

ABSTRACT

JEWETT, AMANDA AVERELL. Aristocratic Gentlemanliness and Revolutionary Masculinities among Virginia's Delegation to the Continental Congress, 1774-1776. (Under the direction of Dr. Craig Thompson Friend).

There was never one type of manhood practiced in Virginia during from 1774 to 1776. Instead, different masculinities blended and overlapped to reflect changes in culture and society. While elements such as public validation and an honorable reputation persevered across gender constructions, they meant different things to different men in the early years of revolution.

The American Revolution unleashed democratic, military, regional, and intellectual impulses that gave impetus to forms of manhood that helped to erode aristocratic gentlemanliness. Militant, intellectual, and southern men absorbed some ideals of aristocratic gentlemanliness like honor and public virtue, while abandoning others including submission and restraint. The Revolution and meetings with other men in the Continental Congress contributed to the dismissal of these principles as Virginians responded to changes in their political and social roles on a larger stage.

Ultimately, the need for public approval ties all of these Virginians together. Validation of one's gender and class from outside observers, be it fellow Virginian planters or delegates from other colonies, is the most permanent aspect of masculinity during these years. While other types of manhood—military, Enlightenment, and southern—broke from or changed several traits of aristocratic gentlemanliness, the requirement of public confirmation for status endured.

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Aristocratic Gentlemanliness and Revolutionary Masculinities among Virginia's Delegation
to the Continental Congress, 1774-1776

by
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my father, my sister, and my partner. My father, Keith Jewett, instilled me with a love of history from a very young age, and I am proud to say that I also inherited his wonderful sense of humor. Emma Jewett, my amazing sister, is a constant source of love and inspiration for me and she fills each day with incredible joy. My loving partner, Scott Zekanis, has shown me endless patience and support throughout my time in the graduate program. Without the encouragement of these caring individuals, this project may not have succeeded.

BIOGRAPHY

Amanda Averell Jewett lives in Garner, North Carolina with her partner, Scott Zekanis, and her sister, Emma Jewett. Amanda is expecting her first child in October of 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1775, Peyton Randolph traveled to Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress concerned for his colony's welfare. Having just learned of the events in Lexington and Concord, many feared a repeat of that violence in Williamsburg after royal governor Lord Dunmore seized all the gunpowder from the magazine. Randolph had calmed mobs in both Williamsburg and Fredericksburg shortly before departing for Congress. As a trusted patriarch of Virginia, he likely dreaded leaving his colony in such a tumultuous state.¹

On his journey, Randolph carried with him ideas of manhood and gentlemanliness that some of his fellow Virginians shared. To Randolph, the mob represented ungentlemanly behavior, and with refined patriarchs like him away in Congress, the general citizenry might not be as well controlled. As an aristocratic gentleman, Randolph glorified restraint and self-control as markers of truly gentlemanly behavior, but the threat of mob violence and a refusal to submit to royal authority shared by some of Randolph's fellow delegates evinced changes in masculinity as the older form of colonial, aristocratic gentlemanliness began to collapse.

How did different men practice masculinity in Virginia from 1774 to 1776? Traditionally, historians have used Virginia's George Washington as the epitome of manhood. Scholars' descriptions of Washington make him larger than life with an "arresting figure" whose authoritative demeanor "inspired confidence in congressmen."² Moreover, historians have traditionally described Washington as a veritable renaissance man citing his life as a landholder, his military experience, and his gentlemanly manner as evidence of what

¹ John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988) 1, 3-4.

² Burke Davis, *George Washington and the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1975), 8, 9.

made one a man in the eighteenth century. For these scholars, masculinity was implied and, moreover, it was uniform. In reality however, different masculinities blend and overlap over time. Washington in fact stood transitionally between a construction of manhood—aristocratic gentlemanliness—which he performed in his role as a planter gentleman, and military manhood, formed by his glorified experiences in combat. Scholars have largely failed to understand the subtleties and intricacies within masculinity, and only through widening the view of Virginia to include other figures can historians hope to understand how different ideas of manhood were performed and transformed between 1774 and 1776.³

Daniel Blake Smith's *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* captures plantation life at the family level, the smallest unit controlled by Virginian patriarchs. Published in 1980, Smith discusses aristocratic gentlemanliness as a path exclusively offered through authoritative planter family life. His research into the family dynamics of the Chesapeake gives great insight into how parents raised their children in aristocratic practices to perpetuate Virginia's planter class and their power. Particularly, Smith's chapter entitled, "Fathers and Sons: The Meaning of Deference and Duty in the Family" illustrates how education reinforced proper gender behavior and was essential to a young gentleman's upbringing. However, his assertion that aristocratic gentlemanliness could only be attained through familial means can be directly disproven when examining the life of Virginian Edmund Pendleton. Pendleton was not born to an elite home, but through a law apprenticeship, he learned society's prized qualities of

³ Nathaniel Wright Stephenson and Waldo Hilary Dunn, *George Washington, 1732-1777*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 1:53.

gentlemanliness and practiced them without genealogical influence. By doing so, he became one of Virginia's patriarchs on par with gentlemen like Richard Henry Lee who inherited his genteel status from his ancestors.⁴

Jan Lewis expanded on Smith's use of patriarchy to contextualize planter family life in her *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia*. Patriarchy flourished at both the familial and colonial levels as eighteenth-century men desperately tried to implement their values of "moderation, restraint, [and] independence" both within and outside the plantation house.⁵ Part of being an aristocratic gentleman was controlling others along with oneself. An orderly man and his household marked a patriarch as ready to lead on a larger level. Lewis's work builds on Smith's to expose the more public requirements of patriarchy and gentlemanliness. Lazy or unsuccessful sons did not gain the same station as their fathers, and because sons of wealthy planters were not self-made, they needed to develop their own careers outside the home to ascend the social ranks and cement themselves as patriarchs.⁶

While less interested in Virginia, Anthony Rotundo's *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* explores aristocratic gentlemanliness among other masculine practices along the entire Atlantic Coast in the early to mid-eighteenth century. Aristocratic gentlemanliness became a template of manhood used

⁴ Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 21; David John Mays, *Edmund Pendleton: A Biography, 1721-1803*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 1: 9, 13; and "Order of Apprenticeship" March 14, 1735 in *The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendleton, 1734-1803*, comp. and ed. David John Mays, 2 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 1:4.

⁵ Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 113, 120.

by elite men in both Europe and the colonies. Rotundo dedicates much attention to the public persona: an aristocratic gentleman was “pleasant, mild-mannered, and devoted to the good of the community. He performed his duties faithfully, governed his passions rationally, submitted to his fate and to his place in society, and treated his dependents with firm but affectionate wisdom.”⁷ Peyton Randolph was such a man, and although the Revolution unleashed new forms of manhood in America, many of his fellow Virginians remained influenced by these ideals.

More recently, Kathleen M. Brown’s *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* explored marriage, dress, home, travel, and leisure as stages on which gentlemen performed their gender and expressed their dominance over home and society. Male gentility legitimized political authority. Moreover, Brown argues that anxiety over control of wives, children, and slaves shaped men’s performance of gender.⁸

At the heart of manliness—both aristocratic gentlemanliness and the “American” versions of manhood to come—lay virtue. Jessica Choppin Roney’s “‘Effective Men’ and Early Volunteer Associations in Philadelphia, 1725-1775” explains virtue through the lens of volunteer associations such as firefighting groups. She argues that when fighting fires, men simultaneously displayed “their virtue in putting the needs of others before their own,” and public virtue embedded in self-sacrifice for communal welfare “undergirded the entire

⁷ Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 13-14.

⁸ Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1.

community.”⁹ Indeed, virtue was an essential aspect of patriarchy and gentlemanliness. In order to rise to power in Virginia, men had to publicly display their willingness to sacrifice personal interests for the sake of their community. Practicing virtue secured jobs as vestrymen, justices, and in time, delegates to the Continental Congress. Gentlemanliness had to be validated by the public, and virtuous displays insured acceptance of one’s elite status by fellow gentry.

Aristocratic gentlemanliness began to collapse as the dominant construction of manhood in 1775 as the patriarchal imperial structure came under attack by its colonial dependents. While certain aspects of it remained and were appropriated in different masculinities, aristocratic gentlemanliness and those who practiced it ceased to model the best path to elite manhood. Largely in response to military and political conflict with Great Britain, restraint—an extremely prized aspect of aristocratic gentlemanliness—became a marker of effeminacy and weakness: those who resisted royal authority were seen as more masculine. Increasing provocations by Lord Dunmore and militant actions taken in Congress in 1775 illustrate the increasing irrelevance of men who believed in restraint. Men like Patrick Henry who spoke out against royal authority were hailed as the new heroes.

Throughout the colonial era, another form of manhood existed in tension with aristocratic gentlemanliness. Backcountry manhood manifested in men like Patrick Henry, who lived closer to Virginia’s frontier. Unfortunately, little scholarship has been done on backcountry manhood. David Hackett Fischer’s *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in*

⁹ Jessica Choppin Roney, “‘Effective Men’ and Early Volunteer Associations in Philadelphia, 1725-1775,” in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: University Press, 2011), 159.

America stresses the atmosphere of frontier life and its role in backcountry gender constructions. The ever-present fear of attacks by Native Americans created a tense atmosphere more accepting of men as warriors. Male dominance became far more acute, leading to “extremely sharp distinctions between masculine and feminine roles” and “intense expressions of love and violence between wives and husbands.”¹⁰ Fischer’s discussion of this incredibly violent, tense, and masculine environment shows how backcountry men were often more outspoken and less refined than aristocratic gentlemen. His insistence that violence shaped gender roles in the backcountry is not counterfactual, but much like Smith’s argument, the case studies of Congressional delegates expose exceptions. Patrick Henry’s backcountry upbringing most definitely contributes to his outspoken and less refined behavior, but there is no evidence to suggest that Patrick Henry was a violent man, particularly toward his wife.¹¹

For many backcountry men, manhood manifested itself militarily, and so a virtuous military man like George Washington provided a more appealing model than an aristocratic gentleman like Randolph. In her “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America,” Ruth Bloch also discusses the centrality of virtue in the transition from aristocratic gentlemanliness to military manhood. As armed conflict arose with Great Britain, military enlistment and physical resistance to British authority became heroic, signaling a shift in definitions of manhood. Courage, glory, and fame became popular markers of masculinity and submission to royal authority disappeared as a characteristic of elite manhood. John

¹⁰ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 679.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 676.

Gilbert McCurdy's "Gentlemen and Soldiers: Competing Visions of Manhood in Early Jamestown" explains further how enlistment in the military became a way for non-elites to engage in public virtue and gain honorable reputations. Both Bloch and McCurdy illustrate the importance of the battlefield as a stage to display gender. While the French and Indian War had allowed non-elites and elites to display their military manhood alongside British soldiers, the War for American Independence became a stage for colonists to perform masculinity in competition with the British. Consequently, the performance of military manhood situated men like George Washington to gain impeccable reputations as honorable gentlemen in the wake of their military service.¹²

Men who wanted to resist royal authority through intellect and reason instead of armed violence practiced a more "enlightened" manhood. A significant and pioneering work on eighteenth-century Enlightenment masculinity is Jay Fliegelman's *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800*. Fliegelman argues that the American Revolution became "the most important expression" of a broader cultural revolution against patriarchy in the second half of the eighteenth century. Fliegelman focused on Lockean theory and its impact on a generation of colonial men to explain the impact of the Enlightenment on gender constructions, but his deep focus on family dynamics underscores generational differences as a marker of those who accepted Locke and those who did not. His emphasis on Locke's use in children's education paints the Enlightenment as something picked up solely by sons and not fathers. However, Thomas Jefferson was not

¹² Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs* 13, no. 1(1987): 44; John Gilbert McCurdy, "Gentlemen and Soldiers: Competing Visions of Manhood in Early Jamestown," in Foster, ed., *New Men*, 13.

much younger than other Congressmen and several men including delegates from other colonies were stout followers of the Enlightenment. Thus, while Enlightenment manhood was a younger form of masculinity, it could be adopted by men of different ages.¹³

Hannah Spahn expanded on Fliegelman's book in her "Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment," which discusses the broader definition of citizenship that accompanied Enlightenment thinking and manhood. By engaging with other rationalist writers from all over the world, Jefferson developed himself as a citizen of the world, and his wider knowledge of governments and rationality informed his gender performance and his relationship to Great Britain. Thus, his documents confronting the King and Parliament showcase both his knowledge and his enlightened manhood. Both Fliegelman and Spahn show how educations deeply versed in the literature of Enlightenment thinkers shaped the worldview of men like Jefferson and, by extension, their gender behavior.¹⁴

Virginians' drift away from aristocratic gentlemanliness paralleled gender changes in the North. But other cultural and gender practices in Virginia became distinctly southern, laying the groundwork for an increasingly regional manhood drenched in honor, mastery, and the agrarian way of life. In *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, Michael Kimmel astutely argues for the importance of independent adulthood for elite men. Kimmel asserts that "Being a man meant also not being a boy. A man was independent, self-controlled . . . a

¹³ Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 5.

¹⁴ Hannah Spahn, "Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment," in *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Francis D. Cogliano (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 366.

boy was dependent, irresponsible, and lacked control.”¹⁵ Not only does this dichotomy explain resentment toward Great Britain’s restrictive legislation, it also shows the juxtaposition between slaves and their white masters in gendered terms—planters were free men who independently controlled their emasculated slaves. Lorri Glover drew upon this construction in *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation*, which explores southern white elites in the new republic. Dating back to the Revolution, southern social norms created a uniquely southern manhood: “To be a man in this society was to be male, white, and elite *and* embody the proper gender attributes. A male lacking any of these qualities was not fully a man in the eyes of the region’s ruling class.”¹⁶ Remnants of aristocratic gentlemanliness provided for the construction of southern manhood. Glover also emphasizes the importance of communal acceptance for southern men as seen with aristocratic gentlemanliness; “A boy became a man only when he convinced his community that he was one.”¹⁷

Similarly, Bertram Wyatt-Brown’s *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* found the South’s code of honor to be a unique aspect of masculinity, different from manhood in the North or in Europe. Drawing from colonial aristocratic gentlemanliness, southerners adapted honor and made it into a code that gentleman prized highly (and northerners largely ignored). Wyatt-Brown observes that among lower classes, who also practiced a southern code of honor, the code manifested differently than it did among elite men: “Gentility, on the other hand, was a more specialized, refined form of honor, in which

¹⁵ Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 14.

¹⁶ Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

moral uprightness was coupled with high social position.”¹⁸ Connecting behavior to status emphasized the public component of masculinity in the South. Men had to be recognized as both elite and honorable by their peers to gain and maintain status as southern gentlemen. Wyatt-Brown also emphasizes other important southern duties of plantation management and slave mastery as components shaping male honor.

When looking at these different masculinities within the context of the Continental Congress, the diversity of gender constructions becomes even clearer. There was never one type of manhood practiced in Virginia during this period. Instead, different masculinities blended and overlapped to reflect changes in culture and society. While elements such as public validation and an honorable reputation persevered across gender constructions, they meant different things to aristocratic gentlemen than they did to military men or southern men. Kathleen Brown eloquently argued that “In early America, Indian, European, and African men’s and women’s lives were mediated by gender roles, making the historical study of masculinity and men’s experiences *as men* important to developing a more complex understanding of seventeenth and eighteenth-century America.”¹⁹

The American Revolution unleashed democratic, military, regional, and intellectual impulses that gave impetus to forms of manhood that helped to erode aristocratic gentlemanliness. Militant, intellectual, and southern men absorbed some ideals of aristocratic gentlemanliness such as honor and public virtue, while abandoning others including

¹⁸ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 88.

¹⁹ Kathleen Brown, “Brave New Worlds: Women’s and Gender History,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1993): 325.

submission and restraint. The Revolution and meetings with other men in the Continental Congress contributed to the erosion of these principles as Virginians responded to changes in their political and social roles on a larger stage.

Aristocratic gentlemanliness dominated gender performance for most of the eighteenth century, but there were variances in obtaining and executing it. Edmund Pendleton became a planter gentleman through his apprenticeship, showing that aristocratic gentlemanliness was not always inherited, but within the grasp of non-elite young men. A man's gender and class were always on display in the eighteenth century and the public validated his masculinity. Hospitality, for example, allowed men to intersect their domestic and public selves in a controlled environment through exchanges with guests. Guests in plantation houses observed their host, his dependents, and his possessions with a critical eye, and hosts offered themselves as humble servants to their guests reinforcing virtuous male behavior. In essence, the gentlemen of Virginia validated one another's status and achieved patriarchal power in their home and colony.²⁰

Men living near Virginia's frontier, like Patrick Henry, embodied backcountry manhood. Henry did not have the same educational background or social restraint as men like Pendleton, but still engaged in genteel attempts at social mobility and political power. Henry did not closely follow the social mores of aristocratic gentlemanliness due to his upbringing in the hostile environment of Virginia's backcountry. Violence and affection intersected in backcountry life leading to a constantly intense domestic atmosphere. The

²⁰ Idem, *Good Wives*, 270, 271.

intensity and perpetual fear of Native violence led backcountry men to be less refined and more outspoken. Henry attained impressive political power, but never put in the effort of self-mastery to become an aristocratic gentleman. In fact, his lack of interest in performing gentlemanliness for public acceptance is a reflection of his detached and unrestrained backcountry manhood.²¹

An aristocratic gentleman like Edmund Pendleton, Peyton Randolph obeyed royal authority in the face of revolution, which was not surprising. However, many of his fellow delegates resisted British authority in 1775 after Virginia's royal governor seized the magazine in Williamsburg. As the political environment in Virginia changed, masculinity began to transform, but Randolph did not acclimate. Randolph's death in October of 1775 symbolized the collapse of aristocratic gentlemanliness as the dominant construction of manhood. Despite its decline, remnants of aristocratic gentlemanliness remained and were later adapted to fit new constructions of southern manhood.

George Washington's masculinity was more complex than that of Randolph's given his aristocratic upbringing and later military career. But in 1775, it was his history of military service that informed Washington's public performance of manhood in Congress. The cultural environment of Virginia began changing after Lexington and Concord as submission to royal authority became a sign of emasculation and resisting British authority through military enlistment became masculine. Washington's military experience in Virginia's backcountry shaped his reputation in Congress. The act of wearing his uniform in Congress

²¹ Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 678.

also presented his military manhood for public evaluation. However, his demeanor and conduct showed remnants of aristocratic gentlemanliness. His fellow Congressmen judged him worthy of military leadership and in the Continental Army he gained a greater reputation for honor and glory, further elevating his martial manhood. Later in his life when Washington returned to politics, he continued to be recognized for his military might while simultaneously practicing genteel mores.

Thomas Jefferson did not enlist in the military and instead embodied a newer form of masculinity—Enlightenment manhood. Jefferson’s public performance of gender also reflected elements of aristocratic gentlemanliness in his manner, but like Washington, Jefferson challenged other aspects of this older construction through his resistance of royal authority. Instead of combating Great Britain through armed conflict, Jefferson used the tools of the Enlightenment to prove his manhood. Reason, philosophy, and a thirst for education drove his ability to perform his masculinity through the written word. His failure as an effective public speaker—an extremely important quality of masculinity—surprisingly did not prevent him from gaining prestige among his colleagues. Jefferson’s written works, including *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* and *The Declaration of Independence*, allowed him to display his manhood and reputation for public validation and gain fame to the same degree as orators like Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee. Jefferson’s drive to embody Enlightenment manhood through a vast education often eclipsed his personal life, causing him to lose his first love interest to another, but for Jefferson, the pursuit of education was a noble goal that justified personal sacrifice. Ultimately, his

extensive self-education enabled him to effectively perform Enlightenment manhood through the written word and gain worldwide prestige and validation. While Jefferson embodied characteristics of southern masculinity, his case study serves more to explain Enlightenment manhood.

Richard Henry Lee's gender performance is a more fruitful example of a southern manhood that emerged during the Revolution. Southern manhood took elements of aristocratic gentlemanliness and transformed them into something unique to Virginia and other colonies of the South. Changes in the North and an embrace of tradition in the South led to regionalism along the Atlantic coast. Lee came from what can only be described as one of Virginia's leading dynasties. While he followed political and social paths similar to other men discussed here, Lee's life and understandings of manhood reflected ideas of southern honor and conduct characteristic of the antebellum South. Lee's mastery over slaves and his anxieties over slaves witnessing white, male freedom led to a deep fear of slave insurrection. Slaveholding served as a large element of southern culture and mastery, along with the paranoia accompanied by it, shaped white manhood in Virginia.

