

President's Corner

Proclaiming Liberty': The Story Behind the Declaration of Independence

Epoch Times by Phil Hall 5/9/2026

Few documents have made a more profound impact on history than the Declaration of Independence. However, the story behind its creation and the true force of its legacy have often been a victory of legend over facts.

Timothy Sandefur's **"Proclaiming Liberty: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the Declaration of Independence"** puts the Declaration in the proper context of its time, while demonstrating how it's withstood endless assaults by critics. It's a perfect book for the American 250th anniversary celebrations.

Mother Country Blues

In many ways, the Declaration capped British tumult that first erupted in the 17th century. The execution of King Charles I in 1649 during the English Civil War coupled with the 1688 overthrow of King James II in the Glorious Revolution to give credence for challenging authority.

During this period, the citizens in Britain's North American colonies were passive observers of the upheaval in their mother country, but they were also passive players in their own realm. Sandefur observes that nearly 100 onerous laws regulating trade within the colonies were passed by Parliament between the reigns of Charles II and George III with no input from the impacted peoples.

At first, the colonists obliged these regulations while running a shadow economy with smuggled commodities. However, when the British treasury was depleted after the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Parliament levied a series of harsh new taxes on the colonies. A heavy-handed use of military force to silence dissent made matters worse.

Benjamin Franklin warned British officials against their actions, declaring, **"Suppose a military force sent into America: ... They will not find a rebellion; they may, indeed, make one."**



"Declaration of Independence," 1819, by John Trumbell. Vernon Lewis Gallery/Stocktrek Images/Getty Images



A good way to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our Nation's founding is to read the Declaration of Independence. I reread it yesterday and found it an amazing political and social document. In the manuscript, Thomas Jefferson, the primary author, declared that the thirteen British Colonies in the New World were now independent and made a compelling case for that conclusion. Jefferson wrote that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed and that all people have unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This philosophy forms the political essence of what we practice today in our great land. As I thought about my article for the Communiqué,

I reflected on how precious freedom is; how I didn't have to bend my knee or answer to a dictator or a monarch; and how people who share my dreams of opportunity and peace can come to this land and find them. From the beginning of time, when the first human settlements arose in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and

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PRESIDENT LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret) FIRST VP TBD SECOND VP TBD SECRETARY LTC Steve Jamison, USA (Ret) TREASURER COL Robert F Brown USA (Ret) PROGRAMS COL Thomas J Dalzell, USMC (Ret) CHAPLAIN LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret) MEMBERSHIP CHAIR COL Robert F Brown USA (Ret) VCOC REPRESENTATIVE CAPT Matthew K Haag USN (Ret) LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS REP LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret) PERSONAL AFFAIRS REP LTC Steve Jamison, USA (Ret) NEWSLETTER EDITOR COL Thomas J Dalzell, USMC (Ret) FACEBOOK EDITOR CDR Lee M Ensley, USN (Ret) WEBMASTER CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) PUBLIC AFFAIRS CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) AWARDS CHAIR LTC David King, USA (Ret) SERGEANT-AT-ARMS CPT Larry Johnson, USAR (former) BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret) COMMUNITY SERV VOL REP LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret) PAST PRESIDENT CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) SURVIVING SPOUSE REP Mrs. Mary Lou Summers DIRECTORS COL Robert F Brown USA (Ret) CAPT Roger Burnett, USN Ret) CAPT Richard Cocrane, USN (Ret) COL Thomas J Dalzell, USMC (Ret) CDR Lee M Ensley, USN (Ret) LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret) CAPT Matthew K Haag USN (Ret) LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret) LTC Steve Jamison, USA (Ret) CPT Larry Johnson, USAR (former) LTC David King, USA (Ret) COL John Miller, USA (Ret) CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) CAPT Martin Robertson, USN (Ret) Mrs. Mary Lou Summers Ms. Evelyn Cox, 1st Lt USA (Former)		controlled by their leaders until 1776. Sadly, even today, millions of people around the world are not free but bound to autocratic regimes. The Declaration of Independence, along with our Constitution and its Bill of Rights, reminds us that all people are created equal and that the rule of law guides our Nation’s governance. This philosophy runs counter to the basic acts and proclamations of the regimes and political institutions that governed the world long before we began our shared experience with democracy. The ideas articulated in these founding documents were radical, novel, fragile, and powerful. The ancient Greeks and Romans wrote about them and practiced them on a much smaller scale than we do today. These grand principles that Jefferson articulated are worth living for and dying for: affirmations that human beings have worth and dignity and that no monarch, no dictator, no creed, no ruler, and no military has the right to disturb or compel. These visions form the social and political fabric that millions of people worldwide yearn for and dream of every day. Let us cherish and practice them in our daily lives and actions, and be proud to call ourselves Americans as we continue to forge a more perfect union. I hope you enjoy your summer, whether you sail on Smith Mountain Lake, walk the Creeper Trail in Abingdon, have a family picnic in one of Virginia’s fabulous state parks, or do anything else our splendid Southwest Virginia region has to offer. We live in a beautiful part of our Nation, and let’s continue to be grateful for all our forefathers and servicemembers have won for us through their blood, vision, energy, and courage. Happy 4th of July!
		<u>OUR MISSION</u> As the community face of the Military Officers Association of America, the Southwest Virginia Chapter’s mission is to advocate for a strong national defense, be an influential provider and supporter of programs, benefits and services for our military community, and a source of social fellowship for our members. <u>OUR VISION</u> To Be An Influential Military Organization in Southwest Virginia.
		 

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Printed Word Power

The struggle against British rule became North America’s first mass media-influenced campaign. Newspaper columns and pamphlets, many published under pseudonyms, offered eloquent arguments against British political and economic abuses. While Thomas Paine’s “**Common Sense**” (1776) is the best known of these works today, Sandefur cites “**Boston Pamphlet**” (1772) as a primary inspiration for the Declaration’s principles. It was authored by Samuel Adams, Joseph Warren, and James Otis; the work focused on the “**natural rights**” of the colonists and quoted English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) on why legislatures cannot claim absolute power and must only govern with the citizens’ consent. Sandefur details how many of the grievances against Britain cited in “**Boston Pamphlet**,” along with Locke’s impactful language, were incorporated into the Declaration.

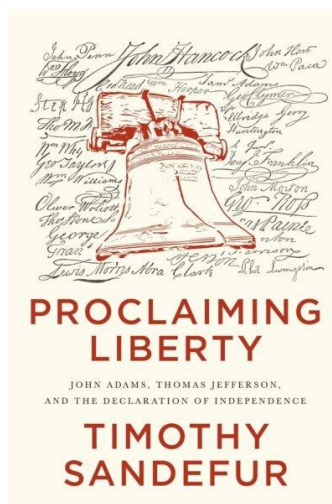
The Jeffersonian Touch

Thomas Jefferson is often erroneously credited as the sole author of the Declaration. In fact, he was part of a five-member committee within the Continental Congress tasked with its creation. John Adams, who was also on the committee, later took credit for giving Jefferson that assignment; Jefferson refuted Adams’s claim. Adams and the other committee members (Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Thomas Livingston) made changes before the document went to the full Continental Congress for its final draft. Jefferson took two days to write the first draft, which Sandefur credits to his heavy reliance on other writings. This included Jefferson’s own 1774 pamphlet “A Summary View of the Rights of British America,” which argued that Parliament had no right to govern the American colonies. He also borrowed from the preamble he wrote for the Virginia Constitution. Sandefur explains, “**His task was not to set forth new ideas, but the opposite: to summarize things on which the American people already agreed and that justified their long-delayed separation from Britain.**”

Many patriots were involved in creating this American document.

