Richmond. The state’s commissary informed the governor that Peyton had received arms for the Gloucester militia the previous summer and that no accounting had then been made. The arms were then in storage, as “the militia went off after the siege was over, and left their arms stacked upon the ground.” Consequently, many arms belonging to the county militia could have been among the arms removed from the county and then in storage. The Council of State on July 23, 1782, ordered that one hundred stand of arms should be sent to Peyton for the defense of Gloucester County. Peyton must, however, account for the public arms in Gloucester at this time and the disposition of those arms previously sent him. Peyton informed the state’s commissary that, while a detailed return would be submitted later, “five hundred stand had been distributed to the militia at different times. . . . Very few of the later [private guns] remain in the county, he having collected a very large number which passed into the hands of others besides the Gloucester militia.”

Governor Harrison and the Council planned that state troops would help defend the garrisons at York and Gloucester during and after the gradual withdrawal of the few remaining French troops still there in the beginning of July 1782. On July 22, George Washington suggested, however, to Harrison
that the works at Yorktown and Gloucester be leveled, so that the Enemy may have no object to attempt in that Quarter more than in any other part." Harrison disapproved of Washington's suggestion, pointing out to Virginia's congressional delegates that "the forts and platforms to the Water were all built by the State, & are necessary for the defence of that river and its Trade." Governor Harrison changed his mind in November 1782 and "suggested to the board [Council of State] the propriety of levelling the works around York from an apprehension that the enemy may be induced to take possession of them if left standing." The Council ordered five hundred militiamen from surrounding counties, including Gloucester, "proportioned according to the number of Militia in each of the said Counties" to be employed in leveling the works. This plan was not effected, however, because the magistrates of York and Gloucester refused approval and cooperation and because the barracks at the works were insufficient to house the militiamen. On January 6, 1783, Governor Harrison informed Sir John Peyton that the militia called together at Yorktown had been dismissed and that none should be marched there until further orders. David Jameson, a prominent resident of Yorktown, pleaded with Congressman James Madison, "The people of that place [Yorktown and Gloucester] were much distressed by the British, and are really not able to do so great a work themselves. Nor do I imagine any person will think that after all their sufferings, the burthen of leveling those works ... should fall on them -- Or that they ought to bear at
their very doors Mounds of Earth which prevent a free circulation of the Air, and Ditches of stagnant putred water." Congress, however, rejected Virginia's request, and the earthen works at Yorktown and Gloucester Point eroded gradually away.

Another reminder to Gloucester's inhabitants of the siege and surrender of Yorktown was the attempt to survey and recover on the damages they had suffered from living in the midst of battle. Because Gloucester County had to serve as a major provider of food and supplies for the British, the Americans, and the French for at least four months, the people suffered much. The legal and illegal seizure of the inhabitants' property was by far the most pervasive injury suffered before and during the occupation of the county. In May 1780 the General Assembly had provided that county commissioners could procure certain goods for the public from inhabitants, with their consent or without, and were to give certificates for the value of the goods taken. A May 1781 statute had increased the impressment powers, allowing almost any property to be seized for the public use by various state and military officials. The General Assembly passed legislation in November 1781 to hasten the process of providing compensation for the many persons who had had property impressed. The county court was to hear all claims of impressment for the public service, making sure to distinguish between those articles impressed for the state and those for the Continental establishment. The court would report these claims to the state, and auditors
of public accounts would examine the records to determine if compensation was called for. In Gloucester County, when the county court began meeting on April 5, 1782, to receive claims for impressments, over two hundred people presented claims. Among the many goods claimed by these persons were beef, pork, bacon, lambs, mutton, corn, wheat, barley, straw, oats, rum, whiskey, brandy, cider, vinegar, corn blades, tools, saddles and yokes, medicines, horses, boats and canoes, and various services and labor provided the troops. The vast majority of the items listed were attributed to the Continental establishment, and the articles most frequently claimed were beef and other food provisions and the use of horses or oxen. When the Gloucester County Court convened again on August 2, 1782, and received additional claims of impressments, sixteen more claims were received. In accordance with the continuation of the act providing for such, the court received claims through its meeting in July 1785, by which time almost one hundred more claims were received.