Honor also informed Lee's performance of gender as a southern man. Morality and social grace, two traits that existed in Pendleton's time intensified as components of a unique southern code of honor not present in the North. For aristocratic gentlemen, virtue had been common to all of the Atlantic colonies as a part of social mobility. As regionalism began polarizing the North and South, virtue acquired different meanings in the two regions. Like aristocratic gentlemanliness, southern honor rested on public validation and often included

one's ability to gracefully socialize about light subjects like horseracing and parties. The atmosphere in which Lee rose to local power encompassed the notions of southern honor and his colleagues evaluated his masculinity with these codes in mind.

Ultimately, the need for public approval ties all of these Virginians together. Validation of one's gender and class from outside observers is the most permanent aspect of masculinity during these years. While other types of manhood—military, Enlightenment, and southern—broke from or changed several traits of aristocratic gentlemanliness, the requirement of public confirmation for status endured.

CHAPTER 1: The Refined and the Rough in Colonial Virginia

In Philadelphia, the First Continental Congress served as a larger stage for Virginia delegates to perform gender. Patrick Henry stepped into the spotlight during the opening congressional session with a charged opposition to British authority. In September of 1774, Henry echoed in the crowded room of Carpenter's Hall as he exclaimed, "Government is dissolved. Fleets and armies and the present state of things show that government is dissolved . . . The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian but an *American*."²² Henry's opening address to Congress mirrored others he had given in the political arena, and displayed his lack of restraint as a man of the Virginia backcountry. As practitioners of aristocratic gentlemanliness with deep ties to royal authority, most other Congressmen, like fellow Virginian Edmund Pendleton, did not share Henry's desire to oppose Great Britain.

In the years leading up to 1774, Virginians practiced an aristocratic gentlemanliness similar to the performance of masculinity with cultural and social implications parallel throughout the British Empire. Masculinity derived from ideas of restraint, control, virtue, and power. In Virginia, manhood was based on aristocratic gentlemanliness, but varied based on region. Men like Edmund Pendleton practiced a refined aristocratic gentlemanliness seen among several well-connected members of Virginia's gentry. Pendleton and other gentlemen in the eighteenth century relied on British advice literature as a guide for navigating the

²² Patrick Henry, Remarks at the First Continental Congress, Sept-Oct 1774, in *Patrick Henry in His Speeches and Writings and in the Words of his Contemporaries*, comp. James M. Elson, (Lynchburg, VA: Warwick House Publishers, 2007), 69.

social mores of aristocratic masculinity. The extremely popular letters of English writer Lord Chesterfield gave men along the Atlantic coast advice on refinement and articulated the culturally accepted behaviors of gentlemen. Chesterfield and other authors of advice literature stressed that gentility could only be confirmed by the public. The key to earning the respect due to a gentleman rested on self-regulation and mastery. Only by controlling oneself could a man perform proper class and gender behavior. Gentlemen suppressed improper words and actions in a seemingly natural and graceful manner while simultaneously socializing with great ease. Edmund Pendleton and other members of Virginia's gentility utilized these and other guidelines to become aristocratic gentlemen and widely respected patriarchs of their colony.²³

Less celebrated and often alienated from men like Pendleton, Patrick Henry practiced a more outspoken backcountry manhood. Raised in a frontier environment, men like Henry ignored the norms of stoicism and self-restraint, acting extravagantly and passionately in public life. Gender norms in the backcountry were somewhat different than those of Henry's eastern neighbors. A constant fear of violence from Native peoples that stretched back generations created an environment that praised men as warriors and protectors. The ever-present threat of hostility also contributed to more rigid gender roles than those seen in eastern parts of Virginia. Families in the backcountry fell under stricter male domination with a wife's status buried deeply under her husband's as both his manual and reproductive

²³ Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 86-87.

laborer.²⁴ The pressure of protecting families from constant attack in an environment that embraced violence and male domination led to a less refined version of masculinity in the backcountry. Practitioners of backcountry manhood like Patrick Henry were often quick to a temper and did not closely follow the guidelines of self-regulation promoted by authors like Lord Chesterfield. As a result, Henry did not gain social acceptance by the elite, but he did follow a similar path to gain political success.²⁵

As Pendleton and Henry entered adulthood and served their counties in the House of Burgesses, conflict arose with Britain. The imperial government's increasing control over local affairs—a control absent in previous generations—was seen as an unlawful infringement on local patriarchal power. Both men represented Virginia in the Continental Congress, called to consider the alarming new relationship with Great Britain. Due to their different relationships with royal authority, shaped by upbringing and gender performance, Pendleton acted as a conservative and Henry as a radical. The conservatives ultimately spoke for the Congress and implemented the Articles of Association in 1774 as an attempt to retain and promote local patriarchal power. By the following year, cultural and political shifts had caused Virginia's gentry to see themselves less as the English in Virginia and more as Virginians. This shift in how Virginian men saw themselves in relation to Great Britain further strengthened their desire to push back against parliamentary legislation.²⁶

²⁴ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 677. This did not apply to Patrick Henry's wife as their marriage brought him considerable wealth and slaves that prevented her from engaging in manual labor. But other wives did not escape the intense demand for manual labor present in the Virginia backcountry.

²⁵ Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 676, 680.

²⁶ Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 249.

In the eighteenth century, patriarchy was foundational to all facets of society. Male-controlled social, political, and legal systems cemented order and peace in society while simultaneously reinforcing patriarchal control over women, slaves, and the lower classes. The gentry assumed their station above the rest of society—but below the king—and used status and gender to regulate proper race, class, and gender behavior in others. Using the important tools of masculinity and patriarchy, elite men along the Atlantic coast copied their counterparts on the other side of the ocean by practicing a type of aristocratic gentlemanliness similar to upper class manhood in Great Britain.

A key element of aristocratic gentlemanliness in Virginia was the self-restrained gentleman. Like the nobility of Great Britain, aristocratic planter men tied proper gender, class, and race behavior to emotional self-control. Self-control reflected a readiness and ability to control others, and a passionate man had no place governing a society that required deliberate and orderly authority. The gentry in eighteenth-century Virginia paralleled British customs and norms in both private and public life. Planter men, like elite men in England, derived their authority from landownership, control over dependents—women, slaves, and children—and public service at the local level.²⁷

Ideals of class and gender were inscribed from a very young age when parents taught children proper gender behavior and the benefits of strategic marriage within the Virginia

²⁷ Jessica Choppin Roney, “‘Effective Men’ and Early Volunteer Associations in Philadelphia, 1725-1775,” in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: University Press, 2011), 161; Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 13-14; Brown, *Good Wives*, 323, 324-327; Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson’s Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 21; and Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Williamsburg: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 37.

elite. As early as five or six years old, planter parents began separating their children based on gender. While girls wore dresses, boys transitioned from gender-neutral gowns to breeches, effectively beginning their training as future patriarchs. Adults then divided parental responsibilities with fathers acting as models for their sons. Sons learned mathematics and classic languages from tutors at home to prevent improper outside influence on the young mind. The purpose of an education outside the home was to begin cultivating a young man's sense of autonomy, a crucial aspect of male adulthood. Thus, when the time came for educational advancement and maturity, young men left the plantation house for an education that often took place in England or at Virginia's College of William and Mary.²⁸

The ability sons had to leave home for education and daily tasks reflected the inherent freedom of movement tied to manhood not available to women. As men came of age, they left home with increasing frequency for business, politics, land speculation, and education. Due to ideas of proper class behavior and concerns for female safety, elite women did not enter public spaces without the escort of a man. Young men not only journeyed independently for education, but also accompanied their fathers to observe daily activities on the plantation. The ability to wield some power over servants and watching their fathers' behavior toward slaves gave young men authority that would grow as their roles in society increased, and they established private and public selves of their own.²⁹

²⁸ Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 56-58; Brown, *Good Wives*, 295, 296; and Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 22, 59.

²⁹ Brown, *Good Wives*, 249, 281.

As men constructed public lives, virtue became a marker for aristocratic gentlemanliness and backcountry manhood alike. Virtue was a public act. Men in England and the colonies prized virtue highly, and it functioned as a primary requirement for patriarchs. Virtuous men worked for the common good of the colony through self-sacrifice, public service, and economic autonomy. The willingness to participate in civic life and engage in public service marked an individual as a virtuous and honorable man. Thus, planter men had to become masters of the home and of public life to effectively practice masculinity in eighteenth-century Virginia.³⁰

Men wanting to be aristocratic gentlemen lived according to the cultural rules of English gentility, built and lived in houses reflecting English wealth and class, married strategically within the planter class, upheld cultural norms regarding male restraint and virtue, secured important political and religious positions within the colony, and transformed themselves into an English gentry living in Virginia. The growth and maintenance of an elite planter class had been established by the time of Edmund Pendleton and Patrick Henry's births. Men like Pendleton embodied these masculine ideals of the aristocratic gentleman. However, some men, like Pendleton's fellow Virginian Patrick Henry, participated in planter culture, but a backcountry background dictated different masculine behavior.³¹

Henry Pendleton never met his seventh child, Edmund Pendleton, who was born in September of 1721, four months after his father's death. Edmund Pendleton grew up in one of the northernmost counties of Virginia, Caroline County. Life in Caroline County mirrored

³⁰ Roney, "Effective Men' and Early Volunteer Associations in Philadelphia," 159-60; Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs* 13, no. 1(1987): 38, 42.

³¹ Brown, *Good Wives*, 248.

that of fellow Virginians living near or on the frontier, but access to streams allowed for trade and travel to the Tidewater region and beyond not available in other areas. The greater freedom of movement available to inhabitants of Caroline County allowed larger economic development and a more refined culture compared to their western neighbors. The death of his father made Edmund Pendleton's upbringing somewhat different from others who became aristocratic gentlemen. Despite these differences, Pendleton came into his own as a member of the planter class and an embodiment of aristocratic gentlemanliness.³²

Edmund Pendleton spent his early childhood working on the family's small tobacco plantation, plowing land by day and educating himself at night by reading and studying any available books. By age fourteen, the only formal schooling Pendleton received was two years at an English school where he became literate and gained a basic understanding of arithmetic. Without a father to guide him and a lack of family finances, the young Edmund Pendleton risked becoming a burden to the colony of Virginia. In order to make sure the boy grew up with a sense of purpose and the knowledge of a trade, the Caroline County Court bound him as an apprentice to the court's clerk for six and a half years. In 1735, Pendleton left his family's home and moved into the house of his master, Benjamin Robinson, where he remained until adulthood. While these early years differ from the common upbringing of an aristocratic planter, it was in his master's house where Pendleton learned the behaviors and

³² David John Mays, *Edmund Pendleton: A Biography, 1721-1803*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 6; *Ibid.*, "Map of Tidewater Virginia," inside front cover.

responsibilities of a gentleman, evidencing the availability of different paths to aristocratic gentlemanliness not solely based on bloodlines and genealogy.³³

Already a well-mannered and diligent worker before entering Robinson's house, Pendleton honed these traits and developed new behaviors and skills under the tutelage of his master. Growing up in Robinson's house, Pendleton received instruction and companionship from his English-educated master and maternal affection from Mrs. Robinson—something scarce in the Pendleton home due to Edmund Pendleton's four brothers, two sisters, and two half-siblings who also demanded his mother's attention. Not only did he receive instruction and paternal friendship from his master, Pendleton also experienced gentry life through the enjoyment of leisure activities such as hunting and horseback riding.³⁴

When working, Pendleton accompanied Robinson on Court Days. On Court Days anyone with legal business flocked to the county court where citizens tried cases, recorded new deeds, paid debts, and sold slaves. It was a very busy time for Caroline County residents. Pendleton never received a classical education, but his observation of lawyers and judges gave him an understanding of the law and legal procedure as did the handling of deeds, petitions, wills, and other court documents.³⁵

By 1737, the leading men of Caroline County had taken notice of Pendleton's work ethic and attention to detail, and appointed the sixteen-year-old to clerk for the vestry for St. Mary's Church. As clerk of the vestry, Pendleton kept minutes of the vestrymen's meetings,

³³ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 9, 13; "Order of Apprenticeship" March 14, 1735, in *The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendleton, 1734-1803*, comp. and ed. David John Mays, 2 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 1:4.

³⁴ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 6, 11-12, 13, 14.

³⁵ Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 88; Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 13, 17.

preserved their accounts, and recorded births, christenings, and deaths within the parish. He also observed and learned about the behaviors and duties of vestrymen—an observation that would serve him well in adulthood. He used the small salary he received to purchase books, “and read them very diligently.”³⁶

Three years later, Pendleton began another post, clerking for the Caroline Court-Martial, and the additional job increased his knowledge of local government procedure. In 1741, Pendleton wanted to become a lawyer—a popular and honorable position for men in Virginia. The social mobility available to lawyers in the eighteenth century gave Pendleton another opportunity to bypass his non-elite upbringing to gain power and prestige within the colony. He again took up the task of educating himself, but instead of books on practicing law, he found only old county court records. Written largely in Latin, the records were unintelligible to Pendleton. However, due to his determination to practice law and rise in the social ranks, Pendleton enrolled in a Latin school while clerking and gained enough knowledge of the language to understand the records. At age nineteen, Pendleton traveled to Williamsburg for his bar examination, and became a lawyer for the Caroline County Courts.³⁷

The sizeable number of successful lawyers in Caroline County kept Pendleton from having a large client base. Despite his lack of funds and the objections of his master—mostly related to Pendleton’s finances—Edmund Pendleton married Betty Roy at age twenty, and became a widower the following year after she and their infant child died. Being single for long stretches in adulthood was taboo for both men and women. Marriage marked status and

³⁶ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 18, 19; Edmund Pendleton, “Edmund Pendleton’s Autobiography,” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 11 April 1828.

³⁷ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 21, 23.

a single man or woman lost power without important matrimonial alliances. Pendleton remarried seven months after his late wife's death, but the new couple never had children. He did however fulfill other husbandly duties as protector, friend, and master of his wife.³⁸

When Edmund Pendleton became a lawyer, his landholdings were sparse. The land once belonging to his maternal grandfather had been sold and large tracts belonged to men outside the family. Once Pendleton's earnings became sufficient, he started to buy back his family's land, and within ten years he owned and reclaimed over two thousand acres. Already equipped with proper gentlemanly manner and work ethic, Pendleton furthered his class and reputation within the colony through a profession in public service and an increase in landholdings. The leading men in Caroline County again took notice of Pendleton, and appointed him vestryman of his parish in 1745.³⁹

The local church served as another arena for eighteenth-century gentlemen to reinforce their patriarchal roles over the community by acting as vestrymen. Because of the long distances between neighbors and friends, the church acted as an important place for community activity.⁴⁰ The most elite members of the community served as vestrymen of their church. Vestrymen usually held other prominent positions in local affairs including law and politics. Serving as vestrymen gave community patriarchs another seat of power in Virginia, and another sphere in which to dominate dependents and lower classes through acts of aristocratic gentlemanliness and male virtue. Only wealthy landowners well practiced in

³⁸ Ibid., 29. His lack of children may seem unusual, but Pendleton went on to embody patriarchal and fatherly behaviors toward his nephews and the larger community. Smith, *Inside the Great House*, 160.

³⁹ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 33.

⁴⁰ Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 58. It is important to note that the church served more as a place for community gathering and patriarchal displays than actual religious devotion.

politics and religion gained appointment as a vestryman. Vestrymen had many responsibilities including appointing the minister, paying his salary in tobacco, providing his lodgings and land, examining the needs and complaints of all dependents in the parish and finding resolutions to their problems, turning in members of the church who violated moral and religious law, and funding the building and maintenance of future churches and chapels. Thus, only the most trustworthy and virtuous gentlemen gained appointment to the post of vestryman. With all their responsibilities, vestrymen served as the moral and religious patriarchs of the parish while reinforcing their status through public service.⁴¹

In the early 1740s, Pendleton's law practice began to grow and the same year as his appointment as vestryman, he qualified to practice law before the General Court in Williamsburg. The highest court in Virginia, lawyers of the General Court argued cases in front of the royal governor and his council. Only proper gentlemen gained appointment to such a prestigious position. Pendleton continued to practice law until 1751 when he became a justice of Caroline County. Being a justice increased Pendleton's masculine virtue because as justice he served the public in an even larger capacity, and made countless decisions in the interest of his county. As a justice, Pendleton helped determine the location of new roads and supervised their construction, he appointed men to inspect products for export, and established ferries to better connect Caroline County to other areas of Virginia. All of his efforts worked to maintain and improve his county's economy and allowed Pendleton to display his virtue as a promoter of community welfare.⁴²

⁴¹ Ibid., 65; Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 18.

⁴² Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 34, 40, 52; Richard R. Breeman, *Patrick Henry: A Biography* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), 22.

More important than his efforts in the economy, Pendleton's seat on the court made him a protector of Virginia law. The law defined rights, and by extension, citizenship. Citizenship was an important marker of elite white manhood, and included essential patriarchal powers. Wealthy planters exercised the rights of citizens including voting, landownership, and holding prominent positions in society. Pendleton's protection of these male rights ultimately helped to maintain the patriarchal power of the planter class in Virginia. Another valuable tool in maintaining patriarchal power among the elite was the ability for planters to appoint fellow gentlemen to represent them in the House of Burgesses. In 1752, Pendleton's fellow leaders in Caroline County appointed him to the House of Burgesses. For the next two decades, Pendleton periodically traveled to Williamsburg to represent his county as a Burgess.⁴³

Elite Virginians directly represented their countrymen in the honorable House of Burgesses. Burgesses were responsible for "framing such laws as shall be the Welfare and true Interest of this Colony."⁴⁴ The gentry's dominance over political affairs allowed them to spread their control over fellow Virginians and institutionalize their power in law and government. Political professions combined with the role of vestryman in local churches to empower elite men with control over all facets of society, and through political advancement and class, the leading families in Virginia maintained their power for several generations.⁴⁵

Ten years after his appointment as Burgess, Pendleton acted as a father and patriarch in a more private setting when he began raising his late brother's son. Chesapeake

⁴³ Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 94; Brown, *Good Wives*, 364; Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 160.

⁴⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, 12 May 1774, 4.

⁴⁵ Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 133; Robert A. Becker, "Politics of Taxation in America, 1763-1783" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971), 364.

households in the eighteenth century often opened to relatives in need, and it was common for kin to enter the household and become adopted members of the immediate family. Pendleton provided his nine-year-old nephew, John Taylor, with an education and later, an understanding of law. Taylor continued to live with his uncle throughout his young adult life with the only exceptions being his education away from home at the College of William and Mary and his service in George Washington's Continental Army. Thus, despite not having his own children, Pendleton kept power within his family by raising his nephew with the proper ideals of aristocratic gentlemanliness, while simultaneously reinforcing his own status as patriarch.⁴⁶

By the time Pendleton reached his forties, he had repeatedly proven himself as an honorable representation of aristocratic gentlemanliness. His vast landholdings and powerful political and religious positions increased his status and reputation through wealth and public service. The work ethic and manners he showed throughout his life had earned the attention of fellow Caroline County residents, and later in the House of Burgesses, fellow Virginians. Pendleton's guardianship of his nephew, John Taylor, marked him as a generous and gentle patriarch within his own home. Both in public and private life, Pendleton became a member of the powerful and elite. He continued to embody the qualities of restraint and modesty, even during the Stamp Act Crisis and his time in Congress when Pendleton came into direct conflict with men who deviated from these qualities, like Patrick Henry.

⁴⁶ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 139, 140; Smith, *Inside the Great House*, 190. Pendleton later paid George Washington four hundred pounds in 1772 on behalf of his nephew Philip, the third son of Pendleton's brother later brother, James, who bought land from Washington in Frederick County. See Edmund Pendleton to George Washington, letter, December 19, 1772 in Mays, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendleton, 1734-1803*, 1:75.