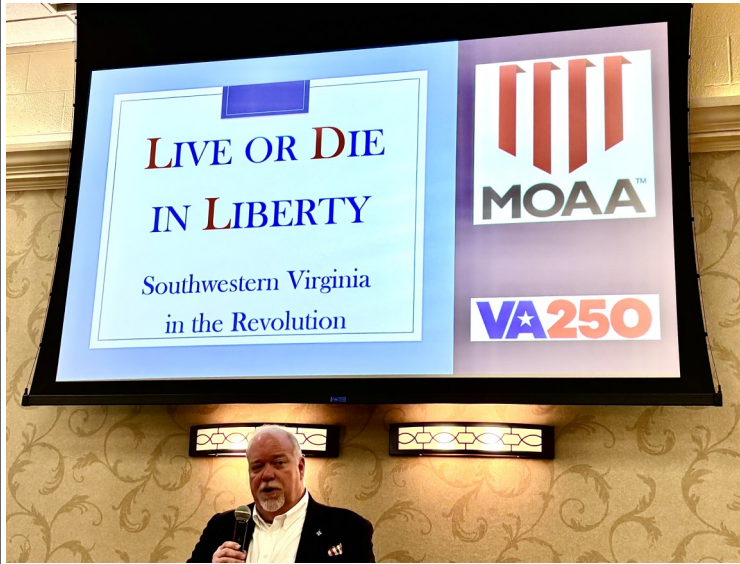
What It Means

The immediate reaction of the British elite to the Declaration was heavy in ridicule. Sandefur quotes philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who contemptuously viewed the document’s advocacy for individual rights as “**rhetorical nonsense—nonsense upon stilts.**” Parliament paid writer John Lind for a book-length rebuttal accusing the Continental Congress of disloyalty. Later generations of American thought leaders were also flummoxed with the Declaration’s language, especially claims that all men were created equal. Abolitionist leaders insisted the Declaration’s principles were anti-slavery, but Chief Justice Roger B. Taney used the Supreme Court’s 1857 Dred Scott Decision to insist that the slave-owning Founding Fathers never conceived total emancipation of the enslaved population. Sandefur highlights how late 19th- and early 20th-century Progressives sought to belittle and degrade the Declaration’s celebration of natural rights. Even President Woodrow Wilson was skeptical, stating in 1907, “**We are not bound to adhere to the doctrines held by the signers of the Declaration of Independence.**” Into the modern era, several conservative figures also questioned the Declaration’s position on natural rights. Judge Robert Bork went so far as to insist the document’s references to liberty and the pursuit of happiness opened the door to “**personal license and social disorder.**” Sandefur concludes his book by challenging the theory presented by revisionist historians Nikole Hannah-Jones and Ta-Nehisi Coates that the nation’s foundation was built on the slavery economy and not the principles of the Declaration. While acknowledging the nation’s troubled racial past, he criticizes those efforts for trying to erase the Declaration’s noble aspiration of a nation as “**one people.**” “**Proclaiming Liberty**” is a rich and provocative history lesson that offers wise consideration of what it means to be an American. Freedom rings loud and clear in this excellent book.



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA IN THE REVOLUTION

On Thursday 16 April 2026. Mr. Eric Monday, General Counsel, Roanoke Regional Airport Commission, presented a program on “**Southwest Virginia in the Revolution.**” Southwest Virginia was a crucial, violent frontier during the American Revolution (1775–1783), serving as the western edge of the colonies and a key source of ammunition. It was pivotal for early defiance, notably the 1775 Fincastle Resolutions, and for supplying lead from mines in present-day Wythe County. Southwest Virginia



played a pivotal role in shaping the American Revolution. In 1775—more than a year before the Declaration of Independence—local leaders from what was then Fincastle County boldly signed the **Fincastle Resolutions**, a document that echoed the same fearless desire for political liberty that would soon ignite a nation. These men, many of them frontier leaders and militia captains, risked everything—family, land, and even their lives—by publicly defying the British Crown. Their commitment would ripple through history and contribute directly to the birth of the United States.

In January 1775, over a year before the Declaration of Independence, residents of Fincastle County signed a document pledging to defend their liberty, representing an early and bold defiance of the British Crown. Their actions inspired Patrick Henry’s iconic “Liberty or Death” speech and ultimately fueled the American Revolution. These were strong-willed folks who really did not like being told what to do. They had come to the frontier because they wanted to be free to choose where and how to live and worship. By 1775 they were ready to live and die for their liberty, and they put that in writing so that everyone — King and country — would know. That defiant frontier spirit lives on in the people of Southwest Virginia today. Then there was John Chiswell’s lead mines near present-day Austinville which were critical to the patriot cause, supplying ammunition for the Continental Army, Virginia, and North Carolina. These mines also became a location for labor involving enslaved people, including some who had sought freedom with the British. The region faced a “dual threat” from British-allied Tories (Loyalists) and Native American tribes (such as the Shawnee) allied with the British. Settlers built numerous forts in the Clinch and Holston Valleys for



protection, including Glade Hollow, Russell’s Fort, Moore’s Fort, and Fort Blackmore. Frontier militia from the area, often known for their fighting spirit, participated in key battles, most famously the Battle of King’s Mountain in South Carolina, which was a turning point in the Southern theater. The region was not united; it was a hotbed of anti-patriot fervor, with many residents (Tories) remaining loyal to King George III, leading to brutal, local violence. Southwest Virginia was among the last parts of the state to be settled by Europeans, in a flow of migrations that consisted mainly of English, German, and Scots-Irish and Irish immigrants. A major route of migration to the region was the Great Wagon Road through the Great Appalachian Valley.

The **Royal Proclamation of 1763** was issued by King George III of Great Britain on 7 October 1763. It followed the Treaty of Paris (1763), which formally ended the Seven Years' War and transferred French territory in North America to Great Britain.^[1] The proclamation at least temporarily forbade all new settlements west of a line drawn along the Appalachian Mountains, which was delineated as an Indian Reserve. Exclusion from the vast region of Trans-Appalachia created discontent between Britain and colonial land speculators and potential settlers. The proclamation and access to western lands was one of the first significant areas of dispute between Britain and the Thirteen Colonies and became a contributing factor leading to the American Revolution. The 1763 proclamation line is more or less similar to the Eastern Continental Divide, extending from Georgia in the south to the divide's northern terminus near the middle of the north border of Pennsylvania, where it intersects the northeasterly St. Lawrence Divide, and extends further through New England.

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On October 7, 1763, King George III's Royal Proclamation imagined a line passing through the Appalachian Mountains. By carefully dividing colonial and indigenous territories, British officials hoped to turn a fractious frontier into an empire of peace. When

it came time to survey this continental boundary, however, Virginia's determination to claim land to the banks of the Ohio River threatened this imperial vision. Before the line could be settled, the American War of Independence wiped it off the map.

The Proclamation Line



in the Old Dominion shows how Virginians pursued an agenda of expansion and how Cherokee and Iroquois leaders attempted to carve out a stable place for Native nations in North America in the generation before the American Revolution.

Southwest Virginia played a huge part in the fight for independence. From 1776-1781, all major events in Virginia were west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. At the time, Southwest Virginia was the western edge of the colonies. The 15 frontiersmen who signed the Fincastle Resolutions did so in support of the Continental Congress' boycott of British goods in protest of the Intolerable Acts. It was written as an address to Virginia's delegates to the First Continental Congress. These men, many of them frontier leaders and militia captains, risked everything, family, land and even their lives by publicly defying the British Crown. Their commitment would ripple through history and contribute directly to the birth of the United States. The document defended the colonists' "inestimable privileges" as rightful British subjects, which they swore "never to surrender to any power upon earth, but at the expense of our lives. These are our real, though unpolished sentiments, of liberty and loyalty, and in them we are resolved to live and die."



Boundary between Mississippi River and 49th parallel uncertain due to misconception that source of Mississippi River lay further north

1775



Chapter President LTC Bob Habermann presenting Mr. Eric Monday the chapter "Cup" in appreciation for his excellent presentation on Southwest Virginia in the American Revolution



Taking questions from the chapter membership

DID YOU KNOW?

