

## Speech at Culpeper Courthouse July 3, 2010. by Mike Lyman, VA OFPA Governor

In the 1760s there was a large change in attitude regarding liberty and independence by the Virginia populace from the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown 403 years ago, and a second settlement 400 years ago this year at Hampton. The offspring of these initial Founders, six or so generations later in the 1760's would be great or great, great grandchildren. Most of these later generations, having never been in England would have less loyalty to the Crown than their forefathers. But there are other reasons for the change in attitude that I will explain.

Initially persons coming in from Great Britain were men of influence called landed gentry. The gentry were given land grants and patents by the British government. For example, Lord Fairfax and Lord Culpeper had land grants of large areas in Virginia. Many of the initial immigrants brought with them indentured servants, who after serving their time received land. The transporters of this influx of people received land as well. Many people came because of religious reasons, so that they could practice their faith here, what they were not allowed to practice under the King of England.

By 1634, there were eight shires or counties in Virginia which were all in the tidewater area near Hampton Roads except for Accomack County on the eastern shore. The settlements were along the six rivers emptying into the Chesapeake Bay, the Elizabeth, the James, the York, the Mattaponi, the Rappahannock and of course the Potomac River leading up to Northern Virginia. Each of the original eight shires or counties in 1634 expanded and broke off into other counties. Culpeper County for example first came from York County, then into Gloucester, into Lancaster, into Old Rappahannock, into Essex, Spotsylvania, Orange and finally Culpeper was formed in 1749. By 1772 sixty seven counties had formed. Each of these counties had councilors which were representatives to the House of Burgesses selected by the Virginia governor, and approved and ratified by the British government. Also for each of these counties, Court Justices were appointed by the Virginia Royal Governor. The parishes of Virginia expanded along with the counties. Virginia had expanded by its charter, all the way to the Mississippi River and to the Great Lakes by the early 1770s.

It was in the mid-1750s, that the French and Indian War took place for a prolonged seven years. Many of the men that fought this war from Virginia, were led by men of their own county or region and they got the feeling that they were American soldiers rather than British forces. Yes, it was the mother country's war but Americans were fighting it for them.

But the final attitude change came in 1765. The British Parliament, in order to find a way to pay for the French and Indian War decided in March of 1765 that it was going to charge a stamp tax on all documents and imports coming into America. It had an implementation date of November 1, 1765.

This of course was not well received by Americans as the British Constitution indicated in principle that British subjects were not liable to any taxes, except those by their own consent or voted for by their appointed representatives. In May of 1765, the House of Burgesses met at Williamsburg and was represented by sixteen Court Justices from Culpeper County. It was during this session that Patrick Henry from Louisa County presented a resolution indicating that only the VA Legislature had the right to lay taxes on Virginians. This was considered treason by many and was not passed and it was removed from the record. However, it was published in some Northern newspapers. The Virginia Gazette did not publish it as it was real close to the royal government there in Williamsburg. The Resolution by Patrick Henry had the effect of increased resistance to Great Britain in all the colonies. You should note that this was ten years before Patrick Henry gave his renowned "Give me Liberty or Death" speech.

After the last session of the legislature in this year 1765, these sixteen representatives met and decided to resign as they felt that they could not enforce the law. They provided the reasons for their resignation to the Culpeper County court on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1765 and the court in turn sent by message their resignation to the Virginia governor. In several other counties in Virginia, especially Westmoreland County, Justices that were required to enforce the law resigned as well. Lieutenant Governor Fauquier forwarded this information to the British Lords in England. Having received similar resentment and resistance from the other colonies, in March 1766, the British Parliament repealed the Stamp Act.

But it was too late, as the discussion and uprising about the Act inflamed the populace throughout Virginia and in the other colonies. This change of attitude about Great Britain had a dramatic effect and was significant for what was to follow in the next ten years in the want of liberty and independence.

This County then played an important role in influencing the Virginia Colony's opinion about independence from the mother country and the need for representation before taxation. The document showing the reasons for the resignations of Culpeper's sixteen Court justices is in the Culpeper court records here at the Courthouse in the Order book of March 21, 1765. It has been pretty well forgotten but I feel it needed remembering on this Independence Day.

At this time I turn you over to Mister Lacey, who will describe what happened in the next ten years between 1766 and 1776.