Unlike Edmund Pendleton, Patrick Henry embodied backcountry manhood. Henry lacked a distinguished family background, economic advantages, and classical education. However, many of those inadequacies could be overcome through various avenues of social mobility. What Henry lacked that Pendleton possessed was a sense of restraint and manners prized by Virginia's gentry. He did not possess proper demeanor and decorum, and often displayed extravagance, egotism, and drew financially from neighbors and family members. Henry's business failures, lack of self-control, and his behavior in the courtroom, House of Burgesses and later, in Congress, marked him as a less refined, backcountry man among more traditional gentry like Edmund Pendleton.⁴⁷

Patrick Henry was also born in a northern county of Virginia. But his birthplace of Hanover County stretched farther west and did not have the water access for trade and travel available in Caroline County. His father, John Henry, was born in Scotland and strategically married into Virginia's aristocracy after settling in the colony. While the Henry family did not rank among the leading families of Virginia, John Henry climbed the social ladder and gained some level of prosperity by Patrick Henry's birth in 1736. John Henry gained even more social prominence after his son's birth and went on to serve as chief justice of Hanover County Court, vestryman of the Church of England, and gained the rank of Colonel in Virginia's militia. John Henry became a member of the planter class through a combination of marriage and merit, but his manners, family lineage, and smaller plantation kept him socially outside of the wealthiest planter families' circles.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 1; Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, 10.

⁴⁸ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, "Map of Tidewater Virginia," inside front cover; Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 2, 3.

John Henry's son, Patrick, enjoyed elite leisure activities like hunting, but his location closer to the frontier left him with fewer educational opportunities. As a result, Patrick Henry received no classical education, and the small amount of formal schooling and tutoring he did obtain never sparked interest within him. Consequently, investing in a college education for Henry seemed wasteful and was never broached. A lack of interest in self-improvement through education separated Henry from more traditional gentry who prized education as a marker of status and power. Instead of schooling, Henry began clerking for a small merchant in his home county at age fifteen. Henry enjoyed his time as a merchant and decided to go into business with his older brother, William. Unfortunately, the Henry brothers granted overly extensive credit to their patrons and the store had to be liquidated. Failure in business embarrassed all men, and went directly against aristocratic gentlemanliness's demands for order and control. Moreover, upper-class children like Henry were duty-bound to their parents to gain an education and conduct themselves in a manner that honored the reputation of their parents and household. Instead, Henry's desire not to continue his education and his public failure as a merchant reflected poorly on himself and his family.⁴⁹

However, Patrick Henry held to traditional planter culture in several ways, partly evidenced in his marriage to Sarah Shelton at age eighteen. Part of being an elite man was marrying, caring for, and controlling a fellow planter's daughter. Much like the aristocracy of Great Britain, wives served as symbols of male status and strategic marriages between planter families consolidated political and social power. Marriage to a planter's daughter helped families maintain wealth and status amongst the elite for several generations. Due to

⁴⁹ Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 4-6; Smith, *Inside the Great House*, 97; Brown, *Good Wives*, 344.

social and cultural shifts in Virginia, by the mid-eighteenth century young men and women increasingly married for love and selected marriage partners independent of parental influence. However, the work done by previous generations in building powerful kin networks created a large pool of wealthy men and women, allowing planters to maintain class and status.⁵⁰

Patrick Henry's father-in-law had social standing similar to his own father, and uniting the two families reinforced their class positions within planter society. Henry's new father-in-law gave the couple three hundred acres and six slaves to further Henry's status and provide security—and protection from manual labor—for his new bride. Young men required an accumulation of land and slaves if they hoped to compete with and find a place in the planter class. Like Henry, other Virginian sons received a share of their fathers'—and sometimes father-in-law's—slaves and land holdings, usually upon marriage, giving them the highest likelihood of remaining in the planter class and perpetuating the wealth and reputation of the family line. Slaves not only served as a marker of status, but also as a way to reinforce their masters' manhood. For the planter class, being a man also meant being an adult. Boys were dependents who lacked self-control, while men were independent, self-restrained, and responsible. Language used in regard to slaves reflected these ideas. Masters often referred to black slaves as “boys” not only to emasculate slaves, but to empower themselves as adult men. Slaves on plantations served as both a labor force and a mechanism

⁵⁰ Brown, *Good Wives*, 248, 250, 253, 256.

through which white male gentility could be reinforced through daily interactions between master and slave.⁵¹

Unfortunately, a fire destroyed Henry's home and most of his possessions in 1757. After the fire, Henry decided to sell his slaves, and used the money to open another store in the hopes of replenishing some lost wealth. Participation in business both on and off the plantation served as another means to maintain a planter's masculinity and class. Many successful planters in Virginia also operated as merchants and entrepreneurs. Participation in the mercantile economy as both buyer and seller allowed planter men to accumulate more wealth and power within the community. However, Henry's attempt as a merchant again failed and he took a job in his father-in-law's tavern.⁵²

The tavern served as a location of male conviviality and competition. Certain taverns were connected with certain social and economic classes of men, and the planter gentry frequented more upstanding establishments to preserve their reputations. Simply by walking into a particular tavern, a man could display his economic and political status while achieving the gentility and subtlety required of an honorable gentleman. The discussion of matters pertaining to manhood both alienated women and validated gentlemen as the keepers of their own, and their dependents', fates. Manhood in taverns often boiled down to political discourse, and most men gathered in taverns after a session in the House of Burgesses or during Court Days. The gentlemen of Virginia used the male public sphere of the tavern to complete business transactions and discuss—or loudly debate—the colony's politics. As

⁵¹ Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 14.

⁵² Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 6-7; Brown, *Good Wives*, 249.

tavern keeper, Henry witnessed discussions, debates, and gambling within the tavern, reflecting the cultural importance of male competition on multiple levels. Not only did men compete with other patrons simply by walking into a tavern through appearance and dress, but they also showcased their knowledge and competed on intellectual levels through political and philosophical discussion.⁵³

Henry continued working in the tavern until 1760 when he left to start a legal career. He did little to educate himself on law, and appeared in Williamsburg for his examination where examiners Peyton Randolph and George Wythe took note of Henry's overall ignorance of Virginia's laws. Despite his lack of education, Henry managed to pass the exam—although he did so very narrowly—and earned a license to practice law in Hanover County. Perhaps Patrick Henry passed his exam due to what examiner John Randolph observed as remarkable “natural reason.”⁵⁴ Indeed, Henry's quick wit and oratorical skills made him a very successful lawyer, and he had finally found a vehicle through which he could advance in Virginia society. The money he made from cases went to the purchase of various landholdings in Hanover County, and parts of the Carolinas, enhancing his economic position and social standing amongst the gentry.⁵⁵

In 1763, Henry's law profession launched his political life with a case against the Two Penny Act that would later be called The Parson's Cause. The Virginia General Assembly passed the Two Penny Act five years before, which allowed taxpayers to pay their

⁵³ Sharon V. Sallinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1, 5; Roney, “‘Effective Men’ and Early Volunteer Associations in Philadelphia,” 158. For more on the importance of appearance and cleanliness amongst the gentility, see Kathleen M. Brown's *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), part II.

⁵⁴ John Randolph quoted in Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 9.

⁵⁵ Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 26-29.

annual 16,000 pounds of tobacco at a rate under the inflated four pence per pound at two pence per pound. This lower rate—in effect for only one year—relieved Virginians burdened by drought and other taxes already in place because of the Seven Years War. Virginia’s government enacted the Two Penny Act prior to its official ratification by England’s Privy Council. An English clergyman journeyed to the Privy Council and fought the act’s passage, and succeeded in 1759 when the act expired. The clergyman filed suit for retroactive payment, and Patrick Henry defended the Two Penny Act.⁵⁶

In the courtroom, Henry first sculpted his reputation as a radical politician and loose cannon. He argued that in striking down the Two Penny Act, the king would transition from a benevolent patriarch to “a Tyrant [who] forfeits all rights to his subjects’ obedience.”⁵⁷ Opposing counsel and others cried treason, but the court did not reprimand Henry and he won the case. News of his victory traveled quickly, giving him massive popularity and an appointment to the House of Burgesses by the fellow backcountry men of Hanover County who understood Henry’s demeanor better than aristocratic gentlemen.⁵⁸

Patrick Henry found himself somewhat alienated in the House of Burgesses. Clearly, Henry possessed the political skills to follow a more genteel path like Pendleton, but he continued to resist aristocratic behavior, remaining outspoken in public life. Leaders in the House including Peyton Randolph and Edmund Pendleton came from similar educational and genteel backgrounds, further stressing the difference between them and Henry, the uneducated backcountry man and former business failure. In 1765, when Parliament passed

⁵⁶ Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 13-20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17, 19 (Patrick Henry quote).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 20, 22.

the Stamp Act, Britain's involvement in local politics challenged years of power delegated to colonial legislatures to govern and directly tax residents.⁵⁹ Most colonists saw the sudden change in policy as an assault on their autonomy and liberty—and by extension their status as adult men. Virginia's gentry reacted in different ways, which was represented by Edmund Pendleton's more reserved response and Patrick Henry's clamorous reaction to the Stamp Act.⁶⁰

News of the Stamp Act reached Virginia before its passage, and Pendleton did not approve of the act. Through an official address to the king—and also as a justice—Pendleton condemned the act with logic and analysis. He and several other aristocratic members of the House of Burgesses including Peyton Randolph and George Wythe co-authored an address to the king one month before the Stamp Act's passage. Pendleton and his colleagues stressed the loyalty already given in paying for the defense of the colonies and asked for the monarch's protection of their civil rights. The gentlemen's address to the king represented the challenge of merging ideas of patriarchal liberty with a submission to royal authority, an idea that would become increasingly difficult as British legislation continued to stunt local patriarchal power.⁶¹

When he resumed acting as a justice under the Stamp Act, Pendleton articulated the combination of maintaining local patriarchal power with obeying British law. As a justice, he argued the Stamp Act was void because it infringed on principles of the British Constitution.

⁵⁹ Bloch, "The Gendered Meaning of Virtue," 40. This negative reaction to Britain's direct involvement in local affairs was also seen with the Parson's Cause, and would later be seen by various taxation acts passed by Parliament over the course of the 1760s and 1770s.

⁶⁰ Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 34, 40.

⁶¹ Mays, *Edmund Pendleton*, 170-71; E.J. Miller, "The Virginia Legislature and the Stamp Act," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1913): 236; Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, 14.

According to Pendleton, it was his duty as a justice of the court to uphold the law of the Constitution, and not an act of Parliament violating it. Pendleton exercised restraint and self-control to maintain what he saw as natural and lawful order in his opposition to the Stamp Act. As a justice, Pendleton exercised his power, but as a gentleman, he wrote to the king begging his superior for aid. Understanding his place in society and acting with decorum within his station further marked Pendleton as a proper aristocratic gentleman. On the contrary, Patrick Henry did not react to the Stamp Act with submission or restraint.⁶²

In May of 1765, only nine days after taking his seat in the House of Burgesses, Henry gave an impassioned speech condemning the Stamp Act. Henry refused an economic relationship with the king if it meant he and fellow colonists would lose control over local politics and government, just as he stated during the Parson's Cause. Instead of a logical approach generating from a place of cool self-control, Henry's reaction to the Stamp Act originated from emotion and flamboyant temper. During his speech, Henry was cut off by fellow Burgesses' accusations of treason. While there has been some conflict over Henry's reaction to the charge of treason and the end of his speech, he remains among the earliest open dissenters to the British crown.⁶³ After his theatrics at the House of Burgesses, Henry earned a reputation as a "Devil in Politicks—a Son of Thunder . . . very stern and steady in his country's care . . ." in the eyes of fellow radical gentry who deviated from ideals of

⁶² Mays, *Edmund Pendleton: A Biography*, 170-171.

⁶³ In 1921, *The American Historical Review* published "Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies 1765" in Vol. 26, no. 4: 726-47. The journal gives a much more milder account of Henry's speech in which Henry begged pardon of the Speaker after being accused of treason and proclaimed loyalty to George III. The author (and eyewitnesses) claims that Henry declared, "...what [I] said must be attributed to the Interest of [my] Countrys [sic] Dying liberty..." 745. For a scholarly interpretation of "Journal of a French Traveller" see Rhys Isaac "Lighting the Fuse of Revolution in Virginia, May 1765: Rereading the 'Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies'" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* vol. 68, no. 4 (October 2011): 657-70.

stoicism and restraint.⁶⁴ The theme of Henry's attacks on the king and Parliament, a defense of local power and patriarchy, was a common argument against the Stamp Act—and later legislation passed in England—utilized by radicals and conservatives alike. However, conservative gentlemen thought Henry's oratory intended to make an agreement with Great Britain difficult and deplored the extravagance of his speech, despite agreeing with Henry's argument for local governance. Conservative Virginians like Pendleton could not support Henry due to the emotional and combative manner in which he spoke, no matter how much they agreed with the logic of his words.⁶⁵

Virginians and their fellow colonists reacted similarly to the Boston Port Bill the following decade. The Boston Port Bill of 1774, a provision of the Intolerable Acts, would, “discontinue . . . the landing and discharging . . . of goods, wares, and merchandise, at the town, and within the harbour [sic], of Boston, in the province of Massachuset's [sic] Bay.”⁶⁶ Removing the colonists' ability to participate in their own economy threatened their status as powerful, self-sufficient men. Virginians reacted to the chastisement of Massachusetts as though their own ports had been closed. Edmund Pendleton wrote, “we could not avoid considering [it] as a common Attack upon American rights.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Roger Atkinson to Samuel Pleasants, 1 October 1774, in “Letters of Roger Atkinson,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 15, no. 4 (1908): 356.

⁶⁵ Thomas Jefferson to William Wirt Henry, 4 August, 1805, in Elson, comp., *Patrick Henry in His Speeches and Writings*, 53; *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1761-1765*, ed., John Pendleton Kennedy, (Richmond, VA: The Colonial Press, 1907), 73; Breeman, *Patrick Henry: A Biography*, 42, 53; and Mays, *Edmund Pendleton: A Biography*, 163.

⁶⁶ Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia, *Boston Port Bill of 1774*, <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/bpb.htm> (Accessed 1 February 2012); Christine Sismondo, *America Walks Into a Bar: A Spirited History of Taverns and Saloons, Speakeasies, and Grog Shops* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69.

⁶⁷ Edmund Pendleton to Joseph Chew, 20 June 1774, in Mays, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendleton*, 1:93.

Like the Stamp Act, the passage of the Boston Port Bill challenged local power and patriarchy. In closing the port, the bill threatened the economic independence and governance of men in Boston and throughout the colonies—a characteristic central to aristocratic gentlemanliness. The gentlemen of Virginia feared their economic independence would also be taken away with future acts of Parliament. Arthur Lee, brother of Virginia Burgess Richard Henry Lee, wrote from London the same month as the bill’s passage to warn his brother of the dangers in submitting to the legislation. Arthur Lee explained, “. . . if the colonies, in general, permit this to pass unnoticed, a precedent will be established for humbling them by degrees until all opposition to arbitrary power is subdued.”⁶⁸ If the colonists did not rebel against this bill, the British Crown might continue to chip away at their masculinity through the disbandment of other markers of manhood such as politics and landownership. Arthur Lee feared Virginia’s aristocratic gentlemen would be reduced to the lowly status of dependents.

The royal governor, Lord Dunmore, dissolved the House of Burgesses in May, two months after the passage of the bill, when the politicians, “appoint[ed] the 1st of June . . . to be observed [with] a fast” as a sign of sympathy for Boston’s plight.⁶⁹ The governor likely questioned the loyalty and stability of the Burgesses, prompting his dissolution of that legislative body. Once the House of Burgesses dissolved, the fears of the Virginians had been confirmed. Dunmore—and by extension George III and Parliament—undermined the

⁶⁸ Arthur Lee to Richard Henry Lee, 18 March 1774, in *Memoir of the Life of Richard Henry Lee, and His Correspondence with the Most Distinguished Men in America and Europe: Illustrative of Their Characters, and of the Events of the American Revolution*, comp. Richard H. Lee, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: William Brown, 1825), 1: 93-94.

⁶⁹ Edmund Pendleton to Joseph Chew, 20 June 1774, 1:93.

manhood of the patriarchs, reducing them to the status of an enslaved dependent. In taking away the Virginians' ability to exercise political control in the colony, Dunmore reduced the Burgesses from independent politicians to the status of unheard children—a direct threat to their masculinity.⁷⁰

The following day, the gentlemen found a new headquarters and the former Burgesses met at the Raleigh Tavern. As one of the spaces to publicly display manhood and masculinity in the eighteenth century, the tavern served as an important tool for political discourse. Taverns were familiar spaces to the politicians of Virginia, especially Patrick Henry, due to his brief career as tavern keeper. At the Raleigh, the gentlemen formed a plan to regain their local authority and power at the First Virginia Convention, which would meet in August of that year. The Convention's consideration to boycott British goods intended to show the English government that the tradition of local, elite control rightly functioned despite this assault on political and masculine liberties. After being in contact with the patriarchs of other colonies, Virginians held their Convention to deliberate on "the present critical and alarming situation of the continent of North-America."⁷¹

Choosing delegates for a Congress of the colonies' elite was another vital purpose of the Convention. Edmund Pendleton and Patrick Henry's domination over Virginia's land, politics and economics made them ideal candidates for that fall's First Continental Congress.

⁷⁰ Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, letter, 26 June 1774, in *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, comp. and ed. James Curtis Ballagh, 2 vols., (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 1:114.

⁷¹ George Washington to George William Fairfax, letter, 10 June 1774, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Beverly H. Runge, vol. 10, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 10:96; "Notice of Call for First Virginia Revolutionary Convention," Williamsburg, 31 May, 1774, in Mays, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendleton*, 1: 89-90. Richard Henry Lee to Samuel Adams, 23 June 1774, in *Memoir of the Life of Richard Henry Lee*, 1:98; Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 5 September 1774, 34 vols. (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1904-1937), 1:23.

The five other elite patriarchs chosen for the Congress demonstrated key elements of aristocratic gentlemanliness and virtue. Peyton Randolph, the leader of the delegation, was a former Speaker of the House of Burgesses with extensive political roots in the colony who had been Pendleton's ally during the Stamp Act crisis. While Randolph's brother-in-law, Benjamin Harrison, was not well known to the public, family ties served as an important part of political power in a society operating under patriarchy. Harrison's relation to a prominent man such as Randolph helped to secure his seat in the delegation. Landowners and politicians George Washington and Richard Henry Lee held considerable power in their own counties, just like Pendleton and Henry. The last delegate, Richard Bland, was "staunch and tough" with experience as a lawyer that prepared him—and most of the other delegates—for congressional debate.⁷²

The Convention instructed Virginia's delegation to "procure redress for the much injured province of Massachusetts-Bay, [and] to secure British America from the ravage and ruin of arbitrary taxes."⁷³ Even though Edmund Pendleton and Patrick Henry received the same instructions, the two men journeyed to Congress with different ideas of Virginia's relationship to Great Britain, which reflected their own connections to royal authority. Henry's upbringing in the backcountry and various careers prevented him from direct contact with royal authority until his appointment to the House of Burgesses in 1765. His lack of attachment to England made him a more radical politician less interested in reconciliation and agreement with the parent country. Contrary to Henry's limited encounters with British authority, by the time Pendleton joined Congress in 1774, he had served in the House of

⁷² Roger Atkinson to Samuel Pleasants, 1 October 1774, in "Letters of Roger Atkinson," 355, 356, 357.

⁷³ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 5 September 1774, 1:23.

Burgesses for twenty-two years and worked amicably with royal officials throughout that time. Pendleton's close relationship with royal authority as an aristocratic gentleman made him reluctant to confront Great Britain until all paths to reconciliation had been explored. Thus, Pendleton approached Congress with a mind to adhere to the Virginia Convention's instructions for reconciliation, while Henry severely lacked a sense of loyalty and attachment to the king.⁷⁴

All of the delegates wanted to retain local patriarchal power, but most had the mindset of Pendleton and desired not separation—but negotiation and reconciliation with Great Britain—to maintain that power. Indeed, revolution was not a duty of the Virginians at the First Continental Congress, and the Convention tasked the delegates with obtaining “the return of that harmony and Union. . . so ardently desired by all British America.”⁷⁵ In their home counties, Virginia's delegates—and those of other colonies—exercised enormous power, and upon banding together in Congress, widened their reach and influence to negotiate with Great Britain as representatives of the Atlantic coast. In establishing a Congress, the delegates displayed their masculinity on a larger scale in an attempt to reclaim what they saw as their fundamental patriarchal right to local control in the face of unlawful legislation.

With their newly extended sphere of power, Congress set up two committees to combat the alarming parliamentary legislation, with influential Virginians serving on both. They resolved unanimously that, “a committee be appointed to State the rights of the

⁷⁴ Breeman, *Patrick Henry*, 54. Patrick Henry's lack of attachment to royal authority also deviated from the sentiments of most traditional gentry.