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER INITIATIVES

Vittles for Vets



Vittles for Vets is a non-profit 501 C-3 organization that was founded in December 2014 by veterans for veterans. Our primary purpose is to distribute gift cards for nutritious food to qualifying veterans. We also conduct special drives to meet the needs of veterans and their families who have qualified for our program through Virginia veteran services. Vittles for Vets empowers those who have served our country honorably and have fallen on hard times to see a brighter future through the gift of nutritious food. We hope to further strengthen our program through establishing a support system within the community and beyond. We strive to develop a strong chapter of Vittles for Vets that can be replicated in more areas to serve a larger number of veterans in the state of Virginia and the United States. The Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA has partnered with Vittles For Vets by serving on the Board of Directors, assisting in fund raising and by applying for and receiving MOAA Community Outreach Grants in support of the Vittles For Vets programs. The SWVC received a MOAA Community Outreach Grant of \$2,000 in 2024, a \$2,500 grant in 2025 and a \$2,500 grant in 2026 to support the Vittles For Vets program. Chapter member CDR Lee Ensley, USN (Ret) a member of the Chapter and the Vittles For Vets BOD, prepared and submitted the grants. Prior to that in the early 2020's the Chapter applied for and received MOAA Community Outreach Grants of \$5,000 and \$3,750 to support the Military Family Support Center in Roanoke.

Dublin - Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery

The Southwest Virginia Chapter played a vital role in identifying the need for a veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia, locating a suitable site, supporting legislative efforts, and assisting with the cemetery's planning and development. As the cemetery's use has grown over the years, so has the need to transport families, visitors, and veterans — particularly those with mobility challenges — throughout the grounds. In response, the chapter previously raised funds to purchase a four-passenger electric cart to assist cemetery guests. Funds are now being solicited to procure a six (6) passenger vehicle. Chapter members also actively participate in the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, as well as the annual Wreath Laying Ceremony held each December.



DID YOU KNOW?

Franklin: The Almost 14th State

At the close of the American Revolution, the newly formed U.S. Congress was deep in debt. In 1784, the province of North Carolina voted to cede 29 million acres of land between the Allegheny Mountains and the Mississippi River to Congress to ease its financial troubles. The U.S. government had two years to accept responsibility for the area; however, in the meantime, western settlements on this land feared that they would be left to handle the nearby Cherokee people alone, or even that Congress would sell the territory off to a foreign entity. A few months later, North Carolina rescinded its offer after re-evaluation, reclaiming authority over the land (now eastern Tennessee).

Unhappy with North Carolina's governance over the area, frontiersmen from the region sought to establish their land as a separate, independent state called "Frankland." In August of 1784, delegates from the counties in question gathered in Jonesborough, elected leaders for their new state, and drafted a state constitution.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF FRANKLIN

Your committee appointed to collect and adjust the reasons which impel us to declare ourselves independent of North Carolina, report as follows, to-wit:

WHEREAS, we, the freemen inhabitants of part of the country included in the limits of an Act of North Carolina ceding certain vacant territory to Congress, having declared ourselves independent of North Carolina, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind make it proper that we should manifest to the world the reasons which induced us to a declaration, which are as follows:

FIRST. That the Constitution of North Carolina declares that it shall be justifiable to erect new States whenever the consent of the Legislature shall countenance it, and this consent is implied, we conceive, in the cession act which has thrown us into such a situation that the influence of the law in common cases was almost a nullity, and in criminal jurisdiction had ceased entirely; which reduced us to the verge of anarchy.

SECOND. The Assembly of North Carolina have detained a certain quantity of goods, which was procured to satisfy the Indians for the lands we possess, which detainure we fully conceive has so exasperated them that they have actually committed hostilities upon us, and we are alone compelled to defend ourselves from these savages.

3RDLY. The resolutions of Congress held out from time to time, encouraging the erection of new States, have appeared to us ample encouragement.

On May 16, 1785, they petitioned Congress for statehood. Seven out of the thirteen existing U.S. provinces voted in favor, but this was less than the two-thirds majority required by the Articles of Confederation. Attempting to bolster their petition, Frankland leaders changed the name of the area to "Franklin" and attempted to garner support from founding father Benjamin Franklin. Though he declined, "Franklinites" existed in their own little republic for just over four years, expanding their territory gradually by seizing it from the indigenous population. After conflict with the North Carolina administration, the Franklin government collapsed in early 1789, and North Carolina resumed full control of the land. Not long after, North Carolina voted again to cede the area to Congress, and it became part of the Southwest Territory (eventually, Tennessee).

Fun fact: Folk hero Davey Crockett was born in the state of Franklin, and his father was a passionate Franklinite.

DID YOU KNOW?

The First Female U.S. President

You read that correctly. While the United States may not have seen an official “first female President,” a woman functionally ran the executive branch for more than a year over a century ago.

In August of 1914, President Woodrow Wilson lost his wife, Ellen. The following March, he was introduced to widow Edith Galt through a first cousin. As if in love at first sight, Wilson immediately began showering her with gifts and love notes, some of which probed for her opinion on presidential matters. Three months after their introduction, Wilson proposed (to his advisors’ alarm) and the two were married in December of 1915.

Wilson won another term, and his new wife became his constant companion. She attended his meetings, was given access to classified materials, and even filtered his mail. Toward the end of World War I, she accompanied the President to Europe to attend the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.



Shortly after their return, a stroke left President Wilson paralyzed and bedridden. Instead of encouraging her husband to resign and be replaced by the Vice President, Edith took on a number of his duties herself, hiding the extent of his incapacity from the public. From the time of his stroke to the end of his term in 1921, Edith Wilson was the only connection between the President and other officials, filtering all presidential matters and determining what was important enough to be brought to his bedside.

She was so serious about her new position as “presidential steward” that when the Secretary of State conducted Cabinet meetings without her being present, she had him removed from office. When an ambassador arrived to help negotiate for the President’s version of the League of Nations, she refused him the opportunity unless he fired an aide who had made a joke about her (the ambassador refused)

Edith Wilson analyzed every message delivered to the President, barred all officials from bringing him business, assisted him in completing any necessary tasks, and naturally influenced domestic and international policy in doing so. Though she did not make any crucial decisions, she was accused of running the country in Wilson’s absence—an accusation that she insisted was incorrect up until her death in 1961.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Woman Who Helped Win World War II

After World War I, damaged nations recuperating after significant losses cultivated expansionist agendas all over the world, setting the stage for a second World War. Germany's loss of no less than 13% of its home territory, in particular, laid the groundwork for Adolf Hitler's eventual political takeover in the 1930s.

In the midst of this international tension, one self-described “**capricious and cantankerous**” woman, Virginia Hall, was determined to become a player. During college, she became fluent in French, German, Italian, and Russian, and after graduation, she applied to the U.S. Foreign Service; being a woman, however, she unfortunately didn't make the cut. Not to be discouraged, she instead traveled to Europe and began working as a clerk with various U.S. diplomatic institutions. During this period, she accidentally shot herself in the left leg while on a hunting trip, requiring amputation and a wooden replacement (which she lovingly named Cuthbert). Shortly after recovery, Hall applied to the U.S. Foreign Service again, but was rejected once more—this time because of her new disability.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded its neighbor Poland from the north, south, and west, kickstarting World War II. Initially, Hall contributed to the war effort by driving ambulances for the French army, and in her off-time, speaking passionately about Hitler's evils to her friends. A British spy, Vera Atkins (sometimes credited as the inspiration for James Bond's Miss Moneybags) overheard one of Virginia's tirades, and recruited her for a secret organization that was being organized by Winston Churchill—the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

As part of the SOE, Hall soon demonstrated proficiency at living in disguise under a fake identity, recruiting loyal resistance spies, uncovering information about German movements, organizing drop zones, and facilitating jailbreaks. According to one report alone, she and her team killed 150 Nazis, captured several hundred more, derailed German freight trains, and detonated several bridges. At one point, her sabotage work became such an inconvenience for the Nazis that she was called “the **most dangerous of all Allied spies**” by the Gestapo. Only known to them as “the **Limping Lady**,” she quickly climbed to the top of Germany's most wanted list.

They never did catch her, however. Upon returning home after the war, Hall was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest military decoration in the United States Army. Her work was still not done—she continued to work for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and then later, for its successor, the Central Intelligence Agency—only leaving when she was required to retire at the age of 60. Today, visitors to the Agency will find a field agent training facility named for the “**Limping Lady**” and a special section dedicated to her life and work in the Agency museum—notably, she is one of just five agents and the only woman to receive such an honor.