Impressment claims against the state were a lesser problem for the inhabitants than were claims for which they had no immediate or governmental redress — runaway slaves and damages or impressments by French or British troops. A petition from a Gloucester County woman to the Council of State soon after the surrender of Yorktown brought to the attention of the governor and Council the many damages suffered by inhabitants near the scene of battle, damages for which they had no recourse but special petition. Mary Harris, "a poor woman of Gloucester County," claimed that
some of the Duc de Lauzun's hussars had taken from her all her household furniture, including feather beds, rugs, cotton, wool, a Dutch oven, pewter and plates, and many other household items. The governor and Council agreed that she had been "most cruelly treated by some of the French Soldiers." This case may have prompted the Council to proclaim that since many of the citizens of James City, York, Warwick, Elizabeth City, and Gloucester counties had sustained considerable damage from the French troops, they could present their claims to Dudley Digges, who would present them to Rochambeau. Claims for undocumented impressments or damages by the American army would be likewise gathered by Digges and presented to the Congress by the General Assembly. Mary Harris was among the fortunate inhabitants who received some relief, for Rochambeau allowed her £21.10.3 for her possessions taken or destroyed by French troops.

One cannot say when the war actually ended in Gloucester, for the lingering effects of years of supply requisitions, manpower demands, invasion, raids, and impressments culminated in the burdensome demands of taxation in the early 1780s. Taxes were demanded in grain, beef, and tobacco, which were all in short supply in Gloucester in the years immediately after the Yorktown campaign. By 1782 to 1783, the people refused to pay in those commodities. Although perhaps exaggerating the problem somewhat, Sir John Peyton, who as sheriff was responsible for arrears in the taxes of 1782 and 1783, wrote of numbers starving in 1786. A judgment for the taxes was obtained against Peyton, and his
petition for redress of the penalty was ultimately rejected. One hundred Gloucester families petitioned the governor and the Council in 1787 for relief from taxation. Their remonstrance portrays many of their wartime problems:

During the late War with Great Britain your petitioners' situation was such that it was with difficulty they could support their families. . . . Little or no tobacco could be made in the county for many years before. The lands a long time cleared and worn out. . . . At the siege of York and Gloucester Town numbers of cattle were taken to support the armies. . . . render it out of your Petitioners' power to pay such heavy taxes . . . without selling Land or Negroes. . . . Ship-building, which employed at least four hundred of the Inhabitants, formerly brought in the County a little money. . . . Your petitioners find themselves short of that happiness, ease and plenty, so much Boasted of upon an establishment of our Independence and peace. . . . We beg leave to say no people has the Interest of their country more at heart. Did not your petitioners shew it thro' out the war? Can any people, situated as your petitioners, boast of so few having Joined the enemy, or exerted themselves more in their country's cause?

When execution of the judgment against Peyton was ordered and part of his lands offered for sale, the people of the county refused to buy them, as they did with others similarly distressed.

The above incident is illustrative of the community cohesion of the people of Gloucester and their strong ties to the county's leaders. From the first calls to resist Parliamentary taxation to demands for supplies for American and French troops, the people and their leaders were, based
on all available evidence, subject to no significant internal dissension. Such a circumstance is particularly meaningful for a population in which almost half of the adult white males were landless by 1782 and well over half could not vote for their representatives in the General Assembly. The skill of communication possessed by the leadership is no doubt one aspect of cementing this community cohesion during the stress of political turmoil and war. The leaders were able to articulate and define the mutual fears, anxieties, and anger, while increasing the numbers actively involved in the contest with the mother country. It seems true, as J. R. Pole has written, that "the most distinctive feature of the Revolution in Virginia was the skill with which it was led."101