⁷⁵ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 5 September 1774, 1: 23. Emphasis added.

Colonies in general . . . and the means . . . for obtaining a restoration of them.”⁷⁶ The second committee was “appointed to examine and report the several statutes, which affect the trade and Manufactures of the colonies.”⁷⁷ Combined, these committees reflect cultural understandings of aristocratic gentlemanliness. The first committee’s address to the king displayed the delegates’ adherence to the constraints of gentlemanliness through submission and a humble appeal to George III as their supreme patriarch. Creating a report on manufacturing and trade not only displayed delegates’ patriarchal power, but also showed the Congressmen’s determination to retain their elite status and local control.

Congress sent their address to the king, but moved forward in their retention of local power. The data collected by the second committee on trade and manufacturing combined with debates over non-importation and non-exportation of British goods led to the most drastic measure imposed by the First Continental Congress—a boycott of British goods in the twelve colonies.⁷⁸ Ultimately, the Articles of Association promoted patriarchy and the facets of aristocratic gentlemanliness. Colonists who denounced luxury and European finery promoted self-sacrifice—and by extension—male and female civic virtue. By forcing the gentry out of silk and into homespun, men and women publicly displayed the cost of maintaining local power and their willingness to pay it.⁷⁹

By the time Pendleton and Henry became seasoned politicians in Virginia and Philadelphia, planter men thought of themselves less as an English gentry residing in

⁷⁶ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 6 September 1774, 1:26.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:26.

⁷⁸ Georgia did not attend the First Continental Congress.

⁷⁹ Benjamin H. Irvin, “Of Eloquence ‘Manly’ and ‘Monstrous’: The Henpecked Husband in Revolutionary Political Debate, 1774-1775,” in Foster, ed., *New Men* (New York: University Press, 2011), 202-203.

Virginia and more as Virginia gentry. Through subtle differences in culture such as plantation life and the institution of slavery, Virginians began to see themselves apart from the gentry of England. The establishment of a Virginia gentry and strategic marriages to elite Virginia-born women further cemented the self-sufficiency and difference felt by the elite. Moreover, the idea of parliamentary tyranny through legislation like the Stamp Act and Boston Port Bill threatened Virginian patriarchy and the right of all elite men to directly control and govern their dependents. As a result, men in Virginia would begin to implement new aspects of patriarchy and masculinity less akin to that of Great Britain and more tied to their own colony's society and needs.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Brown, *Good Wives*, 249.

CHAPTER 2: The Collapse of Aristocratic Gentlemanliness

On the 24th of May 1775, Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, summoned delegate Peyton Randolph home for a meeting with the General Assembly. Randolph left Congress for Virginia that morning with John Hancock elected to serve as president in his place. In many ways, Peyton Randolph's submission to royal authority and his removal from Congress symbolized the conclusion of aristocratic gentlemanliness's dominance among Virginian men. While the aristocratic form of manhood did not completely disappear, its fading allowed other constructions of masculinity to emerge and evolve on the continental stage. Military and intellectual manhood emerged as new forms of masculinity that evidenced the transformation of Virginia itself.⁸¹

Aristocratic gentlemanliness prized restraint, submission to royal authority, and patriarchal control over one's family and community. Other constructions of manhood reflected some characteristics of aristocratic gentlemanliness and the legacy of elite landowning gentlemen never disappeared from the landscape, but newer understandings of manliness rejected submission and restraint in relation to Great Britain. Military manhood praised physical strength, bravery, and glory as important markers of masculine behavior, using arms and violence to reject royal control. Men earned glory in challenging British soldiers' masculinity on the battlefield. The Enlightenment fueled a new type of intellectual masculinity in which men wrote on natural laws and self-determination to display manhood. Enlightenment masculinity overtly challenged royal authority, like military masculinity, but

⁸¹ Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 24 May 1775, 34 vols. (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1904-1937), 2: 58-59.

enlightened men used thought and reason instead of violence to showcase detestation of Great Britain.⁸²

Virginia patriarchy stood as the epitome of masculinity in the colony's society. Planter men maintained order in Virginia largely by controlling their dependents at home. Elite men in the Chesapeake kept their own homes in order and isolated their families from immorality and unpleasant behavior. Planters then extended their sphere of power to the local level through political participation. Just like their wives, children, and slaves, gentlemen knew that lower-class men were vulnerable to passion and depravity. Both within their homes and out in the community, planter men embodied male virtue, the opposite of vice. Virtuous men practiced moderation, self-sacrifice, public service, and reciprocity—necessary behavior for any citizen. In fact, reciprocity and balance were crucial to gentry society, and men tracked social transactions in their diaries after events ranging from large gatherings to cordial visits. By embodying the qualities of virtue and possessing the race, gender, and wealth to be citizens and patriarchs, planter men controlled their family and local politics in Virginia.⁸³

Because planters were responsible for molding their sons—and sometimes, other male kin—into elite, virtuous gentlemen, fathers took great care in indoctrinating their sons

⁸² Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) 13-14; Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 97; Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs* 13, no. 1(1987): 44; Dorothy Twohig, "The Making of George Washington," in *George Washington and the Virginia Backcountry*, ed. Warren R. Hofstra (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1998), 10; Hannah Sphan, "Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment," in *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Francis D. Cogliano (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 366.

⁸³ Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 11, 17, 19.

in the culture and practice of patriarchy. Part of becoming an elite patriarch meant embracing life outside the plantation house and engaging in the public male sphere. Boys as young as five or six accompanied their fathers on social visits to neighbors, church, the county court, and taverns. Visiting—and the freedom of movement it entailed—showed boys that as men, they had dominion in both the home and community. Freedom of movement extended as boys moved into adolescence and acted as messengers for their households, sometimes spending days away from home conducting business on behalf of their fathers. Young men also looked to their fathers when seeking an education. Not only did one's education affect his economic and political prospects, it also preserved or elevated his social status. Moreover, a good education indicated self-improvement through virtue and intellect, an important goal in building a reputation. A reputation of virtue, honor, and discipline coupled with education and social contacts opened a gateway to politics and control over colonial affairs. This upbringing from childhood to young adulthood constructed by planter men transformed young boys into independent, adult patriarchs. Peyton Randolph, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson's understandings of masculinity were all based on this aristocratic patriarchy. Planter gentlemen raised these three men to be patriarchs, but each varied in the degree to which this upbringing shaped their behavior in 1775.⁸⁴

Peyton Randolph assumed an older, model of manhood that began to fade in the face of revolution. Aristocratic gentlemen during Randolph's time were wealthy, well-educated, mild-mannered servants to the community who restrained emotions. While Randolph's aristocratic construction of connecting masculinity with submission and stoicism did not

⁸⁴ Smith, *Inside the Great House*, 83-84, 88-89, 92, 97.

completely disappear, it became overshadowed as Virginians restructured what it meant to be a man in 1775.⁸⁵

After the conflict with Great Britain escalated to armed violence, restraint became a marker of cowardice, not masculinity. Virginians displaying heroism and glory in resisting authority embodied a new, military masculinity. Men joining the military in the eighteenth century gained social position and displayed masculinity through bravery. While older constructions of aristocratic gentlemanliness remained in men like George Washington, military battles, such as the siege at Boston in 1775—and the glory that followed—supplanted Washington’s identity as a gentleman with one as a military commander, connecting his manhood to his military might.⁸⁶

Men who sought to express displeasure with Great Britain without resorting to violence took up their pens, writing petitions, grievances, and declarations to British authority. Virginians raised with Lockean notions of education and freshly ingrained with Enlightenment principles through exposure to foreign ideas and literature, openly expressed their passions against the king. A refusal to restrain tempers set these enlightened men apart from those basing masculinity on aristocratic constructions. Not enlisting in the military also made these men different from previous Virginian expressions of manhood. Instead of submission or armed conflict, men like Thomas Jefferson used their intellect and reason to showcase themselves as masculine beings. Jefferson’s journey through Enlightenment ideas—in the form of literature and education—cultivated his understanding of the world and

⁸⁵ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 13-14.

⁸⁶ Bloch, “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America,” 44; John Gilbert McCurdy, “Gentlemen and Soldiers: Competing Visions of Manhood in Early Jamestown,” in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: University Press, 2011), 13.

what it meant to be a man. Passionately informing George III that, “The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time” allowed Jefferson to resist British authority and prove his manhood equal to that of George Washington without military enlistment.⁸⁷

Peyton Randolph, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and their fellow Virginians saw massive disruptions to their gender constructions in 1775. When the meanings of “Englishman” and “American” changed in response to conflicts with Great Britain, the roots of masculinity in Virginia fluctuated. These fluctuations took various forms from the older aristocratic gentlemanliness to military to intellectual as Virginian men were pulled in two different directions: one toward the consistency of older societal ideas and another toward new political opportunities brought by conflict with Great Britain.⁸⁸

On the 21st of April, only two days after shots were fired at Lexington and Concord—and almost a week before Virginia received the distressing news—a group of furious Virginians confronted Lord Dunmore at the Governor’s Palace in Williamsburg. The head of Virginia’s delegation and president of the First Continental Congress, Peyton Randolph, led the group to Dunmore’s door. Randolph’s group had just arrived from the courthouse where they convinced an angry mob to confront Dunmore in front of the Governor’s Palace instead of storming the residence. That very morning, while following Lord Dunmore’s direction, British soldiers raided Williamsburg’s magazine and removed the gunpowder. Virginians were outraged because by seizing the gunpowder, Lord Dunmore removed the men’s right to the armed defense of their property and of their families, an egregious assault on their role as

⁸⁷ Spahn, “Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment,” 366; Thomas Jefferson, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774; reprint, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), 122.

⁸⁸ Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, 8.

patriarchs. Peyton Randolph's desire to quell the mob in front of the Palace stemmed from older constructions of manhood shaped in previous decades.⁸⁹

Born in 1721, mid-eighteenth century aristocratic notions of manhood shaped Peyton Randolph's attitudes during the revolution. The second son of Sir John and Lady Susannah Randolph, Peyton Randolph led a privileged and refined life. He received an education in law with schooling in both Virginia and London—education abroad was the marker of a wealthy gentleman. Tied to obligations and deference, men during Randolph's time submitted to their superiors and gracefully accepted all duties put upon them. The aristocratic gentlemen of Virginia also placed great emphasis on economic participation. Essential to expressions of masculinity, economic self-sufficiency and productivity through land ownership marked a man as a good patriarch to his family, and his economic independence meant he was truly free and financially beholden to no one. Being dependent on anyone, financially or otherwise, kept a man from being fully masculine, likening him to a woman or slave.⁹⁰

The Virginia family served as a microcosm for the political system, with the father as head and patriarch to his wife, children, and slaves. However, in the community, an ideal man in the early and mid-eighteenth century knew his place, behaved pleasantly, performed his duties loyally, and reigned in his passions and temper. Randolph's actions in the

⁸⁹ John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988) 1.

⁹⁰ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 13; "Peyton Randolph," Colonial Williamsburg, <http://www.history.org/almanack/people/bios/biorapey.cfm> (Accessed 1 November 2012); Jessica Choppin Roney, "'Effective Men' and Early Volunteer Associations in Philadelphia, 1725-1775," in Foster, ed., *New Men*, 161. Upper-class men in the eighteenth century abhorred debt and dependence. Placing debtors in English and American prisons further evidenced what Jay Fliegelman calls a "revulsion against dependence." Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 27. Jan Lewis has referred to dependence as "a cause for shame, apology, and anxiety" for planters in eighteenth-century Virginia in her book *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 109.

community reflected a commitment to duty and deference. At the age of twenty-six, Randolph became a vestryman for the Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg and was appointed to the House of Burgesses the following year. In both capacities, he served his fellow colonists loyally and submitted to the authority of his political and religious superiors, reinforcing his aristocratic gentlemanliness.⁹¹

Thus, the Peyton Randolph who stood in front of the Governor's Palace on the 21st of April 1775 understood both his duty to the angry citizenry and his fate and place in society under the royal governor. In fulfilling his obligations to the people he was appointed to protect, Randolph had to be certain that Dunmore knew he went too far, and could not simply ignore the incident at the magazine. But violence against the governor did not fit Randolph's definition of proper masculine behavior under his older, aristocratic understandings of manhood and honor and could, "produce effects, which God only knows the consequence of."⁹² Actions and reactions were also limited as Randolph and other newly elected delegates prepared to depart for Philadelphia and the inaugural meeting of the Second Continental Congress. The mob demanded the gunpowder's return, telling Dunmore it belonged to Virginia, not King George III. In response, Dunmore assured them that if powder were needed, it would be returned to the magazine. To avoid violence, Peyton Randolph and other

⁹¹ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 12, 13-14; "Peyton Randolph."

⁹² Randolph quoted in Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783*, 3. Like Randolph, Dunmore did not want a confrontation. In fact, he thought the display of force at the magazine would shock dissenters into submission and the rage with which Virginians reacted left *him* surprised. To Virginians, Dunmore's raid on the magazine marked the beginning of a military invasion, in which he and the king would strip the citizenry of their manhood. In reality, Dunmore simply acted on orders from England to "seize any munitions brought into the colonies . . ." Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783*, 1-3.

elders of Williamsburg accepted Dunmore's claim, calmed the mob, and instructed everyone to return home.⁹³

Following the raid on the magazine, Randolph and his fellow delegates hesitated to leave their colony, and took care to prevent further armed uprisings before departing. On the 28th of April, Virginia received the terrible news of Lexington and Concord and learned that soldiers seized New England's arms and prominent men. For Virginians, the similarity to the raid on their magazine the previous week was alarmingly coincidental. Before leaving Virginia, Peyton Randolph again dissuaded colonists from violence in Fredericksburg, calming a force of mustered men. In Randolph's mind, a man guarded his anger and adhered to proper manners outside his home. Attempts at violence against the governor were not only taboo, but also unseemly for honorable men.⁹⁴

On the 10th of May, the Second Continental Congress began by once again unanimously electing Peyton Randolph their president. However, Randolph barely remained in Congress two weeks because in Virginia, Lord Dunmore attempted to get his colony under control. At the beginning of the month, Dunmore wrote to General Thomas Gage and Vice Admiral Samuel Graves of Great Britain asking for both military and naval support. While awaiting their reply, Dunmore attempted to reason with his angry citizenry, recalling Peyton Randolph home for a General Assembly meeting.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 3-4; Elizabeth Cometti, *Social Life in Virginia During the War for Independence* (Williamsburg: Virginian Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1978), 2.

⁹⁵ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 10 May 1775, 2:12. Thirty-Four Volumes; Terrence Leon Mahan, *Virginia Reaction to British Policy, 1763-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1960), Microfilm, M-1033, 304. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Hailed as a hero upon his arrival by fellow Virginians, Peyton Randolph proceeded to the assembly meeting with Dunmore on the 1st of June. Dunmore addressed the assembly expressing the belief that, “the disputes, which have unhappily raged between the mother country and the colonies [will come] to a good end . . .”⁹⁶ Dunmore went on to speculate that “your well-founded grievances, properly represented, will meet with that attention and regard [from His Majesty] which are so justly due to them . . .”⁹⁷ Given Dunmore’s raid on the magazine and requests for naval support in April, Randolph probably heard the conciliatory speech with great suspicion. Yet, Randolph likely hoped Dunmore’s words were true because reconciliation with Great Britain ensured continuity and stability in Virginia’s political and economic affairs, and could prevent further challenges to royal authority. Subsequent events in Virginia that spring and summer proved any suspicions of Dunmore valid. Moreover, as Dunmore’s actions continued to provoke Virginians, Randolph’s older beliefs in submission to superiors and guarded tempers became increasingly irrelevant.⁹⁸

In June of 1775, the last hopes for Virginia to reconcile with her royal governor were lost. On a weekend shortly after Dunmore’s speech to the assembly, a small group of men broke into the newly booby-trapped Williamsburg magazine. After tripping the spring, a shotgun injured three of the men. Virginians were outraged. The usually moderate Edmund Pendleton—with similar ideas of masculinity to Peyton Randolph—said upon hearing the news that if the three men died, “assassination might be in order.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ John Murray, Fourth Earl of Dunmore, *Speech to the General Assembly at Williamsburg*. 1 June 1775, Microfilm, One page, M-1561. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783*, 41-42.

⁹⁹ Pendleton quoted in *Ibid.*, 42.

Over the next few days, skirmishes and incidents amongst Virginians increased and Dunmore retreated to one of the newly arrived ships off the coast. Prior to Dunmore's flight, colonists in Virginia held three different opinions regarding rebellion against the Crown. One group of Virginians wanted to take action against the king and ponder consequences later, while a second group of colonists were too afraid to take any action. A third group of Virginians took "the middle way" wanting to "draw all together to a Steddy [sic], tho' Active Point of Defense."¹⁰⁰ Peyton Randolph however wanted to explore all means of reconciliation before taking up arms against England, and prioritized the preservation and continuity of business and government above all else. Aristocratic gentlemen practiced moderation in all things, and Randolph carried the idea of moderate behavior into his politics on the conflict with Great Britain. He never acted to catalyze tensions with the mother country, but also restrained himself from openly disagreeing with other delegates in Congress about relations with the king. However, public opinion of Dunmore plummeted after his flight, even among those previously loyal to him, as Virginians now knew he had summoned the vessels stationed off the coast of their colony. In leaving Virginia, Dunmore left the colony without a government. While he would attempt to govern and issue orders from the coast, a royal government with colony-wide control no longer existed. However, Virginians organized at the county level by forming various committees. In doing so, Virginians directly elected local

¹⁰⁰ Edmund Pendleton to Joseph Chew, letter, 15 June 1775, in *The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendleton, 1734-1803*, comp. and ed. David John Mays, 2 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 1:110.

officials—excluding previous appointments of Burgesses—for the first time in the colony’s history.¹⁰¹

Without the governance of Lord Dunmore, Peyton Randolph and his fellow delegates could assume leadership of the colony and continue her role in negotiations with the king. In August, Randolph’s fellow delegates—Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, and Richard Bland—joined him in Williamsburg while the Third Virginia Convention was still in session. With Congress reconvening in September, the Convention decided to vote on who would represent Virginia. Unfortunately, the Convention could not simply send the same seven men who had journeyed to Philadelphia earlier that year, but the men who traveled to Congress the previous year won reelection, with Patrick Henry and George Washington absent due to military service.¹⁰²

Less than two weeks after the new Virginia delegates were elected, George III declared the thirteen Atlantic colonies in a state of rebellion and treason, putting the delegates in even greater danger. That autumn, the Second Continental Congress took measures to protect itself and its citizenry. During the last weeks in September, Congress

¹⁰¹ Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783*, 42, 44; Edmund Pendleton to Joseph Chew, 15 June 1775, 1:110; John J. Reardon *Peyton Randolph 1721-1775: One Who Presided* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1982), 62, 70; Mahan, *Virginia Reaction to British Policy, 1763-1776*, 287-288,

¹⁰² “Friday, 11 August 1775 Third Virginia Convention Proceedings of Twentieth Day of Session,” in *Revolutionary Virginia The Road to Independence Volume III: The Breaking Storm and the Third Convention, 1775 A Documentary Record*, comp. and ed. by Robert L. Scribner, 7 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 3:417-20, 418. Edmund Pendleton asked to be excused from his nomination to Congress because his health was in decline while both Patrick Henry and George Washington were excused due to their alternate public service positions in the military; Bloch, “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America,” 24, 33.

created several committees to protect the colonies and maintain the citizenry's everyday lives as best they could, including people's participation in a mercantile economy.¹⁰³

Great Britain established a mercantile economy in Virginia as a network for mining resources from the colony for manufacture in the parent country. Merchants contributed greatly to the common wealth of the colony and held relatively high stations within the community. However, most merchants lacked fixed capital because they dealt in a system of debt and credit. Credit terms and conventions varied among merchants depending upon the goods being purchased and rates often fluctuated with market conditions. Despite loathing all forms of debt and dependence, planter men participated in mercantilism because Virginia's high production of one seasonal cash crop, tobacco, left most planter men lacking other goods and materials necessary for daily life. Until crops came in and sold at markets, men needed credit from merchants to purchase foodstuffs and other raw materials. Accumulated wealth from their plantation crops allowed planter men to maintain lesser levels of debt than lower-class farmers, enabling them to retain superiority as patriarchs and independent men.¹⁰⁴

In a world that revolved around raw materials and markets, boycotts served as powerful political statements. Boycotts enacted through the Articles of Association in 1774 greatly damaged colonial economies, and Congress' attempts to solve the problem both reflected and alienated Peyton Randolph's aristocratic gentlemanliness. On the 22nd of September, Congress formed a committee to report on trade conditions in the colonies with Peyton Randolph representing Virginia. Randolph's aristocratic gentlemanliness placed great

¹⁰³ Scribner, comp., *Revolutionary Virginia The Road to Independence*, 3:xxviii.