21 MAY 2026 BARBEQUE MEMBERSHIP MEETING

On Thursday 21 May 2026, the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA held its monthly membership meeting with a barbeque lunch catered by Mission Barbeque in the outdoor pavilion at the American Legion Post # 3 in Salem, Virginia. The meeting opened with an invocation by the Chapter Chaplain LTC David Gilleran, USA (Ret) followed by reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag by all present led by COL Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret). After introductions of guests chapter President LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret) presented the MOAA Chapter Annual Awards for 2025. The awards were: Chapter Level of Excellence Award - 5 Star; Chapter Harris Communication Award - 5 Star for Newsletter and Chapter Harris Communication Award - 5 Star for Website.



Holding the MOAA Chapter Annual Award certificates are (L to R): CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) - Harris Communication 5 Star Award "Website"; COL Thomas Dalzell - Chapter Level of Excellence 5 Star Award and Chapter President LTC Robert Habermann, Harris Communication 5 Star Award "Newsletter".

Chapter President LTC Robert Habermann presenting a MOAA Community Outreach Grant check of \$2,500 to Bill and Sandra McCann of Vittles For Vets. Vittles for Vets is a non-profit 501 C-3 organization that was founded in December 2014 by veterans for veterans. Our primary purpose is to distribute gift cards for nutritious food to qualifying veterans. We also conduct special drives to meet the needs of veterans and their families who have qualified for our program through Virginia veteran services.

The MOAA Levels of Excellence 5 Star, 4 Star and 3 Star awards honor and recognize chapters for their efforts across the full scope of the MOAA mission and do an outstanding job communicating with their members. The Southwest Virginia has consistently earned the 5 Star award in all three categories



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Virginia Council of Chapters President CAPT Mary Lou Wessel, USN (Ret) addressed the assembled chapter members on issues VCOC is working on and the importance to continue to contact both State and National representatives on issues concerning the military and veterans.

Musical entertainment was again provided by Mark Baskind whose versatile background and passion for music continue to delight audiences of all kinds. Marc was raised in the heart of the Mississippi Delta in Greenville and deeply influenced by jazz, blues, and the classics. He began playing ukulele at age 7 and guitar at 11, later majoring in tuba — experiences that sparked a lifelong appreciation for nearly every genre of music.



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The following State Legislators were invited: **STATE SENATOR CHRIS HEAD** - 3rd Senatorial District. Representing Senator head was his Chief of Staff - Ms. Carrie Sheffield. **STATE SENATOR DAVID SUETTERLEIN** - 5th District. **STATE DELEGATE JOSEPH MCNAMARA** - 40th District. **CONGRESSMAN MORGAN GRIFFITH (VA-09)**. Representing Congressman Griffith was his **District Director, Mr. Cody Rush**, Major USAR. **CONGRESSMAN BEN CLINE** - 6th District. **STATE DELEGATE LILY FRANKLIN** - 41st District. **STATE DELEGATE SAM RASOUL** - 38th District. **STATE DELEGATE WILL DAVIS** - 39th District.



State Senator David Suetterlein - 5th District addresses the chapter members present and took questions from the assembly



State Delegate Joseph McNamara - 40th District spoke to the membership. Sitting here with Vittles for Vets Bill and Sandra McCann



Vittles for Vets
Thank You
May 23, 2026

Dear MOAA Committee and Membership,

We are profoundly grateful for your generous donation of \$2500.00 to the Vittles for Vets Charity. The gift of nutritious food is the gift of life itself, and so deserving of our defenders of freedom, many of whom, due to age or illness, have been overlooked. The gift cards purchased with your donation will go a long way in addressing the persistent problem of food insecurity faced by all enrollees in the Vittles for Vets program. We thank you for your empathy, compassion, and generosity in assisting us in our mission. With gratitude, thank you, and God bless.

Bill McCann, Founder/V.P.

Reflections on the American Revolution, 250 Years On

Was the American revolution really the most important event in history since the birth of Christ?

February 23, 2026 "The Globalist"

By Rachel Carnell



With the United States gearing up for the 250th anniversary of its founding revolution this year, historians are marking the moment. Most prominently to date, the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns produced **"The American Revolution,"** a 12-hour series that he hopes will help a polarized United States find common ground. Burns' beautifully crafted television documentary emphasizes the ideas of liberty that drew the disparate 13 colonies together to resist British rule. As Burns explained in a November appearance with Stephen Colbert, for anyone, regardless of their politics, **"understanding the story of us helps to put you back together again."**

The most important event in history since the birth of Christ?

In his conversation with Colbert, Burns leaned into American exceptionalism. He described the American Revolution, in his view, as **"the most important event in history since the birth of Christ . . . the beginning of the time when human beings were no longer subjects but citizens."** While that view is certainly not shared universally around the globe, Burns' motivation is clear: he hopes his work may inspire American citizens to find shared meaning in their history.

Beyond American exceptionalism

However, American exceptionalism is not the only lens through which to view the Revolution of 1776. Several important books published over the last year offer broader historical contexts for the American origin story. In **"Patriots Before Revolution: The Rise of Party Politics in the British Atlantic, 1714-1763,"** University of Alabama historian Amy Watson locates the origins of the American Revolution in the English and Scottish patriot Whig movements. They arose in opposition to excise taxes on the British population proposed by Prime Minister Robert Walpole in the 1730s.

In the footsteps of these British opposition politicians at the time

The American Patriots followed in the footsteps of these British opposition Whigs (known as "Patriots") in their organizing strategies and their deft deployment of the press. Watson reminds us, moreover, that this transatlantic opposition movement was not merely anti-excise but focused on a shared political vision that was **"militant, expansionist, confederal and free."** This movement spoke the language of liberty but was often pro-slavery, pro-war and in favor of Westward expansion into Native American lands.

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The constraints on monarchical power

Stanford historian Dan Edelstein takes an even deeper historical dive in his book titled **“The Revolution to Come: A History of an Idea from Thucydides to Lenin.”** In Edelstein’s view, the American Revolution followed the playbook of 17th-century British revolutions that emphasized the Greek historian Polybius’s belief in “the well-balanced constitution.”

In such a regime, the monarch’s power was held in check by other governmental powers — in the case of England, that of Parliament. The constraints on monarchical power following the English Revolution of the 1640s and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 shaped the American founders’ belief in checks and balances to create “a more perfect Union.” In 1787, the founders created a constitution designed to prevent future **“disunion.”**

Preventing a future “disunion”

A vital feature of the American Constitution is Article V, which allows for amendments that facilitate change. Key amendments enacted in the wake of the American Civil War in the mid-19th century and the Civil Rights movements in the mid-20th century show the power of amendment to promote progress without revolution. But as Harvard historian Jill Lepore points out, **“the constitution has not been meaningfully amended since 1971,”** given the difficulty of achieving the necessary two-thirds majority in Congress and ratification by three-quarters of the fifty states. In **“We the People: A History of the U.S. Constitution,”** she warns: **“A constitution too easily amended leads to chaos. But a constitution too difficult to amend leads to chaos too.”** Lepore wonders **“whether the Constitution can endure”** without the plausible possibility for future amendments.

France’s new conception of revolution

While the Constitutional Convention of 1787 further solidified Americans’ commitment to avoiding disunion, two years later, the French Revolution launched with what Edelstein describes as a new conception of revolution. Rather than being based on the classical playbook described by Polybius, the French Revolution, and subsequent ones around the globe, trusted in the Enlightenment ideal **“that public opinion, when properly guided, would converge on the correct answer.”** This view, however, **“faced a serious test in 1789,”** when different factions of French revolutionaries proposed different forms of government.

Trusting public opinion?

As Edelstein explains, **“These divisions among revolutionaries were doubly problematic. From an Enlightenment perspective, they were unforeseen. Progress was supposed to bring consensus. The only logical explanation, for each group, was that the others were wrong.”** Punishing or executing those with dissenting views became part of modern revolutionary practice, a practice that also often included installing a dictator. As Edelstein explains, **“The modern version of history, when acted upon in a revolution, does not inevitably lead to political terror, but it predisposes revolutionary actors to use it.”** Even as Edelstein explores the revolutionary dictatorships that arose around the globe in the 19th and 20th centuries, he identifies **“the greatest revolutionary threat today”** as the **“phenomenon of democratic backsliding”** where a **“regime shifts seamlessly from democracy to dictatorship.”**

Conclusion

In much the same way that Lepore identifies the threat to democracy in our gradually declining ability to amend the Constitution, Edelstein is concerned about an imperceptible and unnoticed backsliding in any constitutional democracy. **“Our biggest fear,”** he concludes, **“should be that no one even notices the revolution to come.”** The backsliding into dictatorship is something the American founders themselves anticipated. As Ken Burns documents in *The American Revolution*, the founders crafted the delicate system of checks and balances in our Constitution because **“they feared that a demagogue might incite citizens into betraying the American experiment.”** For those of us who value the ideals that the American experiment represented, these lessons from revolutionary history remind us that we must stay vigilant to preserve them.