Men such as John Page, Thomas Whiting, and Lewis Burwell remained the spokesmen for Gloucester County throughout the arduous years of war. The county inhabitants continued to elect and support these prominent individuals and, in fact, seemed to become even more united with the increase in the intensity of the political and military crisis. Dunmore's threats in 1775 to arm the slaves and his invasion and occupation of Gwynn's Island in June 1776 encouraged the county's support of Revolutionary activities. Despite the continual presence of the British within close striking distance of Gloucester's exposed coastline, the citizens had attained a consensus of support for their independence and punished disloyalty in the county.
Throughout the war the people of Gloucester County saw British actions as realistic threats to their social order and their individual well-being. A tenacious localism that outweighed support and service in the wider war was another aspect of the collective behavior of the inhabitants during the American Revolution. Perhaps the most important characteristic of the county was the continual state of military preparedness produced by the almost perpetual threat posed by British forces. Fear and tension resulting from such conditions were augmented by fears of slave rebellion. The British tactic of turning slave against master as one way of weakening the rebels' solidarity is more important for the anxieties it created in Revolutionary society than for the actual result. Gloucester County, where a majority of the population was black by 1776, was particularly susceptible to these anxieties.

The portrait of Gloucester County during the Revolution is one of a county that participated in the Revolutionary undertaking to create a new nation and at the same time was forced to constantly defend its own people and property. Faced with social and political disorder and threats to life and property, the people fused republican ideology with fierce localism and racist attitudes to gain strength and unity to endure the Revolutionary crisis. It is clear that Gloucester County believed the way to freedom lay with the patriots' cause, for the county chose to enthusiastically support the Revolution despite the many physical and psychological hardships its people had to endure throughout the Revolutionary era.
APPENDIX
### TABLE I

**POPULATION OF GLOUCESTER COUNTY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black (in total)</th>
<th>Decennial rate of growth&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tithables&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1653</td>
<td>367</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithables</td>
<td>1682</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>188.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Persons</td>
<td>1701</td>
<td>5720</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithables</td>
<td>1704</td>
<td>2945</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithables</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>3451</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithables</td>
<td>1755</td>
<td>4421</td>
<td>(3284)</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt; Tithables</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>5233</td>
<td>(3696)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Persons&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>13498</td>
<td>(7273)</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Va. All Persons</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>60506</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Va. All Persons</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>747610</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes and sources:

<sup>a</sup>Each figure is for the years from the last tithable, or from all persons when applicable.

<sup>b</sup>Tithables are all white males age 16 and above, and all blacks age 16 and above. Unless otherwise noted, the population figures are from Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population before the Federal Census of 1790* (New York, 1932), 145-150.

<sup>c</sup>This category is extrapolated from Federal census figures of white males age 16 and above and one-half of all slaves.


TABLE II

SLAVE OWNERSHIP IN GLOUCESTER COUNTY, 1782

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of owner</th>
<th>Number (N=517)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Slaveowner (50 slaves or more)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial slaveowner (25+-50)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate slaveowner (10-25)</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middling slaveowner (5-10)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small slaveowner (1-5)</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The tax law on which this assessment was based noted that taxes "upon slaves, be paid by the owners thereof." William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . (Richmond, 1809-1823), X, 504. This is in apparent contrast to personal property tax records used by Sarah S. Hughes, "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782-1810," William and Mary Quarterly, XXXV (1978), 263.
TABLE III
LAND OWNERSHIP IN GLOUCESTER COUNTY, 1782

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large landowner (500 acres or more)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial landowner (250-500)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate landowner (100-250)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middling landowner (50-100)</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small landowner (1-50)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with land</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landless with slaves</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landless with livestock</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landless with house</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landless with no taxable property</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with house</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with slaves</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Landless</strong></td>
<td><strong>595</strong></td>
<td><strong>48.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gloucester County Land Book, 1782, Virginia State Library, Richmond.
TABLE IV
OFFICEHOLDING IN GLOUCESTER COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic position of officeholder</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of officeholders</th>
<th>Percentage of all county taxpayers, 1782</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large landowner (500 acres or more)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial landowner (250-500 acres)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate landowner (100-250)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middling landowner (50-100)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small landowner (1-50)</td>
<td>1c</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landless with slaves</td>
<td>1d</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large slaveowner (50 slaves or more)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial slaveowner (25-50)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate slaveowner (10-25)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middling slaveowner (5-10)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small slaveowner (1-5)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

a. Offices included justice of the peace, deputy sheriff, Loyalist jury, inspector, judge of admiralty, commissioner, county committee, Council, House of Burgesses or Delegates, surveyor, and tobacco warehouse inspector.

b. See Tables II and III.

c. Son of Major Thomas Smith.

d. Owned 314 acres by 1791.