¹⁰⁴ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 167; Jacob M. Price, "What Did Merchants Do? Reflections on British Overseas Trade, 1660-1790," *Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 2 (1989): 273, 279; Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, 110.

significance on economic aspirations and an active role in Virginia's economy, making him an ideal reporter on Virginia's trade. His participation in a mercantile economy aided his understanding of debt, credit, and available resources in Virginia. Moreover, his long-time residence in Virginia and his extended stay in the colony that summer gave him firsthand accounts not as readily available to fellow delegates. The committee's report was ready on the 2nd of October and recommended, "That the Regulations respecting Imports and Exports agreed to by this and the preceding Congress ought to be continued and observed. And further that no Lumber, Hides, Leather, live stock, or Deer Skins, should be exported from these Colonies to any part of the World."¹⁰⁵ Cutting off prized colonial items such as lumber and deerskins would surely be felt in Great Britain and her other colonies. It seemed a fitting punishment for a tyrannical parent. With these resolutions, delegates openly expressed their anger with Great Britain, illustrating a further decline in the dominance of aristocratic gentlemanliness.¹⁰⁶

On the 22nd of October, Peyton Randolph had a stroke and died during the night. The Virginians were devastated. The *Virginia Gazette* announced Randolph's death, displaying his strong reputation in the colony, "We have just received, from Philadelphia, the menlancholy [sic] news of the death of our amiable speaker, the honourable [sic] PEYTON RANDOLPH, esquire."¹⁰⁷ Massachusetts delegate John Adams' wrote extensively about Randolph's passing. Adams' remarks reflect the transition in masculinity symbolized by

¹⁰⁵ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2 October 1775, 3:268. Furthermore, the committee recommended fortifying the roads in order to trade by land with sister colonies. Increasing trade within the thirteen rebellious colonies helped decrease some damage done by the boycotts.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 September 1775, 3: 259.

¹⁰⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, 2 November 1775, 3.

Randolph's death, ". . . this Gentleman Sustained very deservedly One of the first American Characters . . . Mr. Randolph was as firm, stable and consistent a Patriot as any here—the Loss must be very great to Virginia in Particular and the Continent in general."¹⁰⁸ Randolph's aristocratic gentlemanliness faded as men largely abandoned belief in submission as a marker of virtue. A physical understanding of masculinity that resisted restrictive authority through military means overshadowed the duty-oriented construction of manhood embodied by Peyton Randolph. George Washington became a new representative of Virginian manhood in 1775 with his dominating physical stature and military service.¹⁰⁹

The new contrast between manliness and submission underscored the changing meaning of masculinity in 1775. However, aristocratic constructions of masculinity did not completely disappear. George Washington, while praised for his military might, also embodied older ideals of honor and virtue in his manners and politics. But when armed conflict with Great Britain began, military glory and heroism overshadowed the formerly prized qualities of obedience and candor. Washington's military actions in 1775 embodied a newer, war-oriented understanding of manhood. Enlistment in the military served as a path to gaining the prized attributes of honor, fame, and public service, creating opportunities for the non-elite. The self-sacrifice and glory that came with military involvement advanced a man's social position in society, getting him closer to the status of patriarch. George Washington used enlistment during the French and Indian War to increase his social standing, and his

¹⁰⁸ John Adams to James Warren, 23 October 1775, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, ed. Paul H. Smith, et al., 26 vols. (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1976-2002), 2: 232-33.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 232; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 15; Elizabeth Cometti, *Social Life in Virginia During the War for Independence* (Williamsburg: Virginian Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1978), 16.

military history came to be a fundamental part of his identity and reputation in Virginia, both then and during the Revolution.¹¹⁰

Born only a decade after Peyton Randolph, George Washington's childhood and young adult life reflected a European, aristocratic ethos, but his adulthood, largely composed of military service, did not. As a result, Washington's ideas of manliness blended aristocratic gentlemanliness and military manhood. His father, Augustine Washington was an entrepreneur and successful planter in Virginia. Augustine Washington died when George was a child, and he had trouble relating to his mother, practically making him an orphan when his father passed. However, as was common in colonial Virginia, George Washington sought a surrogate family by connecting to other men, mainly in the form of his half-brother Lawrence.¹¹¹

As a young adult, Washington subscribed to masculine public service and piety, acting as a vestry for his church—like Randolph—and a justice on his home court in Fairfax County, like Edmund Pendleton in Caroline County. His education, taking place solely in Virginia, marked a difference from fellow planters' sons who were often educated in Europe. Without a classic European education, Washington likely lacked a connection to the father country that men like fellow Congressman Peyton Randolph experienced during their time abroad. However, his half-brother and role model, Lawrence, was educated in England, further preventing Washington from being completely divorced from ideals of aristocratic

¹¹⁰ Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," 44; Twohig, "The Making of George Washington," 8,10.

¹¹¹ Twohig, "The Making of George Washington," 6, 7.

gentlemanliness. With the help of Lawrence, George Washington created social contacts and maneuvered in Virginia's highest social circles before reaching his teen years.¹¹²

Washington's path diverted further from a domestic, landowning aristocracy when he served in the Virginia militia during the French and Indian War. The George Washington who served in the militia was not the cautious, experienced man who served during the Revolution. A brash, callous colonel, Washington gained his high military rank thanks to social connections through his brother, Lawrence. Almost immediately after his appointment, Washington journeyed westward to build a fort near the Ohio River in order to prevent the French from laying claim to lands the British believed was theirs. The governor selected Washington for this task because of the frontier experience he gained as a surveyor in previous years. Surveyors transformed "savage" territories into "civilized" lands fit for European use and improvement. Thus, surveyors acted as agents of British civilization, and Washington's military excursion west served as an armed extension of this project, protecting British lands from the French so they could be properly utilized and grow the empire's power.¹¹³

When Washington approached the Ohio River, he discovered a fort already built by the French, and a small group of fifty French troops nearby scouting for Native alliances. Instead of waiting and gathering information on the troops, Washington ordered an ambush,

¹¹² Taylor Stoermer, "'What Manner of Man am I?': The Political Career of George Washington Before the Revolution," in *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward G. Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 121, 126; Twohig, "The Making of George Washington," 6, 7.

¹¹³ John E. Ferling, "School for Command: Young George Washington and the Virginia Regiment," in Hofstra, ed., *George Washington and the Virginia Backcountry*, 196, 198-199; J. Frederick Fausz, "'Engaged in Enterprises Pregnant with Terror': George Washington's Formative Years among the Indians," in Hofstra, ed., *George Washington and the Virginia Backcountry*, 121-122.

which proved disastrous. While it is likely that tensions between Great Britain and France would have erupted in violence eventually, Washington's actions catalyzed the clash and his ambush of the French resulted in the first skirmish of the French and Indian War.

Washington lost one-third of his soldiers in the catastrophe, surrendering the rest of his men in an agreement with the French that allowed him to return to Virginia. He arrived home an embarrassed, vanquished commander. Washington returned to battle within a year and by 1757, he had survived several skirmishes. Despite his luck, Washington still lacked experience and was often criticized for poor and rash judgment as a military leader.

However, Washington learned from his experiences during the French and Indian War, and the skills he gained in communicating with Burgesses would benefit him greatly in his dealings with Congress during the Revolution. After his military service during the war, Washington's compatriots elected him to the House of Burgesses in 1758.¹¹⁴ He continued to represent Fairfax County when, in 1774, Washington brought the Fairfax County Resolves to Williamsburg for the First Virginia Convention and was elected to serve in Congress.¹¹⁵

Politics was not a lifelong career for Washington. After the violence of Lexington and Concord in April of 1775, exercising physical might and joining the military demonstrated one's manhood. During the French and Indian War, the frontier served as a stage for

¹¹⁴ Stoermer, "'What Manner of Man am I?'" 121. As opposed to Peyton Randolph who was elected to the House of Burgesses after service to the community and exhibiting a pleasant demeanor, Washington used his military experience as a campaign tool for his election as a Burgess. This reflects a change in understandings of what it means to be a community patriarch. Washington's masculinity had been displayed through armed force and that feat got him into the political arena.

¹¹⁵ Ferling, "School for Command," 198-199; Fausz, "'Engaged in Enterprises Pregnant with Terror,'" 132-133, 134; Twohig, "The Making of George Washington," 11. Among the several resolutions, the citizens of Fairfax County recommended non-importation of British goods and slaves and a non-exportation of raw materials such as lumber from the colonies to the parent country; Fairfax County Resolves, Alexandria, VA, 18 July 1774, in *The Papers of George Washington*, 10: 119-128, 124-25, 127.

colonists to demonstrate their manhood on par with British soldiers. Conflict with Great Britain allowed men in the colonies to challenge the masculinity of British soldiers with their own military might. Men all over the colonies took up arms in defense of their homes and their dependents. However, their efforts were largely unorganized and undisciplined. Congress attempted to stem the chaos through committees and munitions. On the 10th of June, Congress assembled a committee “to devise ways and means to introduce the manufacture of salt petre” for gunpowder, and four days later, they resolved that “six companies of expert riflemen, be immediately raised in Pennsylvania, two in Maryland, and two in Virginia . . .”¹¹⁶ Fellow colonists could now display their manhood through enlistment in the military, but the citizenry could not organize and lead themselves into battle. Congress needed to elect a gentleman exhibiting the qualities of military masculinity to lead the masses.¹¹⁷

On the 15th of June, Congress unanimously elected George Washington to lead the continental forces against the British. Washington was an ideal choice. A prominent, propertied Virginian with military experience, he embodied the adult status that was the hallmark of eighteenth-century masculinity. Washington’s response to his election reflected the prized qualities of honor and humility reflected in older, aristocratic gentlemanliness. But his record of military service also represented the new construction of military manhood. Even Washington’s dress—when in Congress he wore his Fairfax Independence Company of Volunteers uniform—displayed his physical strength and military authority. He stood from his chair in Carpenters Hall to address Congress and said, “Tho’ I am truly sensible of the

¹¹⁶ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 10 June 1775, 14 June 1775, 2: 89.

¹¹⁷ McCurdy, “Gentlemen and Soldiers,” 13.

high Honour [sic] done me, in this Appointment, yet I feel great distress, from a consciousness that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important Trust . . .”¹¹⁸ Washington went on to accept his position in “the glorious cause” and emphasized to Congress that, “But, lest some unlucky event should happen, unfavourable [sic] to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered, by every Gentleman in the room, that I, this day, declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the Command I am honored with.”¹¹⁹ For men of honor, reputation was a guiding force in everyday actions and interactions. Washington’s acceptance of his post as General reflected his need to protect his honor among the fellow gentlemen of Congress.¹²⁰

That night, Connecticut delegate Silas Deane wrote to his wife regarding Washington’s appointment. His remarks displayed the hybrid of aristocratic gentlemanliness and military masculinity embodied by Washington, “Let Our youth look up to Their Man as a pattern to form themselves by, who Unites the bravery of the Soldier, with the most consummate Modesty & Virtue.”¹²¹ Indeed, Washington held onto the old political culture and ideas of manhood reflected by men like Peyton Randolph due to his upbringing. But during his tenure as Commander of the Continental Army, he asserted himself as a military man and embodied the qualities of heroic courage and strength that characterized military masculinity in 1775.

As commander of the entire Continental Army, Washington gained the authority and large numbers of soldiers his ineptitude during the French and Indian War had denied him.

¹¹⁸ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*. 16 June 1775, 2: 92.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 June 1775, 2: 91; Stoermer, ““What Manner of Man am I?”” 134.

¹²¹ Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, 16 June 1775, in Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 2: 494.

Now older and more experienced, Washington no longer made impulsive decisions with his men, and instead worked to make sure his soldiers had necessary provisions, marking him as a worthy commander. Much like providing for his own family, Washington kept in constant correspondence with Congress while commanding Continental forces, and made varied requests for soldiers dependent upon him for survival.¹²² Washington also wrote asking for counsel on military matters. On the 13th of October, Congress received a letter from Washington asking for their “special Advice, & Direction” after discovering—through interrogation—that Dr. Benjamin Church, director of the Continental Army Hospital, was working with the British.¹²³ The day after receiving Washington’s letter, Congress ordered that Church be held in custody for “holding a correspondence with the enemy.”¹²⁴ It would be winter before Congress decided what to do about treason in the Continental ranks.¹²⁵ However, Washington’s behavior exemplified his military masculinity. Not only had he interrogated a prisoner and retrieved valuable information, he also acted as a good soldier by deferring to his superiors in Congress before taking action against Dr. Church.¹²⁶

¹²² Washington wrote Congress dozens of times requesting supplies, munitions, medicines, and money for his soldiers throughout the war. For more, see George Washington to John Hancock, 21 September 1775, and 5 October 1775, in *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series Volume 2, September-December 1775*, ed. Philander D. Chase and Beverly H. Runge, 20 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987), 2: 24-30, 98-101.

¹²³ George Washington to John Hancock, 5 October 1775, in Chase and Runge, eds., *The Papers of George Washington*, 2: 99-100.

¹²⁴ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 13 October 1775, 3: 293.

¹²⁵ Through Dr. Church’s betrayal, Washington recognized the serious problem of an untrustworthy army. In response to his fears, Congress expanded the rules and restrictions for soldiers, which mostly included punishments for “treacherous correspondence” with the enemy; *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 7 November 1775, 3: 330-31.

¹²⁶ Fausz, “Engaged in Enterprises Pregnant with Terror,” 136.

In the second week of November, Congress directed General Washington to destroy all docks, ammunition, and ships in Nova Scotia “belonging to the enemy.”¹²⁷ In response, Washington dispatched some of his army to aid a fellow officer in demolishing British docks in Nova Scotia. Colonists heard of the army’s seizure and hailed Washington as a brilliant commander for protecting the people’s rights and lives. Because of Washington’s status as a hero, Britain’s reaction “to proceed [against the Colonies] as in the case of actual rebellion” motivated colonists to take action against the Crown.¹²⁸ Residents already affected by British actions and troop sieges were “at last determined to prevent . . . a repetition thereof . . . by fitting out armed vessels and ships of force.”¹²⁹ In executing a successful military campaign, Washington recruited more soldiers to serve in his ranks.¹³⁰

Shortly before adjourning for Christmas, Congress stepped up their defense with an attack. According to reports, the citizens of Boston suffered greatly due to its seizure by British troops the previous year. After Boston’s capture, Congress debated whether or not to attack, but only wanted to execute an offensive if victory was possible. Washington had been in Boston since July observing and training the Continental Army. Thus, he could offer Congress first-hand advice on the situation. He wrote to Congress of the military situation, “when we have powder to sport with—I think, if the Congress resolve on the execution of the proposal made, relative to the town of Boston—it can be done.”¹³¹ Congress ultimately

¹²⁷ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 10 November 1775, 3: 348.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1775, 3: 372.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Robert J. Allison, “George Washington and the Siege of Boston,” in *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward G. Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 148.

¹³¹ George Washington to John Hancock, 18 December 1775, in Chase and Runge, eds., *The Papers of George Washington*, 2: 574.

heeded Washington's counsel "after a most serious Debate" and ordered him to attack Boston only if it could be executed quickly and successfully.¹³²

The siege at Boston began in December and bled into the early months of 1776. Both Continental and British forces had to contend with a fierce winter and frozen ground. However, overnight on the 4th of March, Washington's forces built wooden fortifications for troops and artillery, giving the Continental Army great advantage. Of the amazing feat, British General William Howe reported that, "The Rebels have done more in one night than my whole army would have done in a month."¹³³ To produce such remarkable results from an exhausted and freezing group of soldiers required the strong military presence of Washington. His embodiment of the challenge to arbitrary authority—represented by Howe and his men—along with Washington's strict command also likely motivated his men to succeed in such a daunting task.¹³⁴

Washington surrounded Boston with American artillery and on the 17th of March, Howe and his men fled Boston, not having officially surrendered, and headed toward New York.¹³⁵ Over the next week, Washington and his men cooperated with magistrates and Bostonian officials to set up a civil government bringing a "lively joy" to the exhausted

¹³² George Washington to John Hancock, 22 December 1775, in Chase and Runge, eds., *The Papers of George Washington*, 2: 589. This resolution would not be revealed to the public as others had through published editions of congressional journals; *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 22 December 1775, 3: 444-45.

¹³³ General William Howe quoted in Allison, "George Washington and the Siege of Boston," 149.

¹³⁴ Allison, "George Washington and the Siege of Boston," 149.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 150. The military conflict at Boston was utilized here to illustrate Washington's transformation into a military hero and thus the cementing of his masculine identity to physical, militant prowess. For more details on the siege at Boston, see Allen French, *The Siege of Boston* (New York: MacMillan, 1911) and Richard Frothingham, *History of the Siege of Boston, and of the Battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill* (New York: De Capo Press, 1970).

city.¹³⁶ The town of Boston glorified Washington as a hero—an important marker of military masculinity and a significant transition from his aristocratic identity as a modest gentleman. For liberating the city, Washington earned a gold medal from Congress and an honorary degree from Harvard University. Washington’s identity, now inextricably tied to his military history, shaped his public image and his sense of manhood. Men throughout Virginia who joined the militia or became soldiers and officers of the Continental Army possessed a similar understanding of identity and masculinity.¹³⁷

Those who did not fight or wished to express their discontent for Great Britain without violence subscribed to a different construction of manliness in 1775. Men who pushed back against British tyranny through thought and the written word at this time did so using Enlightenment principles. Thomas Jefferson embodied this newer ideology. In June of 1775, Thomas Jefferson, a thirty-two year old Virginian statesman, arrived to Congress as a delegate from that colony. Jefferson subscribed to even fewer remnants of aristocratic gentlemanliness than did Washington. Also educated solely in Virginia, Jefferson first came to Williamsburg to attend the College of William and Mary and study law in 1760. His education, grounded primarily in humanities and critical thought, held him in high esteem as a Virginian gentleman—a remaining virtue from the era of Peyton Randolph. Being widely read and educated in Lockean theory also allowed Jefferson to develop a new understanding of himself as a citizen of the world, a trait common to many Enlightenment thinkers. This

¹³⁶ “Observer in Boston” quoted in Allison, “George Washington and the Siege of Boston,” 150.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

recognition further informed Jefferson's understanding of events in 1775 and what constituted an appropriate response to Great Britain's actions in North America.¹³⁸

Nine years after first attending college, Jefferson's fellow Virginians elected him to serve in the House of Burgesses in June of 1769. In 1775, Jefferson's fellow Burgesses appointed him to Congress as a replacement for Peyton Randolph after Lord Dunmore summoned Randolph home the previous month. Peyton Randolph was a pinnacle of masculinity and honor in Virginia, and an appointment to replace him reflected Jefferson's importance to the elite. After reading his popular work, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, fellow Virginians considered Jefferson a valuable asset in rebellion against Great Britain and a protector of the colony. However, he embodied neither Randolph's aristocratic construction of masculinity, nor Washington's model of military manhood. Thomas Jefferson represented a younger, intellectual masculinity in 1775, using Enlightenment thought and his writings to reflect his manliness and openly express his passions.¹³⁹

Although a soft-spoken man, Jefferson's opinions were widely known in 1774. Not only did he condemn the Boston Port Bill in March of that year, he also expressed resistance against British authority through his writing, especially in *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. Written in 1774, Jefferson used *A Summary View* to articulate a masculine

¹³⁸ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 21 June 1775, 2: 101; "Thomas Jefferson," Colonial Williamsburg, <http://www.history.org/Almanack/people/jeffhdr.cfm> (Accessed 1 November 2012); Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Memorial Edition, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bengh, 20 vols. (Washington D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), 1:4; Cometti, *Social Life in Virginia During the War for Independence*, 2; Spahn, "Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment," 366.