Takeaways:

- The American Founders believed in checks and balances to create **“a more perfect Union”** and created a constitution designed to prevent future **“disunion.”**
- At a time of a sharply rising level of domestic division, Americans urgently need to find shared meaning in their common history.
- The American origin story needs to be viewed in broader historical contexts, especially transatlantic ones.
- The Founders’ movement spoke the language of liberty, but was often pro-slavery, pro-war and in favor of Westward expansion into Native American lands.

VIRGINIA TECH CORPS OF CADETS MILITARY AWARDS CEREMONY

On Thursday 23 April 2026 Southwest Virginia Chapter members attended the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Academic Year 2025-2026 Military Awards Ceremony. Numerous Service Awards, VPI Awards, Joint Awards, Olmsted Foundation Scholar Awards, University Honors and Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Awards were presented to selected Cadets in front of the entire Corps of Cadets. The Southwest Virginia Chapter was honored to participate in the awarding of the MOAA ROTC Medal Awards and the Southwest Virginia Chapter Leadership Awards.



The Southwest Virginia Chapter Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey Leadership Award was presented to (Center), Senior Navy Cadet Joseph G. Colizzi and the General William B. Rosson Leadership Award was presented to Senior Navy Cadet Grace Woodberry (R) by chapter member CAPT Marty Robertson, USN (Ret), at the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Military Awards Ceremony 23 April 2026.



The Military Officers Association (MOAA) Medal Awards were presented to (L to R), Senior Army Cadet Kai Cerana, Senior Air Force Cadet Andres Ospina, and Senior Navy Cadet Hannah Vincenzo by chapter member CAPT Marty Robertson, USN (Ret), at the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Military Awards Ceremony 23 April 2026.



Southwest Virginia Chapter member Capt. Larry Johnston USA (former) on the left and COL Nate Surrey, Professor of Military Science on the right, presenting to Army Cadet Elizabeth Connerton, the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Allegheny-Blue Ridge Chapter, Leadership and Education Award including a certificate, a medal and a check for \$250.



Southwest Virginia Chapter member Capt. Larry Johnston USA (former) on the right and COL Nate Surrey, Professor of Military Science on the left, presenting the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Allegheny - Blue Ridge Chapter, History Award to Army Cadet Hunter Lostumo. The Award includes a book on military history and check for \$150.

Continued on page 16 "Corps of Cadets Award Ceremony"

Continued from Page 15 “ Corps of Cadets Awards Ceremony”



Southwest Virginia Chapter member and Awards Chair LTC David King, USA (Ret) on the right, presenting the Military Order of World Wars, Roanoke, Virginia Chapter, Senior ROTC gold, silver and bronze medals and certificates.



Major General William H. Seely, III,
Commandant Corps of Cadets

MOAA SWVC JROTC-ROTC-ARCHER-AWARD CEREMONIES 2026



Cadet Private Avery Cole, Oak Ridge Military Academy receiving a copper medal and Certificate of Merit from the Roanoke chapter of the Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW) on 9 May 2026 by LTC Terrence Lewis, USA, (L), the Headmaster, Oak Ridge Military Academy and First Sergeant (1SG) Lonnie Corley, USA, (R), the Senior Army Instructor (SAI), Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program, Bassett High School and a MOWW member.



Chapter members CAPT Marty Robertson, USN (Ret) and LTC David King, USA (Ret) presenting the MOAA JROTC Medal Award and the Chapter Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award, to Cadet Joseph V. Payne of the Bedford, Virginia Susie G. Gibson Science and Technology Center, JROTC Unit on 8 May 2026.



Continued on Page 17 “JROTC Awards”

Continued from Page 16 "JROTC-ARCHER-AWARD CEREMONIES 2026"



On 8 May 2026, MSGT Terry Mills, USAF (Ret) presented the Southwest Virginia Chapter, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award, to Cadet LtCol Caden Irby, at the Patrick Henry High School, AFJROTC program awards ceremony.

On 28 April 2026 at the Dan River High School JROTC Awards Ceremony, Chapter member LTC David King, USA (Ret) presented the Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award to Cadet Major Zane Richardson and the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet 1LT Syniah Purnell.

On 15 May 2026 at the Fishburne Military School, Awards Ceremony, Chapter member COL Robert Brown, USA, (Ret), presented the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet Captain Jack Wildermuth.

On 15 May 2026 at the Gretna High School Awards Ceremony, Command Sergeant Major, USA (Ret), Scott Dooley, President Allegheny- Blue Ridge Chapter Association of the United States Army, presented the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award to Cadet Command Sergeant Major Kevin Parrish and the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet CPL Timothy Hall.

On 30 April 2026 at the Tunstall High School Awards Ceremony, Chapter member LTC David King, USA, (Ret), presented the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award to Cadet LTC Cherish Adkins.

On 21 May 2026, at the Franklin County High School Air Force JROTC program

On 6 May 2026 at the Carroll County High School JROTC Awards ceremony, the JROTC staff presented the Southwest MOAA, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Virginia Chapter of Award, to Cadet Devynn Spangler and the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet Melissa Mize.



The MOAA SWVA Chapter MAJ James Milton Archer, Jr., USA Award is presented to the Distinguished Senior Civil Air Patrol Cadet, Cadet Captain Thomas J Friebe in a ceremony on 15 June 2026 by SMSgt Paul Richardson, USAF (Ret). Besides meeting all the requirements for the award by being in good academic standing, being of high moral character, demonstrating a high order of loyalty to his unit, school, and country and demonstrating superior military leadership, Cadet Friebe is on track for a congressional appointment to either the Air Force or Naval Academy.

On 6 May 2026, at the Bassett High School JROTC program awards ceremony, Chapter member LTC David King, USA (Ret) presented The Southwest Virginia Chapter, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award, to Cadet Capt. Hammah Hall and the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet LTC Hayden Brannon .

On 8 May 2026 Chapter member LTC David King, USA (Ret) presented the Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award, to Cadet Joseph V. Payne of the Bedford High School, Susie G. Gibson Science and Technology Center and the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet McKenzi Crow.

On 8 May 2026 at the Chatham High School JROTC Awards Ceremony, Command Sergeant Major Scott Dooley, USA, (Ret), President of the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Chapter, Association of the United States Army, presented the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award to Cadet Master Sergeant Bella Harris and the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet PFC Kailee-Mae Ingram.

Continued from Page 17“ JROTC-ARCHER-AWARD CEREMONIES 2026”

At the George Washington High School, Navy JROTC awards ceremony, the Navy JROTC Staff presented the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award to Cadet LCDR Ramsey Blewy and the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet LT Mario Cisneros.

At the William Byrd High School, National Defense Cadet Corps (NDCC) awards ceremony the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA, Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award was presented to Cadet LTJG Jaxon Fowler by Senior Chief Shawn Wingle, USN (Ret)

At Magna Vista High School on 7 May 2026

At the Danville, Civil Air Patrol, Composite Squadron

MOAA ROTC/JROTC Awards Program

The MOAA Junior ROTC (JROTC)/ROTC awards program **recognizes** an outstanding cadet or midshipman in his or her next-to-last year in the program who has demonstrated exceptional potential for military leadership (exceptional academic achievement in the case of the Marine Corps JROTC [MCJROTC] program.) The medal cannot be used for any other purpose. All military services officially have approved the medal for presentation..