Sources: This table was prepared by comparing information on Gloucester County inhabitants who held offices, gleaned from numerous and scattered sources, to the slaveholding and landholding data on those same persons from the Gloucester County Land Book, 1782, Virginia State Library, Richmond.
Copy from Charles E. Hatch, Jr., "Gloucester Point in the Siege of Yorktown, 1781," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2d Ser., XX (1940), 265-284.
Copy of sketch map preserved with the papers of the Vicomte d’Arrot of the Duc de Lauzun’s legion, in the Lafayette-Leclerc Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Va.
NOTES

CHAPTER I


2 R. Bennet Bean, The Peopling of Virginia (Boston, 1938), 87.

3 Mason, ed., Colonial Gloucester County, I, ix, xiv.

4 Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1975), 265;

5 John W. Reps, Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland (Williamsburg, Va., 1972), 89-91;


7 An advertisement in 1766 offered 300 acres near the old courthouse for sale. "The place is well known to be very convenient for a publick house from the number of Gentlemen who resort thither every court, as also for travellers." Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), July 25, 1766. The lack of pre-urban communities in Gloucester County can be contrasted with a recent study of urbanization. See Joseph A. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "'Camden's Turrets pierce the skies!' The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XXX (1973), 549-574.

8 Purdie and Dixon's Va. Gaz., Sept. 8, 1774, and Mar. 26, 1777; Purdie's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), Nov. 7, 1777.
Mordecai Throckmorton offered 2,000 acres for sale in 1777 that included two plantations; one had a substantial brick dwelling house and the other an overseer's house. See also Purdie and Dixon's Va. Gaz., Nov. 13, 1766, Mar. 10, 1768, Apr. 19, and Oct. 18, 1770, Dec. 12, 1771, July 23, 1772, Nov. 18, 1773, Feb. 10 and 17, 1774; Purdie's Va. Gaz., Mar. 6, 1768, Aug. 9, 1776.

Rind's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), Nov. 29, 1770. See also Dixon and Hunter's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), Mar. 11, 1775; Purdie and Dixon's Va. Gaz., Mar. 17, 1774; and Purdie's Va. Gaz., Oct. 31, 1777.


For other planters in debt to Robert Cary, see Waller Affidavit, Sept. 12, 1810. T. 79/3/407-425. The widespread problem of planter indebtedness as a cause for the American Revolution has been convincingly disputed by Emory G. Evans, "Planter Indebtedness and the Coming of the Revolution in Virginia," WMQ, 3d Ser., XIX (1962), 511-533.


For a discussion of the variety of the slave population and the rise of Afro-American culture, see Allan Kulikoff, "The Origins of Afro-American Society in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia, 1700 to 1790," WMQ, 3d Ser., XXXV (1978), 226-259.


Dunmore to the earl of Hillsborough, May 1, 1772, in K. G. Davies, ed. Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783 (Dublin, 1972- ), V, 94.

Jackson Turner Main, "The Distribution of Property in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLI (Sept., 1954), 246, finds that nine of ten property holders owned slaves.

Kulikoff, "Afro-American Society," WMQ, 3d Ser., XXXV (1978), 248. The reasons for this difference may be the many tenants available for day labor or diversification in the grazing of cattle and other forms of less-intensive agriculture. Sarah S. Hughes, "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782-1810," WMQ, 3d Ser., XXXV (1978), 262, has found that all planters in Elizabeth City County who owned over 100 acres had slaves.