¹³⁹ Lipscomb and Bengh, eds., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 4; *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 21 June 1775, 2: 101-102.

resistance to arbitrary royal authority through Enlightenment ideas. Jefferson's document laid out colonists' "complaints which are excited by many unwarrantable encroachments and usurpations" by the king and his ministry.¹⁴⁰ Jefferson grounded his writings in Enlightenment understandings of natural rights, proclaiming that all British citizens retained the same natural rights regardless of location, and believed that Great Britain violated these rights. Citizenship was inextricably linked to white, landowning men. Thus, when Jefferson spoke of British subjects and citizens, he spoke of manhood and its preservation. This public address allowed Jefferson to express his masculinity and resist submission without military involvement. In the 1770s, reason became a marker of male virtue as the Enlightenment swept through the colonies. Thus, in *A Summary View*, Jefferson proved his manliness in a different sphere by writing to George III "in the language of truth" without "expressions of servility."¹⁴¹ Truth, as well as the honor and reason originating from it, composed a crucial part of a man's code of conduct in Virginia and thus his masculinity. Jefferson's "truth" in *A Summary View* therefore identified him as an honorable and virtuous man.¹⁴²

With Jefferson's views in mind, Congress placed him on the committee responsible for drafting the "Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking Up Arms" only three days after his arrival in Philadelphia. By the first week in July, Thomas Jefferson had, with his fellow committee members, drafted the "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking up Arms" and on the 6th the committee considered the document. However, not everyone agreed with the draft as it stood. Unlike the previous year when Jefferson

¹⁴⁰ Jefferson, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, 105.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁴² Kristofer Ray, "Thomas Jefferson and *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*," in Cogliano, ed., *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, 33; Jefferson, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, 105.

concluded *A Summary View* by wishing “to establish fraternal love and harmony through the whole empire,” the Declaration expressed no desire for reconciliation with Great Britain.¹⁴³ The document was re-committed and according to Jefferson, the Declaration was “. . . too strong for [fellow committee member] Mr. [John] Dickinson. He still retained hope of reconciliation with the mother country, and was unwilling it should be lessened by offensive statements.”¹⁴⁴ Jefferson’s version of the Declaration discussed the Battle of Lexington and Concord, arguing that, “. . . they [British soldiers] made an unprovoked attack on the inhabitants of . . . Lexington, *murdered* eight of them on the spot and wounded many others.”¹⁴⁵ Jefferson’s eagerness to write a confrontational address showed his desire to separate from the Crown and his refusal to submit to royal authority. This document, also grounded in notions of natural rights and self-determination, showcased Jefferson as a man who openly expressed his passions with the pen. Ultimately, Jefferson’s draft was too confrontational and John Dickinson, the delegate from Pennsylvania who originally objected to Jefferson’s draft, penned the final, tamer version with Jefferson’s draft never laid before Congress.¹⁴⁶

In a very short time, Jefferson expressed his reason—and by extension, his virtue—openly in front of fellow Congressmen. His unrestrained passion in *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* and his draft of the “Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking Up Arms” marked him as an intellectual and formidable man. The lack of restraint in responding to royal authority—a far cry from Peyton Randolph’s stoic and submissive

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Jefferson quoted in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, July 1775, 2: 128.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2: 135. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 26 June 1775, 2: 107-108; 6 July 1775, 2: 127.

masculinity—characterized many of the younger men in Virginia. In the 1770s, these men became members of Virginia’s Conventions, Committees of Safety, Congressional delegations, and militias.

Gender constructions fluctuated greatly in 1775. Aristocratic notions of stern patriarchal authority, submission, and silence no longer dominated understandings of masculinity by the end of 1775. Peyton Randolph’s death symbolized the removal of aristocratic gentlemanliness as the dominant construction. After Lexington and Concord in April of 1775, Virginian men returned to the tradition of displaying their masculinity through armed conflict. While Washington’s acceptance of his post as General echoed older ideals of honor and humility, his success at the siege of Boston changed how others saw him as a man. No longer primarily seen as landed gentry, Washington became a military hero who resisted authority in 1775, representing a shift toward military masculinity with the onset of war. Cultural shifts during the eighteenth century produced a different construction of manhood among highly educated Virginians. Rejection of royal authority, grounded in Enlightenment thought and reason, occurred openly in the writing of pamphlets, letters, petitions, and declarations. Jefferson’s “Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking Up Arms” in 1775 represented a change to a passionate and unrestrained resistance to George III’s legitimacy and Great Britain’s actions in British North America.

Thomas Jefferson’s intellectual masculinity would be reflected on a much larger scale the following year with the *Declaration of Independence*. Even while Virginians moved away from submission and restraint, residual characteristics of aristocratic gentlemanliness remained with them. The Virginia delegation included men like Jefferson and Richard Henry

Lee, both young and boisterous when rebelling against George III's authority. However, both men were landed gentry and took active roles in the community before, during, and after their time in Congress. Thus, while aristocratic gentlemanliness faded from the foreground, young men in Virginia did not completely abandon European aristocratic ideals of patriarchy, and embraced domination over land, politics, and economics.

CHAPTER 3: The Origins of Southern Manhood

By 1776, a sense of powerlessness gripped the gentry of Virginia as British policy threatened their patriarchal power. Many Virginia revolutionaries were both conservative and radical hoping to inspire great change fighting against England in order to preserve a patriarchal system that benefited them. Richard Henry Lee and Thomas Jefferson embodied these characteristics as they challenged British imperial policy to uphold family legacies and local power. A sense of honor and virtue deeply entrenched in the men of Virginia was evolving into something uniquely southern, while simultaneously validating their resentment toward recent parliamentary acts. Ultimately traditionalists, southern men understood liberty and freedom as a right to self-determination through local patriarchy. They did not see liberty as a vehicle for overthrowing convention and political order. Lee and Jefferson, like so many others, worked to ensure the stability of old systems and maintain planter power by upholding traditional southern values. Southern life depended on cash crops, commerce, and access to western land, and its reliance on agrarianism and slave labor—along with the accompanying sense of honor and mastery—made the South emerge as a distinct region during the Revolution.¹⁴⁷

For Richard Henry Lee, 1768 proved tragic on multiple fronts. While hunting, Lee received an “unhappy wound” when his gun exploded, causing him to lose four fingers on his

¹⁴⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 31, 35; J. Kent McGaughey, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia: A Portrait of an American Revolutionary* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), xiii, xix; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South, 25th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 371; Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 121.

right hand.¹⁴⁸ The disfigurement and pain were traumatic. Lee faced more loss in December when his wife, Anne Aylet, died of pleurisy, leaving him injured with several children to look after. Like most southern planters, Lee mourned his losses but then sought ways to maintain or elevate his status because of them. While his hand hindered travel for a short time, Lee used the injury to his advantage once he reentered politics. He wore a black silk glove to hide his scars, and learned to use his hand in oratory, making gestures far more captivating and stirring for his audiences. Lee also overcame the loss of his wife by marrying the recently widowed—and wealthy—Anne Pinckard. The couple had five children together, further increasing Lee’s legacy. Always striving for southern honor and status, Richard Henry Lee turned tragedy into advantage, using his injury to increase his political gravitas and a second marriage to further propagate his family’s already impressive and long lineage.¹⁴⁹

Richard Henry Lee’s great-grandfather, Richard Lee, had arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in 1639 with almost nothing to his name save for the patronage of a few significant men. He became involved in the slave and fur trades and used the profits to buy land in Virginia and Maryland. In the twenty-five years after his arrival, Lee became one of the most powerful men in the colony. Before his death in 1664, Richard Lee built a transatlantic empire that became one of the most renowned dynasties in Virginia.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Richard Henry Lee to “A Gentleman of Influence in England,” 27 March 1768, in *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, ed., James Curtis Ballagh. 2 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 1: 27; McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia: A Portrait of an American Revolutionary*, 52.

¹⁴⁹ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 52, 56.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2, 9.

Shortly after Richard Lee's death his sons shifted the family's colonial interests from fur to tobacco. The Lees divided the family business along continental lines with one son heading the commercial interests in London while the others remained in Virginia to manage the colonial side of their empire. The family's Virginia port, Lee's Landing, served as one of the Crown's ports of call in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but their enterprise became imperiled a generation later after conflict with France ended the tobacco trade between the two empires. The embargo reduced the London firm into debt. The head of the firm at the time was Richard Lee III, Richard Henry Lee's uncle. Richard III fled debtors, causing his brother and Richard Henry Lee's father, Thomas Lee, to travel to England in an attempt to salvage the business. An important aspect—and pressure—of planter masculinity in the eighteenth century was the “weight of tradition” impressed upon rising generations.¹⁵¹ Southern parents introduced their children to terrors of shame and disgrace, which contrasted greatly with northerners' piety and conscience-building forms of child rearing. Failing previous generations of patriarchs by diminishing the family name served as a great source of fear for planter men and reflected a weakness of character. Fortunately, Thomas Lee located his brother and managed to rebuild the London firm.¹⁵²

The British side of the family's commercial empire did dissolve shortly after Thomas Lee's rescue when Richard Lee III died in 1718, leaving the London office without a manager. When the firm dissolved, Thomas Lee's reputation in Virginia faltered due to an overall lack of patronage and political power. With the loss of the England office, Lee knew

¹⁵¹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 119.

¹⁵² McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 1, 8, 9, 13,14; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 118, 119.

that in order to maintain a strong empire for future generations, focusing on his social position in the colony was crucial.¹⁵³

Thomas Lee set to constructing the important political and personal pillars of making himself an elite member of the planter class. He obtained a seat in the powerful House of Burgesses as a representative of Westmoreland County. A position as Burgess enabled him to gain influence and political standing in the colony. At home, he hosted an extravagant ball with many wealthy planters in attendance. An important masculine relationship, the host-guest relation allowed men to pursue place in society, display their honor and virtue, and confirm membership in the elite planter circle. Finally, like fellow aristocrats in Virginia, Thomas Lee took a well-connected and wealthy wife, Hannah Ludwell. These gentlemanly activities served as catalysts for further advancement. Lee became a vestryman of his church and a justice of the peace for Westmoreland County. An appointment to the Council of State, also known as the Governor's Council, where he gained large political influence and earned extra money to increase his landholdings and build a large plantation house that he named Stratford Hall. The family moved into the house in 1742, ten years after Richard Henry Lee was born.¹⁵⁴

Thus, by the time Hannah Ludwell Lee gave birth to her son Richard Henry in 1732, the Lees had become a powerful and influential legacy in colonial Virginia. As a boy on a plantation, Lee and his brothers had a larger freedom of movement than his sisters and often roamed the grounds, sometimes playing with slave children. Parents often discouraged this behavior when sons came into their early teens in order to maintain racial hierarchy and train

¹⁵³ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 14.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 16, 17.

their sons in the important skill of mastery. Richard Henry Lee's education was also formulaic amongst plantation children. He received tutelage as a child before traveling to England in 1748 to finish his education. Traveling marked an important transition in a young man's life into preparation for adulthood. Many planter men constantly traveled abroad or within the colonies to secure commercial interests, visit colleagues, or practice professions and politics. The ability to travel, especially for education, also signaled one's class.¹⁵⁵

In January of 1750, while still in England, Lee received the news of his mother's death, and his father followed in November of that year. Philip Ludwell Lee, Richard Henry's oldest brother and principle heir of his father was also in England at the time of Thomas and Hannah Lee's deaths. All of the Lee brothers needed to return to Virginia to settle their father's estate, but Richard Henry Lee stayed abroad to continue courting a local merchant's daughter. This decision struck at Philip Ludwell Lee's sense of propriety and family responsibility—important aspects of planter masculinity. By the mid-eighteenth century, family love in the South shifted to being conditional and based on reciprocity and obligation. Young men who failed to fulfill their duties often felt a withdraw of approval.¹⁵⁶ Philip Ludwell Lee reacted to his brother's decision in kind and in his rage broke off Richard Henry Lee's engagement. Customarily, young men at this time were permitted to choose their brides as long as their betrothed belonged to the same class. Philip Ludwell Lee, who proved to be a somewhat authoritarian estate manager, chose to display his power as head of

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 7, 17, 23, 102.

¹⁵⁶ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 15. As stated previously, elite parents did feel great affection for their children, but at the same time southern families shift to attaching honor and duty-bound strings to their relationships. Parents were still very loving with planter children who fulfilled obligations and duties to home and family. For more, see the honor-shame dynamic (which will be discussed later in this chapter) in Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honor*.

the family by punishing his brother for a failure to ascribe to cultural and familial norms. Philip's maneuver did not sway Richard Henry, who remained abroad touring Europe for a year.¹⁵⁷

When Richard Henry Lee returned to Stratford Hall at the age of twenty-one, his family was in an uproar. Philip refused to divide their father's estate until all of Thomas Lee's debts had been paid. This decision set the older siblings against Philip, and Richard Henry joined his brothers and sister in taking their older brother to court in 1754 to demand the division of their father's estate as stipulated in his will. The lawsuit failed, but Richard Henry bonded with his siblings over their mutual disappointment and anger. A close relationship with his siblings represents a common bond seen in southern planter families. Just as George Washington kept a close relationship with his half-brother Lawrence, Richard Henry Lee developed deep ties with his siblings, and later especially with his younger brother, Arthur Lee.¹⁵⁸

After the lawsuit, Richard Henry Lee moved forward in trying to establish himself professionally and socially in his county and colony. Lee's education prepared him for practicing law, but like most planter men, he realized a profession would not be enough to secure a powerful position in the colony and he began seeking political appointment. Unfortunately, his county had very few offices available, which left Lee stagnant in his political career for almost two years. Moreover, the South had far fewer suitable careers for gentleman than the North with careers as a planter, politician, lawyer, military officer, or

¹⁵⁷ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 24, 25, 26; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 15, 115.

¹⁵⁸ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 26, 31; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 13.

doctor as acceptable posts.¹⁵⁹ The lack of political offices combined with a short list of reputation-enhancing careers left Lee without options. Elite southerners often went into politics as a way to establish themselves as dutiful, virtuous men, and Richard Henry Lee desired to do the same. As politicians, planter men gained social and political status in the colony and amongst their peers. Political leadership signaled a readiness to sacrifice oneself for the good of kin and community. In essence, the lives of southern men were lived for others. Thus, Richard Henry Lee's political stagnancy doubled as a hindrance to his status as a southern man.¹⁶⁰

Finally, in 1756, Richard Henry Lee secured his first political appointment as a justice of the peace for Westmoreland County. Not only did work mark an important transition into manhood, the appearance of work outweighed actual job performance in the South. Reputation in a job mattered far more to manhood than skill, a marked difference between the South and the North, where skill in a trade signaled one's manliness and ability to successfully maintain a family. Ultimately, for southerners, public evaluation made or destroyed one's honor and virtue, an evaluation that men easily found in politics.¹⁶¹

Months after Lee launched his political career, his brother Philip began distributing the landholdings left in their father's will. Without his younger brothers at Stratford Hall, Richard Henry Lee did not have to compete with his family for a county seat in the House of Burgesses. In fact, due to the widespread residences of the Lees, Richard Henry, two of his

¹⁵⁹ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 152. The above list was given in the order of prestige with planting as the highest regarded career.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 149; McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 31, 41.

¹⁶¹ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 41; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 149; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 14.

brothers, and two of his cousins all gained appointments to the House of Burgesses in the 1757 election. Not only did this transition signal a rise in power for Richard Henry Lee, it also cemented his family's legacy and the Lees' extensive influence. Richard Henry Lee served the Assembly dutifully and took a lead role on several committees, no doubt enhancing his reputation amongst Virginia's other patriarchs.¹⁶²

His personal life flourished as well with a marriage to Anne Aylett in December of 1757.¹⁶³ For his new family, Lee leased five hundred acres from Philip to build his new home. This arrangement served two purposes: Richard Henry was able to escape his domineering brother, and by remaining close at hand he could maintain residency for his seat as a Burgess. By the time the Lees moved into their new home in 1763, named Chantilly for a place Richard Henry visited in Paris, the couple had two sons. As the patriarch of a new home and family, Lee began to assume the duties of host—an important convention for the planter class. When guests visited Chantilly, Lee spared no expense and even risked his own health. Lee was no stranger to fine food and wine, especially when entertaining. Afflicted with gout, Lee likely exacerbated the condition during lavish parties. The reputation he gained from hosting events at Chantilly likely trumped his condition because like his father, Lee knew the importance of host-guest relations in building class and community.¹⁶⁴

Even more than hosting, the role as head of a household held great weight amongst southern men. Upon marriage, a planter man began independently mastering his wife, slaves,

¹⁶² McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 41, 48; Oliver Perry Chitwood, *Richard Henry Lee: Statesman of the Revolution* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Library, 1967), 17.

¹⁶³ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 48, 51. Details on Richard Henry Lee's first wife are not available.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 48, 51, 53.

and later, children. Many fathers or fathers-in-law gave a newlywed couple their own slaves, and while the Lee family shared slaves, Richard Henry never owned no more than sixty-three at a time. While sixty-three slaves were modest holdings compared to some, it was enough to enhance his reputation as a patriarch and landowner.¹⁶⁵

Mastery signaled to the community a readiness for public service and either propelled or strengthened one's political position by showing a man's ability to reinforce southern social—and racial—order. Slaveholdings displayed the power of planter men while mastery elevated one's masculinity and promoted racial solidarity in the South. Thus, mastery of slaves was a very southern tradition and contributed to regionalism among southern whites. Moreover, the qualities prized by white planters, independence, public service, and assertiveness, were forbidden and in direct opposition to the prescribed behavior for slaves. Slavery therefore also cemented white men's status as citizens. Public service and political franchisement in the South existed in opposition to the disfranchisement felt daily by the enslaved population.¹⁶⁶

In fact, the idea of freedom in opposition to slavery caused some planters, including Richard Henry Lee, to fear possible slave uprisings. Lee believed that when slaves “observe their masters possessed of liberty which is denied to them” they become “natural enemies to society, and their increase consequently dangerous.”¹⁶⁷ Lee also thought slavery threatened

¹⁶⁵ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 133; McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 61, 62.

¹⁶⁶ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 85, 133; Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, “Introduction” in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004), ix-x; Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 195. For more on the idea of freedom and citizenship being created and existing in opposition to slavery, see Edmund S. Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003).

¹⁶⁷ Richard Henry Lee quoted in McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 62.

the South for cultural reasons, and during the French and Indian War, he criticized slavery to the House of Burgesses and thought Virginia was developing slower when compared to colonies in which slavery was less integral. In his mind, other colonies “with their whites . . . import arts and agriculture, whilst we, with our blacks, exclude both.”¹⁶⁸ However, like most planters, Lee never called for abolition of slavery due to ideas of gender, racial hierarchy, and a reliance on their labor. But both his fear of an uprising and his belief that a reliance on slavery could damage the region’s cultural development give insight into why his slaveholdings remained modest compared to others of his class.¹⁶⁹

At home, Lee’s family continued to increase, and with it, pressures of supporting them mounted. Lee and his wife welcomed two daughters in 1764 and 1766. Lee also developed a large home library for his children, especially his sons who would go to England to further their educations in the early 1770s.¹⁷⁰ The price of educating two sons abroad loomed and constant visits and stays by nephews and nieces added to Lee’s financial burdens.¹⁷¹

As a possible solution to his financial woes, Lee inquired for the position of stamp distributor in November of 1764 before the House of Burgesses met and condemned the act. The following month, Lee drafted a petition to King George III with fellow Burgesses denouncing the Stamp Act and the empire’s new method of directly taxing the colonists—a

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 62, 63.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 58-59. Lee considered sending his sons to William and Mary but deep family ties in London and his belief that schools abroad were better than William and Mary caused him to send the boys to England.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 55, 60. The Lee family shared possessions and their children often visited aunts and uncles. Just as Richard Henry Lee received visits from kin, his children visited Lee’s brothers and sisters as well, reflecting the importance of family and kin amongst the elite.

power usually reserved for local patriarchs such as himself. In July of 1765, two months after Patrick Henry gave his fiery speech on the Stamp Act Resolves, Lee wrote to the gentleman who had helped him apply for the distributorship post. He explained the misfortunes of the man who did get the position, “. . . it is very well that the appointment has passed me, since, by the unanimous suffrage of his countrymen [George Mercer] is regarded as an execrable monster . . .”¹⁷² Lee did not exaggerate. After Mercer arrived in Williamsburg, an angry mob confronted him and forced him to resign. For fear of life and reputation, no other man stepped forward to fill the position, thus ending enforcement of the Stamp Act in Virginia.¹⁷³

Richard Henry Lee was not in Williamsburg at the time of Mercer’s arrival and instead launched his own protest against the Stamp Act in Westmoreland County later that summer. He led a group largely comprised of his own slaves toward the county court carrying effigies of George Mercer and Great Britain’s Lord of the Treasury, George Greenville. Lee formed the Association of Westmoreland and laid out their purpose to stop all “attempts, foreign and domestic, to reduce the people of this country to a state of abject and detestable slavery . . .”¹⁷⁴ Equating the Crown’s actions to enslavement became a popular form of discourse in the 1760s and 1770s. Referring to attacks on local and private power as enslavement both trivialized the gravity of slavery and allowed whites a potent way to identify themselves as oppressed people. The Association of Westmoreland declared loyalty to the king while simultaneously criticizing him for making them “slaves.”¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷² Richard Henry Lee to Unknown, 4 July 1765, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 9.