The **presentation** of an MOAA ROTC/JROTC **medal and certificate** is an excellent way for chapters to gain exposure in their community and, at the same time, foster a positive military recognition among the youth of the community. Accordingly, it is the desire of national MOAA and this chapter that the medals are awarded by a local chapter and school representatives at annual awards ceremonies . The program, however, is entirely voluntary, and no chapter or school is obligated to give awards.



MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY - SW VIRGINIA VETERANS CEMETERY

MEMORIAL DAY, Monday 25 May 2026 was marked with an annual tradition of honor and remembrance at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia where veterans, families, and community members gathered to pay tribute to those who never made it home. The ceremony began promptly at 1100 hours with the chiming of the carillon bell tower and the playing of the ceremonial bag pipes by Andrew Shields Meeks, Bagpiper. The Civil Air Patrol, Roanoke Composition Squadron presented the Colors, the Pulaski County High School Brass Quartet played the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by The SW Virginia Veterans Cemetery Ambassadors. The Southwest Virginia Chapter of the Military Officers Association President, CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) served as Master of Ceremonies.



Despite the threat of rain, the event was well attended with numerous distinguished guests, including; representatives from US Congressman Morgan Griffith's office and Senator Travis Hackworth; VA Delegate Jason Ballard; Mayors of Dublin, Pearisburg and Wytheville. Volunteers placed American flags at each gravesite, honoring service members from the Revolutionary War to the present day. Major General William Seely delivered the keynote address, reflecting on the sacrifice of those he knew personally.

"We must protect what they protect, we must preserve what they defended. We can never be so distracted or too comfortable that we forget what others did and gave for us," said Maj. Gen. William H. Seely, U.S. Navy (ret.), Commandant, Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. *"They were classmates at school, two of them were ushers at my own wedding, many years ago. Several of them I mentioned were marines that served under my command when I was a battalion commander,"* said Seely.

22 wreaths were presented during the ceremony, each symbolizing gratitude and remembrance, and acknowledging the 22 military veterans who take their own lives each day in the U.S. *"We place these wreaths as a symbol for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defending the freedom of this country,"* said Captain Gary Powers (ret.), United States Navy with 35 years of service..



Continued from Page 18 “Memorial Day 2026”

Speakers encouraged those in attendance to reflect not only on the cost of freedom, but on the responsibility to honor it every day. *“The fallen do not ask us to live in sorrow alone, they ask us to live with purpose, to be worthy citizens again. Worthy leaders, worthy Americans. To build and maintain strong families, strong communities, and a strong nation,”* said Seely. Following Gen. Seeley’s remarks, a moment of silence honored Gold Star Families. He then led the procession and placing of ceremonial red, white and blue wreaths with the visiting dignitaries following. Wreaths representing the 6 branches of the military were also placed. A 21 gun rifle salute was presented by the American Legion Post 29 followed by the playing of taps. Bag piper, Andrew Shields Meeks closed the ceremony with ‘**Amazing Grace**’.



Maj. Gen. William Seely served 36 years in the United States Marine Corps, leading at every level from platoon commander to senior strategic leadership positions across intelligence, reconnaissance, communications, and joint operations. His commands included 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, the Marine Corps Intelligence Schools, “Task Force-Iraq” during Operation Inherent Resolve, the Joint Forces Staff College, and most recently the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. Throughout his career, he deployed extensively across the Middle East, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific in support of combat, intelligence, humanitarian assistance, and crisis response operations, including six combat tours in Iraq during the Global War on Terrorism. He later served in several of the Marine Corps’ most senior intelligence and information leadership positions, including Director of Intelligence, Director of Strategic Communications, and Director of Information Intelligence. Maj. Gen. Seely holds degrees from American University, Oklahoma State University, the National Intelligence University, and the Naval War College, along with executive education certificates from institutions including MIT, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and UNC-Chapel Hill.

Today, he continues his commitment to leadership and service as the Commandant of Cadets at Virginia Tech.

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY - ROANOKE

On Monday 25 May 2026 the City of Roanoke in partnership with the Roanoke Valley Veterans Council, conducted a Memorial Day Ceremony at 11:30 AM at the Roanoke War Memorial in Freedom Plaza, Roanoke, Virginia. Due to inclement weather the ceremony was moved into the sanctuary of Green Memorial Methodist Church. Several Southwest Virginia Chapter members were in attendance. The Honorable William D. Bestpitch was the Master of Ceremonies and welcomed all present and recognized local dignitaries including Roanoke Mayor Joseph L. Cobb, and Virginia State Senator, District 19, Senator David Suetterlein. The National Anthem was sung by Mayor Joseph L. Cobb. The invocation was given by the Reverend Morris Bennett, Andrew Chapel UMC. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Sheriff Antonio Hash. The opening speaker was Mayor Joseph L. Cobb who then introduced the Keynote Speaker the Honorable David Radford. After the formal ceremony the Memorial Wreaths were placed outside at the WW 1 and Vietnam War Wall of Honor by The Honorable Joseph L. Cobb, the Honorable David Radford, Mr. Keith Young, and Mr. Dennis Giles. Taps were performed by Mr. Richard Carr and the Raising of the Flag was done by The Honorable William D. Bestpitch.



Memorial Day Ceremony

Monday, May 25, 2026 at 11:30 AM
Greene Memorial United Methodist Church

Welcome	The Honorable William D. Bestpitch
Invocation	Reverend Morris Bennett
Presentation of Colors	Roanoke Valley Regional Honor Guard
National Anthem	The Honorable Mayor Joseph L. Cobb
Pledge of Allegiance	Sheriff Antonio Hash
Opening Speaker	The Honorable Mayor Joseph L. Cobb
Keynote Speaker	The Honorable David Radford
Benediction	Reverend Morris Bennett
Laying of the Wreath	The Honorable Mayor Joseph L. Cobb, The Honorable David Radford, Keith Young, and Dennis Giles
Taps	Richard Carr
Raising of the Flag	The Honorable William D. Bestpitch

In partnership with the Roanoke Valley Veterans Council



Continued from Page 20 "Memorial Day Roanoke"

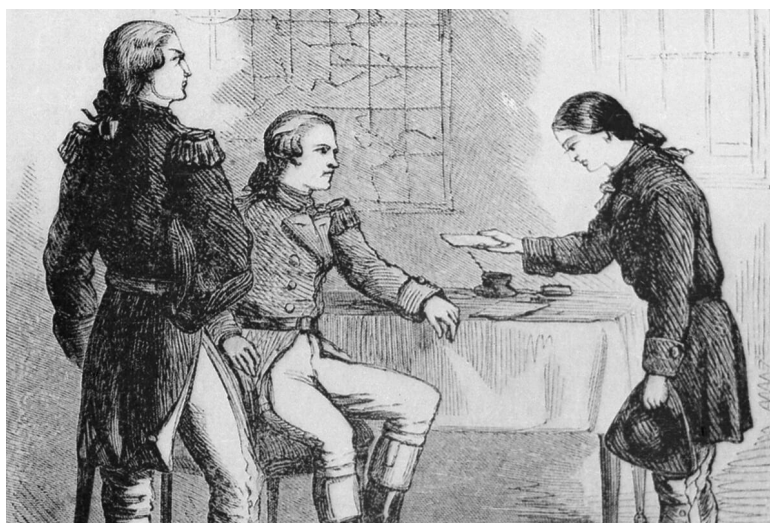


7 THINGS YOU FORGOT HAPPENED DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

AUTHOR - NICOLE VILLENEUVE, 20 MAY 2026 - HISTORY FACTS



During the American Revolution, 13 British colonies in North America fought for independence from English rule in what became one of the most defining conflicts in history. Certain moments from the Revolutionary War — which spanned from 1775 to 1783 — have certainly been etched into popular memory. But it was a long, complex conflict, and for every renowned tale such as the Boston Tea Party or Washington crossing the Delaware, there are lesser-known events that don't always make it into textbooks. Here are some of the most fascinating but often overlooked events that unfolded during America's fight for independence.