Figures are from Mason, ed., Colonial Gloucester County, I, 88. The average plantation in tidewater Virginia decreased from 417 acres in 1704 to 336 in 1750, while the number of property holders increased 66%. Morgan, American Slavery, 341-342. This trend is also discussed in Main, "Distribution of Property," MVHR, XLI (Sept., 1954), 247; and D. Alan Williams, "The Small Farmer in Eighteenth-Century Virginia Politics," Agricultural History, XLIII (1969), 93.

Of 40 wealthy planters in post-Revolutionary Virginia, only 3 were from Gloucester County. This compares with 5 from adjacent Middlesex and 6 from James City County. Jackson Turner Main, "The One Hundred," WMQ, 3d Ser., XI (1954), 355.

The exact circumstances of the large number of landless are difficult to describe, for the few manuscript collections that have survived document the lives of such men as John Page who were wealthy slaveowners. There were no group protests by tenants or laborers in petitions to the state or colonial government. It is therefore unclear whether the landless were younger sons of middle-class planters who did not receive a patrimony, or who were the permanent poor, struggling to feed families through tenancy or day labor.
CHAPTER II

3 Kennedy, ed., House of Burgesses Jours., 1766-1769, 156.
5 Kennedy, ed., House of Burgesses Jours., 1766-1769, 181.
7 Van Schreeven, comp., Revolutionary Virginia, I, 73-77.
10 Van Schreeven, comp., Revolutionary Virginia, I, 79-84.
11 Mays, Pendleton, I, 260; Jensen, Founding of a Nation, 370.
12 Van Schreeven, comp., Revolutionary Virginia, I, 91.
13 Ibid., 94-95.
14 Ibid., 99-100.
15 Ibid., 101-102.
[Notes to pages 19-24] 112


21 Ibid., 126.


24 Van Schreeven, comp., Revolutionary Virginia, I, 231-238. While the Convention did not respond to Gloucester's plea that the recovery of debts be suspended, that they did not encourage a revival of the lapsed Fee Bill indicates approval of the court closure. Curtis, "Role of the Courts," in Martin, ed., Human Dimensions, 141-142.

25 Jensen, Founding of a Nation, 504-505.


29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 The Richmond County Committee resolved on Feb. 6, 1775, to make public their approbation of the actions of the York and Gloucester committees, who had acted "with propriety, firmness, and spirit." Purdie's Va. Gaz., Feb. 13, 1775, supplement.


34 Pinckney's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), May 4, 1775.


37Ibid., Jan. 19, 1775.
38Ibid., Mar. 9, 1775.
40Ibid., 375-376.
41Gloucester County contributed £15, the sum given by a majority of the counties, toward financing the expenses of the delegates to the Continental Congress. Ibid., 385.
45Ivor Noël Hume, 1775: Another Part of the Field (New York, 1966), 150.
47Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution, IX, 107, 111.
48Ibid., 204.
51[John Page, Memoir], "Governor Page," Virginia Historical Register, III (1850), 149.
52Scribner, ed., Revolutionary Virginia, III, 81.
53John Burk, The History of Virginia, from Its First Settlement to the Present Day (Petersburg, 1804-1816), III, 418.
54Mays, Pendleton, II, 13-17.
56Purdie's Va. Gaz., May 19, 1775.
57Kennedy, ed., House of Burgesses Jours., 1773-1776, 177.
Early in June, Gloucester County shipbuilder John Parsons spread word that he and his apprentices, William and John Degge and William Hudgin, had seen goods landed from Norton & Sons at Urbanna, Middlesex County, and delivered to a local merchant, contrary to the Continental Association. This controversy raged for almost two months, as the Middlesex County Committee dealt with the allegations amid testimony from all other parties to the contrary and rumors that Parsons denied the story. The only notice taken of this event by the Gloucester County Committee occurred on July 24, 1775, before the members had seen published testimony destroying Parsons’s claims. The committee, however, suspended judgment until persons material to the case returned to the country. With Parsons’s credibility soon thereafter totally ruined, the matter did not come before the Gloucester Committee again. Pinckney’s Va. Gaz., July 13 and 27, 1775; Purdie’s Va. Gaz., July 14, supplement, and 22, supplement, and Aug. 4, 1775; Dixon and Hunter’s Va. Gaz., July 22, 1775, supplement.