¹⁷³ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 78-79.

¹⁷⁴ “The Association of Westmoreland,” in Oliver Perry Chitwood, *Richard Henry Lee: Statesman of the Revolution* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Library, 1967), 239.

¹⁷⁵ Chitwood, *Richard Henry Lee*, 239.

Association explained that as British subjects they “cannot be . . . taxed but by a consent of a Parliament, in which he is represented by persons chosen by the people and who themselves pay a part of the tax they impose on others.”¹⁷⁶ Because colonists did not have seats in Parliament, Lee and others believed that it was against reason and law to directly tax the colonists from England instead of having local patriarchs carry out that responsibility. Despite the fact that the taxes levied on the colonies to reduce Great Britain’s war debts were not overly harsh or unfair, local politicians and patriarchs like Lee squirmed under the perceived attack on the Burgesses’ local power. The Association concluded their pact by threatening to regard anyone who attacked the colonists’ rights as “the most dangerous enemy of the community.”¹⁷⁷

In addition to the document drawn up by the Association of Westmoreland, Lee also wrote the “dying words” of George Mercer and published them in the *Virginia Gazette*.¹⁷⁸ Lee’s public attack insulted Mercer’s integrity and his manhood. Lee wrote, as a dying Mercer, “I have endeavored to fasten chains of slavery on this my native country . . . which led me astray from honour, virtue, and patriotism.”¹⁷⁹ Attacking Mercer’s honor, public service, and love of his country was an incredibly powerful insult to manhood, reputation, and his role as a citizen. Less than a week later, editorials exposing Lee’s application for the post of stamp distributor, and allegations that his failure to secure the job motivated his actions in Westmoreland County appeared in the *Virginia Gazette*. The paper war continued

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 78; Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, 141; Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 38; Chitwood, *Richard Henry Lee*, 239.

¹⁷⁸ Chitwood, *Richard Henry Lee*, 37-38.

¹⁷⁹ Richard Henry Lee quoted in *ibid.*, 37-38.

with a public response from Lee.¹⁸⁰ Lee attempted to express his patriotism and virtue in the response:

It was but a few days after my letters were sent away, that reflecting seriously on the nature of the application I made; the impropriety of an American being concerned in such an affair struck me in the strongest manner, and produced a fixt [sic] determination to . . . prevent the success of a measure I now discovered to be in the highest degree pernicious to my Country.¹⁸¹

Lee concluded his response as “necessary to say in justice to my character . . .”¹⁸² Indeed, as a southern gentleman who valued reputation and honor above actual actions, Lee’s public response did important work to mend the shaming attack on his virtue and image. While his actions during the Stamp Act Crisis were controversial, Lee’s colleagues embraced him as an ally in confronting Great Britain.¹⁸³

In business, Lee gained crucial knowledge through operations at Stratford Landing not available to other planters. During the 1760s, Richard Henry Lee and Philip Lee’s tobacco trade gave them technical understandings of commerce, knowledge that would help Richard Henry Lee when he arrived in Congress in 1774. Prior to his arrival in Philadelphia, Lee attempted to initiate Committees of Correspondence with Samuel Adams of Massachusetts through his brother Arthur Lee who served as Massachusetts’s colonial agent, and with John Dickinson of Pennsylvania. Neither man initiated a committee until later, but

¹⁸⁰ The term “paper war” comes from Joanne Freeman’s *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

¹⁸¹ Richard Henry Lee to The Editor of the *Virginia Gazette*, 25 July 1766, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 16-17.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 1: 18.

¹⁸³ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 80; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 25-26; Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 35.

Lee resumed his work in Virginia and joined fellow patriarchs in a boycott of British-made goods.¹⁸⁴

Advocates of the boycott saw both political and economic advantages. They hoped that squeezing the king's purse strings would result in a parliamentary repeal of the hated tax duties and revert local power to Virginia's patriarchs. Additionally, planters in debt could reduce their spending during the boycott and promote the purchase and manufacture of colonial goods. However, the boycott made it more difficult for planters to pay debts and soon merchants began taking them to court. Planters abhorred debt, especially public debt. Being taken to court sullied one's reputation as an independent man and questioned his ability to head a household. After the formation of Committees of Correspondence, Lee and his colleagues used the network to criticize British policy and rally others against the courts. The men succeeded and courthouses shut down, preventing debt collection.¹⁸⁵

Shortly afterward, Parliament passed the Intolerable Acts and news of the widely despised Boston Port Bill reached the House of Burgesses in 1774. Lee called the act a "shallow Ministerial device" and the Assembly "demanded a firm and determined union of all the Colonies to repel the common danger," starting with the day of fast which provoked Lord Dunmore to dissolve the House.¹⁸⁶ After his election to Congress, Lee traveled to Philadelphia where he often bought gifts for his children while serving in Virginia's delegation. Outpourings of love for children became more unique to the South during these years. Fathers in more pious Northern households often kept a cool distance from their

¹⁸⁴ McGaughey, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 71, 90, 102.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 90, 105.

¹⁸⁶ Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, 26 June 1774, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 114.

children and mothers feared the consequences for their children's souls if they were shown too much favor. Southern parents often comprised the opposite end of the spectrum; sometimes doting too much on their children, and Richard Henry Lee was no exception. He often went home to Virginia during Congress to see his family and sent them gifts when he could not leave Philadelphia.¹⁸⁷

While in Congress, Lee greatly impressed the delegates with his staggering oratorical skills, and proved to be a formidable opponent of Great Britain during the Second Continental Congress. He obtained a constant stream of information from his brothers abroad to attack parliamentary rule. The Lee family felt that an imperial relationship between England and America could remain in tact, but that the bond of Crown and colony was a voluntary contract that could, out of necessity, be dissolved.¹⁸⁸ Lee believed that Great Britain held the responsibility for breaching the contract between colonists and king and acted accordingly. He wrote to his brother William resolutely explaining his "determination to resist [British policies] by all ways and to every extremity."¹⁸⁹ Viewing the ministry as "Savage," Lee argued that it was impossible for the colonists to be "Rebels excluded from the King's protection and Magistrates acting under his authority at the same time."¹⁹⁰ He decided that if the Crown now viewed them as enemies, it was time for the colonists to create

¹⁸⁷ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 57; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 131.

¹⁸⁸ Many political radicals in England shared this opinion.

¹⁸⁹ Richard Henry Lee to William Lee, 10 May 1775, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 134.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: 134; Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, 20 April 1776, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 177.

their own government. And if a leading colony like Virginia took this step, Lee believed more hesitant places such as Maryland and New York might follow suit.¹⁹¹

By late spring in 1776, the congressional majority shifted in Lee's favor with retirements and reelections stocking Congress with more radical delegates. Through correspondence, the Virginia Convention learned of the shift within Congress and saw an opportunity to end the bond with Great Britain. In June, the Convention instructed Virginia's delegates to introduce a motion on independence. Richard Henry Lee stood before Congress and presented the motion: "Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."¹⁹² The resolution also called for a formation of foreign alliances and the creation of an outline for a united confederation for the colonies' consideration. Congress immediately postponed the consideration of the dangerous resolution. If caught debating independence, the men could be hanged for treason. The idea of debating independence alone staggered and overwhelmed some, and postponing the debate allowed some Congressmen to prepare.¹⁹³

Lee saw the importance of independence and the colonists' need to form alliances with foreign powers to achieve that goal. However, "no State in Europe will either Treat or

¹⁹¹ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 115, 117; Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, 20 April 1776, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 177.

¹⁹² Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 7 June 1776, 34 vols. (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1904-1937), 5: 425.

¹⁹³ McGaughy, *Richard Henry Lee of Virginia*, 117; *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 7 June 1776, 5: 425-26.

Trade” with colonists if they remained subjects of Great Britain.¹⁹⁴ The debate for independence, therefore, involved more than the decision to break from England. Independence meant forming alliances, possibly with Great Britain’s enemies in Europe, setting up a government for the colonies, and most importantly, getting the delegates to accept and agree to the terms of separation and confederation. For Lee and his allies in Congress, independence seemed logical as England continued to ignore the “repeated petitions for peace, liberty, and safety” sent over the previous decade.¹⁹⁵ However, Congress postponed the debate on Virginia’s resolution until the 1st of July. In case the vote for independence carried, Congress appointed a committee to draft a Declaration of Independence modeled after the resolution for Congress’ consideration. The committee comprised several colonists with Thomas Jefferson representing Virginia as the principle drafter.¹⁹⁶

Thomas Jefferson was born in sparsely populated Shadwell, Virginia, in 1743. Jefferson’s father, Peter Jefferson, briefly moved the family away from Shadwell in 1745 to manage his late friend’s estate. The Jeffersons, except for Thomas, returned to their home in 1752 and lived in comfortable house representative of average Albemarle County residents. As a young man, Jefferson enjoyed the typical southern leisure activities of hunting and

¹⁹⁴ Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, 20 April 1776, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 178.

¹⁹⁵ Richard Henry Lee to Landon Carter, 2 June 1776, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 198.

¹⁹⁶ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 11 June 1776, 5:428-29, 431. The committee also included John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston.

riding. However, as he got older and embraced science and natural history, he lost interest in hunting and instead observed Virginia's wildlife.¹⁹⁷

As the oldest son and chief heir to his father's estate, Thomas Jefferson's education and career required attention and diligence. Having remained in Tuckahoe for tutelage, Jefferson did not stay away for long. At age fourteen, he hurried home after his father's death to fill his new role as head of the family. Peter Jefferson left his son most of his estate including books, furniture, almost 5,000 acres of land, slaves, and his mulatto servant Tawny.¹⁹⁸ In order to serve his family and colony as a proper patriarch, Thomas Jefferson had to continue his education. He attended a school in Hanover for two years where he developed his understanding of Latin and Greek, vital languages for the classical education required of southern gentlemen. Jefferson attended the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. The Jefferson family had little connection to England, unlike the Lees, and Thomas Jefferson's new role as patriarch likely made it difficult to stray too far from his estate. Moreover, parents and families in the South at this time linked Europe with decadence and America with virtue. Because decadence could prevent a man from becoming an independent adult and public servant, families found a local education more appropriate.¹⁹⁹

Jefferson embraced the Enlightenment and his dedication to his education often stood in the way of his personal life. At William and Mary, Jefferson found a mentor in George Wythe and began studying law with him. The seventeen-year-old Jefferson bonded almost

¹⁹⁷ Nathan Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson: A Biography*, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), 1: 10-11, 12, 18, 25.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-21. Jefferson would gain thirty more slaves upon his mother's death.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18, 23; Kevin J. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5; Lorri Glover, "'Let Us Manufacture Men': Educating Elite Boys in the Early National South," in Friend and Glover, eds., *Southern Manhood*, 23.

instantly with Wythe through a mutual passion for learning. The two men, while both high in status—Wythe more established than Jefferson—lacked oratorical skill. In a society where the style of words mattered more than the wisdom behind them, Wythe and Jefferson likely bonded over the limitations met by ineffective speaking.²⁰⁰

In 1762, Jefferson grew fond of his classmate's sister, Rebecca Burwell. He stayed incredibly busy at school and did not have many opportunities to court Burwell. Two years later, Rebecca Burwell accepted another man's proposal due to Jefferson's repeated absences and overall lack of commitment. Jefferson did not go before the bar until 1767, and spent far more time preparing than most. Some men prepared for a year or less and two years was often more than enough time for the rest. For Jefferson, the process of cultivating knowledge mattered far more than the common goals of graduation and practicing law. After spending over half a decade of honing his skills and gaining a broader field of expertise, Jefferson passed the bar examination as a student of the Enlightenment. He either acquired or furthered his proficiency in Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and Anglo-Saxon. And his study of law did not suffer when he thoroughly read ancient and modern literature, history, Locke, religious texts, avidly played the violin, and applied reason to scientific problems of the day. His upbringing as a southern man coupled with his Enlightenment reasoning created a "model of honorable conscience conformed with the classical heritage."²⁰¹ Jefferson's education

²⁰⁰ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 33, 34; Joyce Blackburn, *George Wythe of Williamsburg* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 33, 48.

²⁰¹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 99.

focused on both old and new ideas and his personal understandings of honor and reputation colored his application of the knowledge he acquired.²⁰²

Jefferson used his knowledge both at home and in his law practice. He spent much of his time at the estate in Shadwell supervising the growth and harvesting of crops. Delving deeply into natural history and agriculture, he began a Garden Book and recorded the plants, flowers, trees, and bushes on his property.²⁰³ As a Virginian and child of the Enlightenment, Jefferson loved his land, nature, and participation in law and colonial politics. However, he lacked an important skill to be a colony patriarch—oratorical proficiency. Jefferson’s lack of oratorical skill likely impacted his success as a trial lawyer as did his introverted personality. He did not enjoy appearing before audiences and did not like to show his emotions verbally. Creating a public persona was crucial for members of the southern gentry. Fathers and sons alike understood the importance of public speaking in advancing one’s reputation. Jefferson would later take after other Enlightenment thinkers and decide to improve his reputation and public service through writing.²⁰⁴

In the 1760s, Jefferson chose a mountaintop inherited from his father as the spot to build his new home and named it Monticello, or “the little mountain” in Italian.²⁰⁵ The construction of his home showed his distaste for European and colonial architecture alike, and he used his own architectural skills to design his plantation house. In 1769, his public life gained traction and he was appointed to the House of Burgesses. He had already visited the

²⁰² Hayes, *The Road to Monticello*, 66; Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 42-43, 44, 46-47, 50, 58, 63.

²⁰³ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 59. Jefferson would later add details on travels, expenses, the weather, general advice about life, and other thoughts he found worthy of writing down.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 59, 62, 65; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 100-101.

²⁰⁵ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 64.

House in 1765 and heard Patrick Henry's famous speech on the Stamp Act Resolves. Education and experience as a Burgess, along with the responsibilities the job included, provided men with important tools for membership among Virginia's gentry. Shaping colonial politics and acting as a patriarch for fellow Virginia's showcased a man's virtue and ability to take charge outside the home.²⁰⁶

Jefferson assumed command of the colony with fellow Burgesses by signing the 1769 boycott on English goods. For Jefferson, Enlightenment thinking drove his desire to join the boycott. As a reasonable man, it was his responsibility to combat parliamentary measures and restore rationality and natural rights to the men of Virginia. The books he ordered after his first session in Williamsburg reflected his concern about relations with England. Enlightenment thinkers' writings on the nature of government including Locke's *On Government*, Burlamagui's *Natural Law*, and Montesquieu's *Works* along with books on parliamentary history and civil society all arrived that summer. Unfortunately, Shadwell, the home where his possessions and family still lived, burned down in a fire. No family members were hurt, but of his personal effects, only Jefferson's violin survived. He immediately mourned—and continued to lament—the loss of his books and papers, including his law books, memoranda, his late father's memorabilia, and the beginnings of his home library. The fire at Shadwell served as a catalyst for finishing construction of Monticello.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 53, 64, 70; Kenneth A. Lockridge, *The Diary and Life of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 164.

²⁰⁷ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 71-72, 74, 75, 77, 78.

Despite the pain of the loss at Shadwell, Jefferson remained active in public life and gained an appointment as the Lieutenant of Albemarle County's militia in 1770.²⁰⁸ In 1772, Jefferson married Martha Wayles Skelton, a twenty-three year old widow with a small child. At twenty-eight, Jefferson had been a bachelor for far too long according to southern standards. In the South, men married at younger ages because they finished educations and careers far earlier than men in the North. However, Jefferson spent so many years at William and Mary preparing for the bar that he did not reach a level of professional accomplishment that made him an appealing marriage partner until later in life. As a married man, Jefferson no longer "subverted the social order" by remaining single near the age of thirty.²⁰⁹ Martha Skelton Jefferson left her young son with her father and went to Monticello with Thomas Jefferson shortly after the wedding.²¹⁰ The couple welcomed a daughter, Martha, in September of 1772 whom her father nicknamed Patsy.²¹¹

Martha Skelton Jefferson brought her husband one of the many benefits of gentry marriage—increased wealth. Her late husband left a considerable fortune and her father's death in 1773 further increased Jefferson's estate.²¹² Unfortunately, his father-in-law died in massive debt, which plagued Jefferson for the rest of his life. Aside from financial stresses and Martha's poor health, the Jeffersons had a happy life.²¹³ Jefferson also rebuilt his library

²⁰⁸ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 79. Jefferson did not have military experience and did not engage in military activities. The appointment served more as a symbolic post that elevated Jefferson's public persona.

²⁰⁹ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 134.

²¹⁰ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 84, 86. Martha Skelton's son died shortly after in 1772.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 80, 84, 86; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 133. Of the next five children born to the couple, only one (Mary "Polly") survived. Another daughter born in 1782 named Lucy Elizabeth also survived. The constant miscarriages took a serious toll on Martha Skelton Jefferson's health.

²¹² Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 86. Mary Skelton Jefferson's father made his three sons-in-law the executors of his will and divided the estate amongst them.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 89, 237. Martha Skelton Jefferson died in September of 1782.

and by 1773, over one thousand books lined the shelves in his home, not including his books in Williamsburg.²¹⁴

As an Enlightenment thinker, he felt a need to utilize his intellect to improve the world around him, and politics served as his outlet. Beginning in 1774, public life in Williamsburg and superintending Monticello absorbed increasing amounts of his time, and Jefferson sold his law practice to fellow gentleman Edmund Randolph that August. Jefferson's landholdings had increased to encompass three counties and managing his plantations took a lot of time and effort.²¹⁵ Moreover, the continued construction of Monticello and his interest in its architecture further absorbed his attention. He left his home in August to attend the Virginia Convention in response to the Boston Port Bill and other slights from royal authority. However, he came down with dysentery and could not attend.²¹⁶ His absence and the fact that he had not established himself as a patriarch on the level of cohorts such as Peyton Randolph and Richard Henry Lee meant that that he would remain in Virginia while other gentlemen went to Congress.²¹⁷

After proving himself to his fellow gentry through his writings, Jefferson gained appointment to the Second Continental Congress. Still deeply interested in nature and the weather, he purchased a thermometer and recorded the temperature daily hoping to see patterns in nature that, along with reason, could predict future weather. By his arrival in

²¹⁴ Ibid., 87, 91.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 95.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 103. Another theory is that Jefferson was so anxious about having to read *A Summary View* at the Convention that he faked his illness so that someone else would read his work. For more, see Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 5.

²¹⁷ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 92, 95, 103, 105.

Congress, other delegations had become familiar with Jefferson's talents. However, life at Monticello drew him away from Congress and Jefferson went home in December of 1775 and did not return to Philadelphia until May of 1776.²¹⁸

Shortly after Jefferson returned to Congress, Richard Henry Lee presented the resolution on independence. His anxiety over public speaking kept him from participating in verbal debate, but did not sully his reputation amongst fellow delegates who noted his competency as a committee member and document drafter. Thus, his talents made him ideal to serve on the committee drafting the Declaration of Independence and he became the primary author. Jefferson wrote the first draft only a day or two after the committee formed and based its contents on its minutes.²¹⁹ After a few minor changes suggested by the committee, Jefferson's Declaration of Independence went before Congress.²²⁰

Some Congressmen had concern about the delay in debate over the Declaration between the time of Henry's resolution to early July when debates began. However, John Adams of Massachusetts felt that the delay aided those in favor of independence because the extra time had allowed for widespread newspaper and pamphlet debates to make a case for breaking away from Britain. However, some in Congress were against independence. Those for reconciliation argued that some colonies "had expressly forbidden their delegates to consent to such a declaration, and others had given no instructions" and therefore "no powers

²¹⁸ Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, 1: 17; Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 112, 116.