A Woman Disguised Herself as a Man To Fight

Women weren't permitted to serve in the military during the Revolutionary War, but they were nonetheless instrumental throughout the conflict — whether they were sewing uniforms, tending to the wounded, or even acting as spies. Some, such as Massachusetts weaver and school teacher Deborah Sampson, took an even more direct approach. In 1782, Sampson disguised herself as a man and joined the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment under the name Robert Shurtliff. She served in the Continental Army for more than a year, fighting in several battles and even tending to her own wounds — including removing a bullet from her leg. (Another bullet, too difficult to remove, remained in her leg for the rest of her life.) After serving for a year and a half, she fell ill while in Philadelphia in 1783. She was taken to a hospital, where a high fever caused her to lose consciousness, ultimately leading to the discovery of her true identity.

Continued on Page 23 “Forgotten Facts”

Continued from Page 22 **“Forgotten Facts”**

Sampson was honorably discharged in 1783, and, after starting a family, petitioned for back pay and a disability pension for injuries sustained on the battlefield.



Smallpox Almost Derailed the War

Gunfire and bayonets weren't the only threats during the Revolutionary War — smallpox also loomed large. The highly contagious disease had been an epidemic in the colonies at several times throughout the 1700s, and at the outset of the Revolutionary War in 1775, a particularly grim outbreak was taking place in Boston. General George Washington knew the risks well: Having survived a monthlong battle with the virus as a teenager, he warned that smallpox could be **“more destructive than the sword,”** and in 1777, made the bold decision to order mass inoculations for his Continental Army. The procedure involved making a small incision in the arm and inserting a dose of the virus. Though it was controversial at the time, it paid off, reducing death rates and helping keep Washington's army in fighting shape.

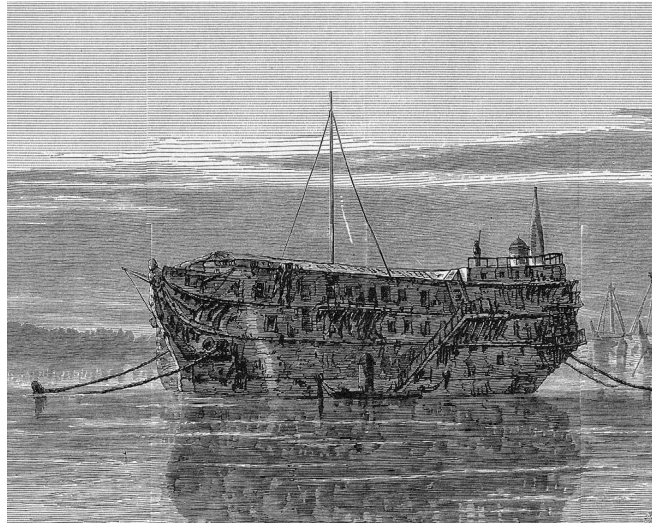


An Amateur Spy Ring Helped Win the War

Winning a war against the mighty British military required more than just soldiers — it also took sleuthing and secrets. From 1778 to 1783, the Culper Spy Ring, led by Continental Army Officer Benjamin Tallmadge, relied on informants who were not professional agents but ordinary citizens — shopkeepers, farmers, and merchants — to gather intelligence from British sources in English-occupied New York. Through code names, cipher messages, invisible ink, and even laundry strategically placed on clotheslines, the Culper Ring provided crucial intelligence to General Washington, including a key report in 1780 that saved French troops in Newport, Rhode Island, from a British attack. Despite the constant danger, none of the Culper Ring's agents were ever discovered by the British, and their underground work helped win the war not with weapons, but with whispers.

Continued on Page 22 **“Forgotten Facts”**

Continued from Page 23 “Forgotten Facts”



British Prison Ships Held Unsung Heroes

While the conflict raged on land, thousands of American soldiers and even civilians faced a different kind of horror during the war: British prison ships. Stationed along the Eastern Seaboard, these makeshift jails were overcrowded, disease-ridden, and notoriously brutal, and could be just as deadly as the battles themselves. The most infamous was the HMS Jersey; it housed as many as 1,000 prisoners at a time, most of whom suffered from starvation and rampant disease. Captured Americans were given a choice: Switch sides and fight for the British or face the harsh reality of imprisonment on the ship. Many refused to switch sides — historians estimate that only about 8% of prisoners joined the Brits — and instead endured unimaginable conditions. It’s estimated that around 11,000 people died on the ships because they chose not to betray the cause.



George Washington’s Security Helped Plot His Assassination

In 1776, as Washington and his troops prepared for battle in New York, a plot on his life by the Loyalists — American colonists who remained loyal to the British crown — was uncovered. The conspiracy involved members of his own Life Guard, an elite security detail, and was allegedly orchestrated by New York’s Loyalist governor, William Tryon. But the plot was exposed before it could happen: One of the conspirators, Washington’s security guard Thomas Hickey, had been jailed for suspected money counterfeiting and leaked the details to fellow inmates while behind bars. Ironically, Washington himself wasn’t above similar schemes — he later approved a plan to kidnap Prince William, the son of King George III, as leverage for prisoner exchanges. (The prince remained out of reach and the kidnapping plan fell through.) Hickey, though he pleaded innocent, was found guilty for his role in the plot to assassinate Washington and was executed for treason.

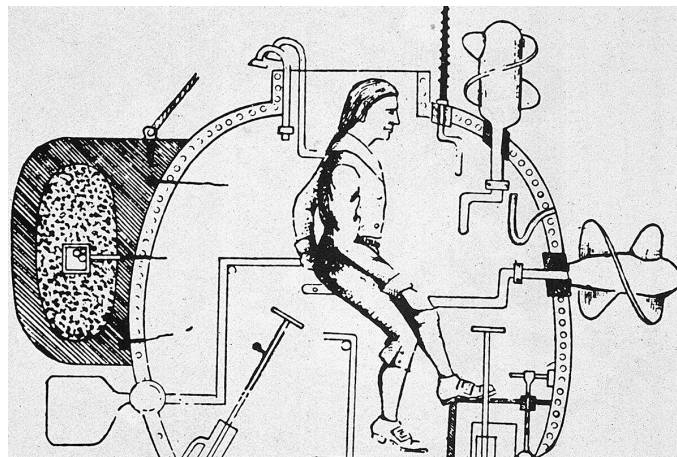
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America Hired Pirates

The Continental Navy was no match for Britain’s powerful 18th-century fleet, so the colonies turned to a different maritime strategy during the Revolutionary War: privateering. Privateers were ships owned and manned by private citizens, hired by the government to attack and capture British vessels. It’s estimated that nearly 800 vessels — ranging from whaling boats to schooners and brigantines — were commissioned during the war. These legal pirates not only disrupted British shipping and supply lines but also took valuable cargo; whatever was seized was usually sold and profits were split with the privateers, while the rest was used to help fund the new nation. Privateers weren’t universally accepted — some colonists saw them as money-hungry opportunists — but they ultimately played a critical role in weakening the Brits. By the war’s end, American privateers had captured or destroyed an estimated 600 British ships.



The First Submarine Attack Happened

Submarines are a common part of naval fleets around the world today, and the first one ever used in combat debuted during the American Revolution. The Turtle, as it was known, was designed by American inventor David Bushnell. The single-passenger, hand-cranked submersible consisted of two shell-shaped wooden halves that were fastened together with iron bands and covered in a thick waterproof coating. It was built to maneuver under and attach explosives to enemy ships, and on September 6, 1776, the Turtle set out on its first mission. Deployed to target the British warship HMS Eagle in New York Harbor, the Turtle did successfully make its way under the massive ship, but was ultimately unable to secure the explosive. Though rudimentary by today’s standards and never able to successfully sink an enemy vessel, the Turtle was dubbed “an effort of genius” by Washington

MOAA SWVA CHAPTER GOLF CART PROJECT “ON PAR”

The MOAA SW Virginia Chapter has remained supportive of the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia for over 15 years. As utilization of the cemetery grew, the need for shuttling families, visitors and veterans, especially handicapped, around the cemetery became obvious. Some 10 years ago, our Chapter stepped in and raised money to purchase a 4-place electric cart to meet this need.

As the cemetery has continued to grow, the demand for shuttle capacity has also increased. Once again, our chapter is ready to step in and address the need for another golf cart with additional seating capacity.

The MOAA SW Virginia Chapter has initiated a project to raise funds to purchase a 6-place cart. The cart that we have selected from a dealer in Richmond is a 2021 Club Car President Gas Golf Cart. The dealer has lowered the price by \$1000 for us to \$9,995 and has generously included shipping and set-up to the SW VA Cemetery in Dublin as well as providing a limited warranty. We have already secured the purchase with a deposit.