64 Scribner, ed., Revolutionary Virginia, III, 414.
65 William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . (Richmond, 1809-1823), IX, 9-35.
69 Mays, Pendleton, II, 51.
70 Burk, History of Virginia, III, 432.
72 Mays, Pendleton, II, 52-54.
73 Quarles, Negro in the Revolution, 23.
74 Pendleton to Lee, Nov. 27, 1775, quoted, ibid., 23.
75 Boyd, et al., eds., Jefferson Papers, I, 265-266.
Page to Lee, Dec. 9, 1775, Lee Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

Hening, Statutes at Large, IX, 75-92 (quote on p. 75).

Quarles, Negro in the Revolution, 25.

Hening, Statutes at Large, IX, 106.

Noël Hume, 1775, 424-441.

"Virginia State Troops in the Revolution," VMHB, XXVI (1918), 398, and XXVII (1919), 64.


"Virginia Legislative Papers: The Case of John Wilkie of Gloucester," VMHB, XV (1908), 293.


Page to Lee, Feb. 3, 1776, Lee Papers, University of Va.

Mays, Pendleton, II, 87.

Page to Lee, Feb. 19, 1776, Lee Papers, University of Va.

Page to Lee, Feb. 20, 1776, ibid.


Mays, Pendleton, II, 100.


McIlwaine et al., eds., Va. Council Jours., II, 482.

On Apr. 7, Capt. James Innes reported to Lee that "on the Gloucester shore, there are about 15 pieces of the folg. sizes: one 24. pounder, one 12. pounder, one 9. Ditto, four 6 pounders, and eight 18 pounders; all of which are exceeding injur'd by the salt water to which they have been exposed for many years." Lee Papers, I, 389.

Ibid., 377.

Page to Lee, Apr. 12, 1776, Lee Papers, University of Va.
CHAPTER III

1 Burk, History of Virginia, IV, 149.

2 Lewis to Lee, May 27, 1776, Lee Papers, II, 42.

3 Burk, History of Virginia, IV, 149.

4 Quarles, Negro in the Revolution, 30.

5 Purdie's Va. Gaz., May 31, 1776. Dixon's Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), June 1, 1776, carried the more reasonable report of 800 men landing on the island, which had 2,300 acres, 500 cattle, and 100 sheep.

6 Dixon's Va. Gaz., June 1, 1776.

7 Quarles, Negro in the Revolution, 30-31.

8 Ibid., 30.

9 Lee Papers, II, 52-53.

10 McIlwaine et al., eds., Va. Council Jours., I, 3, 6, 14, 35, 47, 49, 50, 55, 59, 60, 65, 92, 93, 96, 97.
11Boyd et al., eds., Jefferson Papers, I, 454-455.


15Ibid.


19Petition of Samuel Eddens, Dec. 16, 1797, Legislative Petitions: Gloucester County, 1775-1819, Virginia State Library, Richmond. In his petition, Eddens requested compensation for his labor and for the salvaged equipment. The petition is endorsed "reasonable."

20Return of Negroes Registered & certified . . . on Board Sundry Vessels . . . 1783, Book I, 27, 70, 94, 144, 152, 156, Sir Guy Carleton Papers (photostats), New York Public Library, New York City.

21"Even though Dunmore's raids were of minimal economic and military importance, they provided the Virginians with an opportunity to reveal their true feelings about Negroes. . . . As the war ground on, the whites' attitudes became more fearful, their arguments more strident and extreme." Mullin, Flight and Rebellion, 134.


23One historian has described Gloucester, and particularly Gwynn's Island, as filled with Loyalists. Much of the evidence, however, is of neighboring counties such as Middlesex and Northumberland. Issac Samuel Harrell, Loyalism in Virginia: Chapters in the Economic History of the Revolution (Durham, N.C., 1926), 181, 206. If an amorphous group of Loyalists did exist, they were apparently successful only in covert acts, otherwise some notice of action against them would have been recorded.
CHAPTER IV

1"Summary of the political and military Condition of America," Nov. 16, 1779, in B. F. Stevens's Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-1783 (Wilmington, Del., 1970), XVII, 6.