²¹⁹ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 127. This is John Adams's description of the first draft. However, the minutes have been lost and cannot be used to verify Adams's account.

²²⁰ Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, 4; Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 112.

to give such consent.”²²¹ Moreover, delegations that could not vote for independence would have to secede from the Union and no foreign powers would help the colonies if they were not united. Richard Henry Lee became one of the more vocal delegates to argue for independence. He and others who wanted independence believed that the Declaration said nothing not already felt by the country and signing it would simply “declare a fact which already exists.”²²² For Lee and others, their allegiance to the king became null when “he declare[d] us out of his protection” and responded to their petitions with war.²²³ In their minds, “allegiance & protection are reciprocal, the one ceasing when the other is withdrawn.”²²⁴

As debates continued, Congress began picking apart Jefferson’s Declaration in the hopes of reaching agreement between the colonies. Congress struck out passages criticizing people in England because the “idea that we had friends in England worth keeping terms with, still haunted the minds of many.”²²⁵ One of the most devastating blows to Jefferson came when Congress removed his passage condemning slavery primarily for the people of South Carolina and Georgia. However, without unanimity the resolution on independence would not pass; so the colonies’ patriarchs erased the recognition of oppression and moved on to other issues. The decision disappointed Jefferson but he never actively pursued eradicating slavery, partly due to his overwhelming debt. However, his belief in black

²²¹ Notes on Proceedings in Congress, 7 June 1776 in *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, ed. Paul H. Smith et al., 26 vols. (Washington D.C.: 1976-2002), 4: 160.

²²² *Ibid.*, 4: 161.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ John Adams to Abigail Adams, 3 July 1776, in Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 4: 376; Notes on Proceedings in Congress, 7 June 1776 in Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 4: 160, 162. The group put forth several other arguments including the idea that “the people wait for us to lead the way” and “are in favor of the measure.”

²²⁵ Notes on Proceedings in Congress, 1 July 1776 in Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 4: 359.

inferiority and the idea that white and black peoples could not live in the same areas also contributed to his lack of action on the matter. On the 2nd of July after repeated edits to the Declaration of Independence, Congress agreed to Lee's resolution.²²⁶ And two days later, delegates signed the Declaration and ordered copies sent to assemblies, committees, and conventions as well as to the Continental Army.²²⁷

The Declaration reflected gender, power, Enlightenment thinking, and Jefferson's ideas of reason and nature. For Jefferson, the Declaration served as "an expression of the American mind" for great nations to observe.²²⁸ Ideas of virtue and promotion of public welfare appear throughout the document and reflect the importance of honor among the gentility. The language in certain parts of the Declaration reflected ideas of masculinity and power. Most notably, the delegates painted themselves as heroes who opposed "with *manly firmness* his [the king's] invasions on the rights of the people."²²⁹ In essence, the Declaration called for men to resist British enslavement.²³⁰

²²⁶ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2 July 1776, 5: 506-507. John Adams believed the 2nd of July and not the 4th would be "the most memorable" day in "the History of America" and it would be celebrated yearly; John Adams to Abigail Adams, 3 July 1776, in Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 4: 376.

²²⁷ Notes on Proceedings in Congress, 1 July 1776, 4: 359; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Meaning of Independence: John Adams, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976), 64; *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 4 July 1776, 5: 515-16.

²²⁸ Thomas Jefferson quoted in Kristofer Ray, "Thomas Jefferson and A Summary View of the Rights of British America," in *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Francis D. Cogliano (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 32.

²²⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*, in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2 July 1776, 5: 511. Emphasis added.

²³⁰ James L. Golden and Alan L. Golden, *Thomas Jefferson and the Rhetoric of Virtue* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 33, 251; Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 16; Friend and Glover, "Introduction," in *Southern Manhood*, vii-viii.

Jefferson also used the Declaration as printed evidence of his own virtue that publicly gave “proof of my own sentiment” as a patriot.²³¹ Despite its successes, he also saw the document in a negative light due to all of the changes made by his colleagues. He sent copies of the original along with the final draft to friends to “judge whether it is the better or worse for the Critics.”²³² Jefferson’s colleagues soothed his ego, referring to his draft as “mangled” but also stating that his draft was so masterfully crafted that “no Cookery can spoil the Dish.”²³³ In keeping with southern ideas of honor and reputation, Jefferson’s colleagues conflated the meaning of his draft as opposed to its actual contents. In truth, the Declaration of Independence benefitted from group editing and the more radical, offensive passages were eliminated to make it more agreeable to all the delegates and other colonists.²³⁴

The roots of southern manhood emerged amongst Virginians during the Revolution. Deeply connected to altered principles of honor and virtue, men in the South like Lee and Jefferson performed their masculinity locally and in Congress. Both enhanced family landholdings, bolstered their public selves through political appointments, and preserved their patriarchal power in their resistance to royal authority.

Richard Henry Lee grew up under the enormous pressure to preserve his family’s commercial enterprise and social status, with the unspoken understanding that he would

²³¹ Thomas Jefferson to William Fleming, 1 July 1776 in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed., Paul Leicester Ford, 20 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1893), 11: 41. This desire to use the Declaration as proof of his virtue reflects the importance of southern honor as linked to “excellence of character” which was much more important in the South than in the pious, moral North. Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, 100.

²³² Thomas Jefferson to Richard Henry Lee, 8 July 1776, in Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 4:412.

²³³ Richard Henry Lee to Thomas Jefferson, 21 July 1776, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 210.

²³⁴ Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 137.

develop his own public self to advance his and his family's reputation. Lee maintained an honorable reputation despite a personal scandal surrounding the Stamp Act legislation and his radical political position against Great Britain. He succeeded in remaining a member of the elite because he presented his public self according to the mores of a southern gentleman, exhibiting both virtue and honor in maintaining his reputation.

Thomas Jefferson's identity was also tied to southern manhood, and while he maintained a plantation, slaves, and political power, he prized his education the most. Jefferson's deep focus on his studies while preparing to practice law and his later studies on government reflect the importance of Enlightenment ideals. However, his knowledge of classic literature and philosophy also enabled him to socialize with traditional southerners as they held steadfastly to the classics.

CONCLUSION

Richard Henry Lee and Thomas Jefferson exhibited qualities of southern manhood—a masculinity that began polarizing Northern and Southern regions of the Atlantic Coast during the Revolution. Several differences in gender and behavior emerged in the North and South in the late 1770s. Southern families began to once again embrace facets of colonial manhood such as restraint and submission, which became strictly southern as the North celebrated different mannerisms. Families in the South upheld other differing ideas of behavior and presentations of the public self. Southerners placed more emphasis on material goods and had greater income to do so. Construction of elaborate homes such as Chantilly and Monticello, regular travels, and large parties all dominated the South. Additionally, southern men—and some women—spent more time reading books about etiquette than their northern neighbors. The emphasis on outward presentations of wealth and lessons on gentility worked in tandem to reinforce the importance of reputation and public life, something far less important to pious northerners. Instead, men in the North—who began emerging as a strong middle-class—believed strongly in economic restraint. These divisions in gender norms greatly contributed to the regionalism that began to develop in the late 18th century.²³⁵

The actions and beliefs of men in the South were deeply linked to the region's economic structure. During the Revolution, northerners began pulling away from the idea that landholding meant prestige, an idea that southern men continued to embrace and one

²³⁵ Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 84-85. And would erupt in civil war less than one hundred years later.

which their economy was based on. As white men continued spreading further West and South, new agricultural markets gave men larger networks for conducting commerce built on the institution of slavery. Surveying land and spreading their holdings to new areas, popular practices for southern men, placed the gentry in the role of “civilizing the wilderness.”²³⁶ As wealthy, landed patriarchs, these men created coherent lines in savage and unforgiving lands. Being civilizers cemented planters’ claims to colony control as the only ones with the intellect and class to widen their community’s borders. While southerners spread to new landholdings, their economy continued to rest on old ideas. As opposed to a northern economy that implemented contract law and bankruptcy, the South continued to use debtor-relief programs and refused to enact bankruptcy laws. A mercantile economy with cash crops allowed planters in debt to use credit and debt and pay off debt once harvests sold. Thus, most debt was temporary and there was no cause to disgrace a man with bankruptcy if his debt would soon be paid. All of these beliefs and behaviors reflected important southern understandings of gentility.²³⁷

Two intertwining social ideas composed southern manhood—gentility and honor. These concepts existed in the North, but meant different things. Northern gentility focused more on “reason, sobriety, and caution” while men in the South embraced gentility as “warmheartedness, generosity, and expressiveness.”²³⁸ Rejection of tradition in the North

²³⁶ Kenneth A. Lockridge, *The Diary and Life of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 141.

²³⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73; Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, “Introduction,” in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004), xii; Lockridge, *The Diary and Life of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744*, 141.

²³⁸ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 96-97.

gave Southern men an inflated sense of their own gentility, and in the 1770s southerners increasingly thought of themselves as more sophisticated and courteous than their cool northern counterparts. In the South, men closely linked gentility with honor and their refined behavior with social rank. As such, honor and gentility were very public in the South and planters constantly scrutinized the virtue of their peers.²³⁹

Honorable southern men strongly believed in morality, sociability, and learning and performed public displays of virtue and generosity to prove their worth to the community.²⁴⁰ Men like Lee and Jefferson who served in political positions occupied the ideal arena to display their self-sacrifice for the community, often spending weeks or more away from their families and—during the Revolution—sacrificing their lives to secure rights for fellow patriarchs. Southern men thus ascribed intensity to their understanding of honor and it was often synonymous with virtue. In the North, virtue and honor were more separate ideas and men prioritized virtue above a sense of honor. Men in the North embraced religion more than their southern neighbors and linked honor with scripture. Religion did not become dominant in the South until later and eighteenth-century gentlemen, who often battled with clergymen for power and patronage, did not trust the clergy. As a result, religion did not immerse itself in every aspect of southern life in the intimate way it did in the North.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Ibid., 85, 88.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 3, 88-90, 92-93. These characteristics were not given equal weight. Learning was not as important in the South as it was in New England, but an ability to quote classics did make men appear more worthy of leadership. Moreover, classics remained an important part of college learning in the South much longer than in the industrial-oriented North. Piety became a late edition to honor in the early nineteenth century.

²⁴¹ Idem, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 36, 51-52; Idem, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, 102.

Honor rested on a sense of self-worth that the public assessed and confirmed. Ultimately, honor and reputation were inextricably linked and southerners understood the importance of being “a Man both publickly [sic] and privately.”²⁴² The public assessment of a man’s honor had several components including his social skills and physical appearance. Men conversing in the South often discussed superficial matters such as clothing, horses, and parties. In fact, while visiting the South in 1773, Josiah Quincy Jr. remarked, “matters of political philosophy are religion were so frivolously set aside for lighter subjects of conversation.”²⁴³ In a society that rested on appearance more than substance, it is not surprising that conversation topics often remained light and jovial. However, men of the South, especially widely read men like Jefferson, often quoted the classics of their education, but not solely to display their learning. Familiarization with the classics reassured a society based on tradition and stability. New religious and moral thoughts were often met with skepticism and viewed as dangerous, but older and popular ideas felt safe and served as a common and trusted plane on which men could relate to one another. Appearance served as an outward display of honor and class. In fact, “Poor health, small stature, or any other physical defect” made men seem unworthy of high class and praise.²⁴⁴ The public viewed these imperfections, delegitimizing a weak man’s claims to honor. However, some exceptions existed including Richard Henry Lee’s ability to utilize his hand injury for public oratory.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Richard Henry Lee to Landon Carter, 24 April 1775, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*. 2 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 1: 133.

²⁴³ Josiah Quincy Jr. quoted in Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 90.

²⁴⁴ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 48.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14, 34, 93-94.

Civic duty, intimately linked to honor, also shaped southern ideas of manhood. During the Revolution, civic identity took on a patriotic meaning and only those who were independent, landed gentry had the resources to practice virtue and patriotism without outside influence. Indeed, wealth in the South—and the independence that came with it—closely related to one’s power as a patriarch. Because political and social power were reserved for the upper-class, the men elected to government posts faithfully performed their most important responsibility of protecting fellow men’s property. Richard Henry Lee’s position as a delegate enabled him to combat “the evil machinations of an unprincipled Administration” publicly in Congress to promote his virtue and protect his, and fellow gentry’s, wealth and power.²⁴⁶ Possessions reflected personality, class, and wealth and were therefore crucial in the shaping of honor and reputation. Thus, it was logical for the men with the most wealth to be in charge of protecting their fortunes and the fortunes of fellow southerners.²⁴⁷

Understandings of southern honor and manhood affected society and politics on family and community levels in the eighteenth-century Old South. As early as birth, southerners’ experiences differed from those in the North. Tradition and family lineage weighed heavily on southern families, and the naming of newborn children after members of previous generations—as seen with Virginia dynasties like the Lee family—reflected the importance of ancestry. For the landed gentry, certain names could boost reputation in the community as a boy grew into a man. In the North however, naming practices changed in the

²⁴⁶ Richard Henry Lee to Catherine Macaulay, 29 November 1775, in Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 1: 161.

²⁴⁷ Friend and Glover, “Introduction,” in *Southern Manhood*, viii; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 10; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 70, 72.

late eighteenth-century, especially during and after the Revolution, and children increasingly received nonfamily related Christian names as parents began promoting individuality and a freedom from the past.²⁴⁸

As southern children grew, parents raised and inscribed them with ideals deeply connected to the past and in great contrast with child-rearing practices in the North. In Virginia especially, where so many promoters of American freedom originated, children learned deference to these heroes and underwent pressures to embody them. Sons learned to obey both their father and his social position. Whereas sons in the South were taught the custom of being a gentleman, northern fathers instructed their sons in different ideas of discipline. In Boston, bankers' children learned how to keep strict accounts quite early in life. The southern economy, based on mercantilism and credit, did not require the same work and meticulousness. Instead, southern children learned how to shoot and ride and keep good manners. Additionally, parents in Virginia and throughout the South instructed their children in the values of honor, shame, and submission. Men of honor practiced restraint just like those who embodied aristocratic gentlemanliness before the Revolution like Edmund Pendleton. Southern men took their place above members of society as patriarchs, but also understood their station underneath more senior politicians and submitted to their authority.²⁴⁹

Social activities amongst southern young men also served as markers of entry into manhood. Because manhood largely involved performing gender in public, fighting, hunting, racing horses, and gambling ranked as some of the more popular activities for southern sons

²⁴⁸ Friend and Glover, "Introduction," in *Southern Manhood*, x; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 120, 122.

²⁴⁹ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 11, 99; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 131, 135, 156-57, 158.

to practice. On the contrary, northern families celebrated a son's transition to manhood with a religious or commercial act. A religious conversion signaled the growing up of a pious son, and in mercantile homes, young men often began apprenticeships as they began adulthood. While northerners prepared themselves for careers, southerners practiced a different type of adulthood—one that built their public selves.²⁵⁰

A sense of tradition and an economy built on agriculture and slave labor meant a life of farming and plantation management for elite southern sons. Gaining and maintaining a place in the planter hierarchy was the most coveted goal of southern men. Once planter men secured landed wealth and power, they expanded that power to the public sphere through professional and political positions. Northern men had far more acceptable jobs available to them. Teaching, philanthropy, and low-level government posts were all suitable positions for men up North.²⁵¹

Virginians and other southerners often inherited their high status and mastery over the community whereas northerners had to work as clerks and apprentices and learn trades to gain prominence in society. Southern mastery also involved a “shared mastery of men over women.”²⁵² Marrying not only reflected gendered dominance, but also cemented class. In eighteenth-century Virginia, planters kept a close circle of gentility from which marriage partners were chosen, making it very easy to discern the worthy and honorable from those who were not well-born. Marriage also involved the important task of oath taking. The oath taken in marriage served as a bond that transcended any dangers of tying oneself to a non-

²⁵⁰ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 163-164.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

²⁵² Lockridge, *The Diary and Life of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744*, 132.

family member.²⁵³ Marriage and the sexual privileges that came with it were believed to maintain men's status and physical health. The importance of patriarchy in the home stressed gender differences and a man's place as his wife's master. Mastery over women also gave men sexual access to their wives at their own discretion. In the eighteenth-century, men needed to have "reasonably active" sex lives for health reasons, and it was socially acceptable to find that outside the marriage, provided mistresses were taken privately.²⁵⁴

The most vital aspect of mastery—one that also set the South largely apart from the North—was the white gentry's mastery over slaves. Slaves represented everything planters were not and acted as a counterpoint to understandings of independence and freedom. Jefferson and fellow Virginia gentry understood that they "should not be dependent upon any man or body of men."²⁵⁵ Enslaved people were dependents isolated from kin, had no material wealth, no hopes of defense, and were barred from practicing components of citizenship such as voting and oath taking. Planters constantly labored to control their slaves through violence or threats of violence, which served to cement their power and class while reinforcing their slaves' dependence and weakness. Slaveholding was far more widespread in the South and helped shape ideas of manhood. Many who traveled to the South argued that the racial

²⁵³ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 55-57. Oath taking also served to cement trust and alliances between men. For example, an oral pledge to repay gambling debts was taken just as seriously as a signed document. Political appointees also took oaths to uphold their office and serve as a faithful patriarch to the community. The oath acted as an important social contract in several facets of southern life.

²⁵⁴ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 89, 309; Friend and Glover, "Introduction," in *Southern Manhood*, xiii.

²⁵⁵ Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe, July 1776 in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford 20 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 2: 60.

hierarchy of the region directly related to the gentry's aristocratic behavior and reputation-based society.²⁵⁶

Patriarchy and paternalism both served as frameworks for understanding slavery and manhood in the eighteenth-century South. Paternalism was a “feigned benevolence” for slaves that became far more popular later.²⁵⁷ Whether planters believed they practiced patriarchy, paternalism, or both, each idea rested on an intimate control of one's slave population that slave owners used to shape their masculine identities as masters of the house. Despite white southerners' common refusal to be mastered by others while acting as masters of their slaves, mastery was a uniquely private component of southern masculinity. While honor was an external, public display, mastery remained in the home for “personal fulfillment” of one's manhood.²⁵⁸

A man's refusal to be mastered or shamed by others led to violence outside the plantation as planters engaged in duels and fighting to protect their reputations and honor. Violence could be the result of a verbal insult, a fight over gambling, or slights against one's family. Contests of honor often resulted in violence as men constantly felt a need to prove themselves as southern gentlemen. The propensity for violence distinguished the South from the North. Dueling often emerged as “a defense of personal honor” and occurred when one man challenged or sullied the reputation of another.²⁵⁹ A duel often resulted in injury or death and showed the lengths to which men went to protect their honor. The criminal justice system

²⁵⁶ Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 50; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 57; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 85.

²⁵⁷ Friend and Glover, “Introduction,” in *Southern Manhood*, ix.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, ix, x.

²⁵⁹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 350. For more on dueling, see Joanne Freeman's *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

of the South nurtured the culture's belief in honor. If a man attacked or wronged another man's family, the crime of passion that followed often met with acquittal by the court. The court system focused on honor and responded to cases in kind.²⁶⁰

Southern culture set the region apart from the North as early as the 1770s. Virginia gentry changed to reflect local custom and practice in the eighteenth-century. By becoming a distinct region practicing a masculinity different from New England and Europe, the once British gentry of Virginia became a uniquely Virginian gentry. Men in the South continued to embrace the same ideas of honor and violence beyond the Jacksonian era. Northerners entrenched honor in commercial and evangelical practices of individuality and personal redemption. Moreover, southern men's refusal to be mastered like their slaves provided a popular discourse for the Revolution. In earlier years, obedience to royal authority was the most prized aspect of civic virtue. Southerners used detestation for dependency to reject royal authority and then repurposed submission to local patriarchs as an important quality of southern manhood.²⁶¹

Honor, virtue, and several other aspects of southern manhood had deep roots in aristocratic gentlemanliness. While the Revolution catalyzed the collapse of aristocratic gentlemanliness, it also enabled other gender constructions like military and Enlightenment masculinities to emerge and borrow these older understandings of gentlemanliness with honorable combat and virtuous pamphlets that resisted royal authority. Principles of

²⁶⁰ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 43, 366.

²⁶¹ Lockridge, *The Diary and Life of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744*, 154; Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s*, 32, 54; idem, *Southern Honor*, 84.

aristocratic gentlemanliness were also adopted and adjusted by southern men like Lee and Jefferson to create a unique, regional sense of manhood.

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