

Alexandria Times

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The Fairfax Resolves

Right on the heels of Alexandria's 275th birthday, we celebrate another milestone, for both local and national history. As a response to British Parliament passing what they called the Coercive Acts – and what the colonists called the Intolerable Acts – individual counties wrote their own protests, or Resolves. George Mason had already penned the Resolves of a nearby county, and in July 1774, he is credited with writing the Fairfax County Resolves, posted July 18, 1774. Some historians view this document as the precursor to the Declaration of Independence.

In 1974, the City of Alexandria celebrated the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Fairfax County Resolves, including a reenactment of the event, which you can see pictured here.

Among the demands in the Fairfax County Resolves is the claim that members of British Parliament should not be able to tax the colonists, as the colonists did not have representatives in Parliament. The document's writers advocated a meeting of all the colonies



PHOTO/HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

The 1974 reenactment of the signing of the Fairfax County Resolves.

in order to respond to Parliament's overreach. The First Continental Congress convened less than two months later in Philadelphia. The Fairfax County Resolves also claimed slavery was a burden forced upon the colonists by the British empire. While several of the members of the committee credited with writing the document also owned the largest number of enslaved people in Fairfax County, later generations used the words and ideas expressed in the document to claim their own freedom.

The Fairfax Resolves Marker states:

"Directly across the street from where you stand, radical and influential ideologies

forged a path to revolution. The Fairfax County Resolves, written primarily by George Mason, were issued at the former Fairfax County Courthouse on July 18, 1774, and were the precursors to what ultimately became the Declaration of Independence. Well-known Alexandrians including George Washington, John Carlyle, and Charles Alexander supported the 'Resolves,' or grievances, which objected to the Coercive Acts of 1774. The Resolves declared that the colonies had the right to govern their own affairs and that Parliament could not tax them without their consent. It went further than the Resolves of other counties when it called

for the colonies to unite and permanently abolish the slave trade, arguing this practice was forced on them by Britain as a way to keep the colonies dependent on the British Empire. The Resolves reflected Mason's prioritization of individual liberties, which later resulted in his refusal to sign the Constitution and the creation of the Bill of Rights. While the writers of the Resolves only intended for those individual rights to apply to people like themselves, later generations used their words and ideas to demand those rights for all citizens."

The City of Alexandria dedicates a marker on the Fairfax Resolves on Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m. at Market Square. The program begins at 6 p.m. Keynote remarks will be given by Carly Fiorina, Virginia's National Honorary Chairperson of the American Revolution 250 Commission. For more information, please visit alexandriava.gov/America250.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.