2Ibid., III, 335.

3McIlwaine et al., eds., Va. Council Jours., I, 98.
7Ibid., 207, 214.
8Ibid., 215.
13Hening, Statutes at Large, IX, 179-184.
14McIlwaine et al., eds., Va. Council Jours., I, 263.
16McIlwaine et al., eds., Va. Council Jours., I, 300.
20Estimate compiled from H. J. Eckenrode, "List of the Revolutionary Soldiers of Virginia," Special Report of the Department of Archives and History for 1911 (Richmond, 1912); H. J. Eckenrode, "List of the Revolutionary Soldiers of Virginia; Supplement," Special Report of the Department of Archives and History for 1912 (Richmond, 1913); DAR Patriot Index (Washington, D.C., 1966). Information from these sources was combined with data on Gloucester residents from Bureau of the Census, Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Records of the State Enumerations 1782-1785, Virginia (Washington, D.C., 1908); and Gloucester County Land Book, 1782, Va. State Lib. Lack of identification of other possible soldiers was because of a common family name.
21"Virginia Legislative Papers: The Number of Men of
Military Age in Virginia in 1776, "VMHB, XVIII (1910), 34; Boyd et al., eds., Jefferson Papers, I, 580; II, 600; Ecklenrode, "List of Revolutionary Soldiers, Special Report for 1911, 4. Only fragmentary militia records exist.

22McIlwaine et al., eds., Va. Council Jours., II, 456; Hening, Statutes at Large, IX, 150.


24Account Book of Captain Thomas Lilly, Brig Liberty, [1776], Bounty Warrants, box 58, folder 14, Va. State Lib.


26Stewart, Virginia's Navy, 140, 223.


29Stewart, Virginia's Navy, 46; Hening, Statutes at Large, X, 217.

30Pension claim of William Armistead, Apr. 17, 1834, abstracted in John Frederick Dorman, comp., Virginia Revolutionary Pension Applications (Washington, D.C., 1958), II, 83.


32McIlwaine et al., eds., Va. Council Jours., I, 323.

33Ibid., 335.

34Ibid., 336, 342.


Ibid., 466.


John Page to Richard Henry Lee, Sept. 11, 1777, Lee Papers, University of Va.


Stewart, *Virginia's Navy*, 54.


Stewart, *Virginia's Navy*, 73-76.


Dixon and Nicholson's *Virginia Gazette* (Richmond), Apr. 13, 1780, reported that James Gray of the Gloucester had picked up a Gloucester slave.

55"Steps to be Taken to Repel General Leslie's Army," [October 22?, 1780], in Boyd et al., eds., Jefferson Papers, IV, 61-63.

56Petition of William Evans, Oct. 27, 1790, Legislative Petitions: Gloucester County, 1775-1819.


60Hening, Statutes at Large, X, 391-395.

61Ibid., 326-337.


70George Weedon to Jefferson, Apr. 8, 1781, in Boyd et al., eds., Jefferson Papers, V, 383.

71Page to Jefferson, Apr. 13, 1781, ibid., 436.

72Jefferson to Page, Apr. 18, 1781, ibid., 491.

73Dixon to Jefferson, May 1, 1781, ibid., 583.
CHAPTER V


6Jessel to Weedon, June 21, 1781, ibid., 177-179. Weedon wrote that Peyton's activities to dislodge the Loyalists were "Voluntary as it proceeds from no instructions of mine." Weedon to ?, July 13, 1781, Weedon Papers, Annmary Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, R.I. (film copy at Colonial Williamsburg).


8Ibid.


12Va. State Papers, II, 221.