Now the important piece, your support! We are asking all chapter members to generously support this project by making a donation to the chapter in our continuing dedication to the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery. Only through your generosity can we make this another success.

To date, we have raised \$6,350 with just a short ways yet to go. So if you haven't already, think about making a donation to this worthy project. If you have visited the cemetery in Dublin, you can attest to it's size and how important these carts are to the physically challenged.

Please send your check to MOAA Southwest Virginia Chapter, PO Box 3090, Roanoke, Virginia, 24015-1090. Please mark for MOAA Mobile.

A formal dedication event will be announced when the cart is delivered to the cemetery. Thank you for supporting this worthwhile project.



MOAA Charities

Chapter members are encouraged to consider the following MOAA Charities in your planned giving.

- Support MOAA Charities by shopping with Amazon Smile
- Consider a bequest to The MOAA Foundation
- Consider a bequest to the MOAA Scholarship Fund
- Contributing cash and securities to MOAA Charities
- Setting up a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)
- Establishing a Designated Scholarship
- How Charitable Gift Annuities (CGAs) can provide income for life

DO YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA undertakes annual MOAA Medal awards presented to distinguished JROTC Cadets/Midshipmen in 14 area high schools and the four ROTC Cadets/Midshipmen at Virginia Tech and Radford University? Did you know that these awards recognize the recipient's academic, community service and leadership qualities that demonstrate exceptional potential for leadership while a member of their respective JROTC/ ROTC Programs? These JROTC/ ROTC awards consist of a MOAA Medal Award and an appropriate Award Certificate. The chapter bears the cost of the MOAA Medal Awards, presentation folders and mailing costs.

Did you also know that the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA has established two Leadership Awards presented to ROTC Cadets/Midshipmen at Virginia Tech and Radford University during each academic year? Recipients are to be juniors or who will be starting their final year in the coming fall of the academic year. The Leadership Awards were established to recognize the recipient's academic, community service and leadership qualities that demonstrate exceptional potential for military leadership while a member of the Virginia Tech and Radford University ROTC Programs. The two Leadership Awards each carry a \$500 monetary award and an appropriate Award Certificate. The chapter bears the cost of the two Leadership Awards, presentation folders and the two \$500 monetary awards.

The South West Virginia Chapter of MOAA was a strong supporter of the Military Family Support Center. However, the Military Family Support Center has gone out of operation. The Southwest Virginia Chapter looked into new options to restart the mission to identify and provide for the morale, welfare, and informational needs of military families (of all branches and components) who reside outside of the established support networks. During 2024 the chapter signed a partnership agreement with VFF to be able to provide food assistance in the form of credit cards to needy military families. In 2024 and 2025 the SWVC received a \$2,000 grant from MOAA and \$250 in personal donations to support the VFF program.

The South West Virginia Chapter of MOAA also supports the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia each year providing a MOAA Mobile Vehicle and with the Christmas Wreath Laying Program providing and placing wreaths on veterans' grave sites. The Chapter funded and dedicated a "Memorial Bench" at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia in honor of LTC James "Pat" Green, USA (Ret) who was the person most responsible for getting the cemetery located at Dublin, Virginia.

These programs are extremely important for the SWVC to continue as the community face of the Military Officers Association of America, to be an advocate for a strong national defense, to be an influential provider and supporter of programs, benefits and services for our military community, and to be a source of social fellowship for our members. The chapter has no regular financial stream except for chapter dues or donations. During the coming year we will be asking for your personal and financial support of our outreach programs and our monthly membership meetings.



Chapter Website Up and Running

The Southwest Virginia Chapter website is now up and running. To access the site go to

moaaswva.org. The website is one of the primary means to keep in touch with the current membership, connect with potential members and keep members advised on current issues of importance to the active duty, retired and former military, their spouse

WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON AT MOAA?

- Legislative Accomplishments?
- Legislative TAKE ACTION Center?
- Publications and Reports?
- Military Officer Magazine?
- Newsletters?

Log on to MOAA.org

MOAA Southwest Virginia Chapter

P.O. Box 3090

Roanoke, VA 24015-1090

Email: info@moaaswva.org

Webpage: www.moaaswva.org

Facebook: MOAA SWVA

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the Southwest Virginia Chapter (SWVC) of MOAA are a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, Public Health Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and their surviving spouses.

UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

A REMINDER THAT A GREAT LUNCH IS PROVIDED AT EACH MEMBERSHIP MEETING

17 September 2026. Board of Directors meeting. A program by Mr. Jeff Vick, professor of Political Science at Roanoke College, on **Kazimierz Pułaski**, considered the father of American cavalry, or on **Our Foreign Founding Fathers**, discusses Pułaski, von Steuben, Kosciuszko, and others.

15 October 2026. No Board meeting. A program by Mr. Al McLean, an attorney in Roanoke, on the **Skirmish at Pearisburg**, a small 1862 Civil War battle fought in Southwest Virginia in Giles County.

19 November 2026. Board of Directors meeting. A program by Mr. Patrick Henry Jolly (a direct descendant of Patrick Henry and researcher) on **Patrick Henry**. He appears in costume.

17 December 2026, Board of Directors meeting. A program by **Mr. John Long** on "The Underappreciated Virginia Declaration of Rights."

MOAA'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 119TH CONGRESS

MOAA's Legislative Priorities. As the legislative slate resets for the second session of the 119th Congress, MOAA member engagement will become even more vital to achieving our advocacy objectives. Learn more about our top MOAA legislative priorities and how you can support MOAA's work to pass key legislation, below. Note: This is not an all-encompassing list of MOAA's legislative efforts. For more, visit our **Legislative Action Center**.

- **Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3168)**
- **Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act (H.R. 6231 | S. 3265)**
- **Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act (H.R. 1732)**
- **Military CARE Act (H.R. 6796)**
- **Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act (H.R. 2148 | S. 879)**

VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS/JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL 2026 INITIATIVES **(Adopted at the September and December 2025 JLC meetings)**

- **JLC Initiative 2026-01 Secure the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-02 Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-03 Veteran Suicide Death Information Access**
- **JLC 2026-04 Veteran Textbook Support Grant**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-05 Exempt Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) from Limits on Use of Proceeds from Charitable Gaming**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-06 Inclusion of USPHS and NOAA in Income Tax Subtraction**

A summary of the approved 2026 JLC Initiatives Policy papers for each initiative can be accessed on the JLC webpage at: <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations-2>





CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

as of **30 JUNE 2026**

Regular Members 73
Surviving Spouses 1
Total Members 74
Talk to a fellow officer about joining the Southwest Virginia



JOIN THE CHAPTER

Looking to join the Southwest Virginia Chapter? Want more information on how to join and become involved? Check us out on the chapter website at **moaaswva.org** or on face book at **moaaswva** then Contact COL Bob Brown, USA (Ret), Chapter Membership Chair at (540) 904-2810

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER - ENROLLMENT/RENEWAL FORM

Name (First ,Middle, Last, Rank) _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Email Address _____
Branch of Service _____ Retired _____ Active Duty _____ NG _____ Former Officer _____
Date of Birth _____ Spouse Name _____ MOAA Membership ID No. _____

Annual Chapter Dues are \$30.00. Widows (ers) dues are \$15.00. Dues for those entering MOAA between 1 July and 31 December are \$20.00. Please mail dues payment to: **MOAA, Southwest Virginia Chapter, P.O. Box 3090, Roanoke, VA 24015-1090**

Note: The Chapter Newsletter *The Communique* is published quarterly and sent to the membership by email. Printed copies will be provided upon request. The next issue will be published at the end of SEPT 2026.



- Presidents Corner
- Proclaiming Liberty: The Story Behind the Declaration of Independence
- Franklin: The Almost 14th State
- The First Female U.S. President
- The Woman Who Helped Win World War II
- Reflections on the American Revolution, 250 Years On
- 7 Things You Forgot Happened During the Revolutionary War

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Bring a fellow officer and their spouse to our next meeting.

NEVER STOP SERVING

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