15 Hening, Statutes at Large, X, 283.
16 "Lord Cornwallis's Account of His Campaign in Virginia, in 1781," VMHB, VI (July, 1853), 127.
18 Quarles, Negro in the Revolution, 141; Tarleton, History of the Campaigns, 362.
19 Riley, "Yorktown During the Revolution," VMHB, LVII (1949), 177.
21 Pay Roll for the Invasion, on duty in Gloucester County, Aug. 2- Oct. 8, 1781, Executive Papers: Militia, Gloucester County.
26 Ibid., 299-300.
27 Ibid., 300.
29 Va. State Papers, II, 300-301.
30 John Graves Simcoe, A History of the Operations of a Partisan Corps, Called the Queen's Rangers... With a Memoir of the Author (New York, 1844), 248; Tarleton, History of the Campaigns, 363.
32 Charles E. Hatch, Jr., "Gloucester Point in the Siege of Yorktown," WMQ, 2d Ser., XX (1940), 268.

33 Ibid. For a detailed map of the batteries and redoubts, see Appendix, Map II. The only detailed map of Gloucester Point and the surrounding area during the siege of Yorktown was done by Gabriel-Joachim Revel du Perron, a sublieutenant in the Duc de Lauzun's legion. Howard C. Rice, Jr., and Anne S. K. Brown, trans. and eds., The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army: 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783 (Princeton, N.J., 1972), II, 159-160 and map no. 90. A small schematic map depicting the roads from Gloucester Point to the Courthouse was preserved with the papers of the Vicomte d'Arrot, of Lauzun's legion, at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Va. See Appendix, Map III, for a copy of this map.


35 Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 254-256.

36 Donaldson Yeates to John Page, Aug. 29, 1781, Emmet Collection, N.Y. Public Lib.


40 Page to Nelson, Sept. 10, 1781, ibid., 408-409.

41 Lee, Memoirs of the War, 312; Dorman, comp., Virginia Pension Applications, III, 37, V, 95, VI, 80-81.


44 Weedon to [Nelson], Sept. 17, 1781, Weedon Papers; Hening, Statutes at Large, X, 413-416.

45 Weedon to Page, Sept. 17, 1781, Weedon Papers.

46 Weedon to [Nelson], Sept. 18, 1781, ibid. Weedon commented to [Lafayette] on Sept. 23, 1781: "This militia Tenure is perplexing one Third of the men that I found in this
Quarter when I took Command have since been discharged and no reinforcements joined." *Ibid.*

47Weedon to [Lafayette?], Sept. 20, 1781, *ibid.*

48Weedon to [Lafayette], Sept. 23, 1781, *ibid.*

49Lee, Memoirs of the War, 357; Hatch, "Gloucester Point," WMQ, 2d Ser., XX (1940), 272.


51Weedon to [George Washington], Sept. 29, 1781, Weedon Papers.

52Tarleton, History of the Campaigns, 376; Simcoe, History of the Queen's Rangers, 251.


56Hatch, "Gloucester Point," WMQ, 2d Ser., XX (1940), 276-277; quote from Tarleton, History of the Campaigns, 376.


68 "Richard Butler’s Journal," *Hist. Mag.*, VIII (Jan., 1864), 111. At least three Gloucester slaves were among the group. Return of Negroes Registered & certified, Book I, 96, 127, 144, Carleton Papers, N.Y. Public Lib.


70 Quoted in Hatch, "Gloucester Point," *WMQ*, 2d Ser., XX (1940), 283.


76 Pryor to William Davies, Nov. 2 and 6, 1781, ibid., II, 575, 580.

77 John Robertson to Davies, Nov. 25 and Dec. 7, 1781, ibid., 623, 642.

78 McIlwaine, ed., Governors Letters, III, 220-221.


81 Davies to Harrison, July 23, 1782, ibid., 228.


89 McIlwaine, ed., Governors Letters, III, 421.

90 Dewey, "To Level the Works," VMHB, LXXI (1963), 151.

91 Hening, Statutes at Large, X, 233-237, 413-416.

93 Court Booklets 1 and 1A, Public Service Claims, Box 6A, Va. State Lib.


100 Ibid., 467-468; Journals of the Virginia Council of State, Apr. 25, 1789, Va. State Lib.

101 Pole, Political Representation, 282.
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