

The American Patriots Series

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING . . .

“Through painstaking and detailed research of primary source documents, Leslie Mironuck has gathered, organized, and produced a superb collection of biographies for readers from middle school upward. . . . clearly shows how the founding fathers guided the framework of the government we have today. The reader will get insight to the individual effort of each founding father as details are shared that are typically omitted from today’s textbooks. I wish I had this resource when I started teaching. . . .” (*Excerpt from Foreword*)

— Jim Simmons, M.Ed.
History teacher for 38 years, Mid-Del Schools, OK

“Leslie Mironuck takes readers on his journey of meticulous research to reveal little known facts about the early leaders of our country. Did you know: Joseph Hewes was even part of our history? Benjamin Franklin was one of seventeen children and Patrick Henry fathered seventeen? Israel Putnam’s military fame after the French and Indian War equaled that of George Washington? Most public school educators have been guilty of teaching only the high profile Founding Fathers like Hamilton and Jefferson because “there isn’t enough time.” The majority of the Founders have been ignored . . . until now. Mironuck thoughtfully reintroduces some of these forgotten leaders. It is a journey worth taking.”

— Lula Mae Hardman, M.Ed.
Missouri Historical Society’s “Teacher of Merit”

“While fantasy superheroes save worlds in the movies, American patriots were real people who took extraordinary actions which resulted in a new country. This chronological three book series details brief biographies of American Revolution patriots—based on primary sources. Each volume is indexed. Bios read like stories and are full of patriot life facts with correlations to American Revolution events. The series is recommended for middle school and high school libraries for support of American history curriculum and History Day activities. Others who will find this series worthwhile are historical storytellers, amateur historians, genealogy buffs, and public libraries.”

— Marilyn Odle, M.Ed., M.L.S., School Librarian 30+ years

From Mr. Mironuck's research, using sources from that period, he gives the reader fascinating personal histories of many of the patriots, along with stories of their challenges and courage. Instead of just facts and dates, I read exciting stories about real people, stories that make history come alive, stories I will never forget. *Irreconcilable Differences* is a "must read."

— Judith Learmann, MA, Former chair Language Arts, Waynesville High School, Adjunct English instructor, Drury College

"Would that I had become an avid reader of American history earlier in life. Mironuck's *Irreconcilable Differences* has stimulated my appetite for discovering more about our Founding Fathers."

— Virgie Cole-Mahan, Ed.D.

"I love the concept of the book and how it focuses on individual Founders and their backgrounds. I especially like the fact that they are not all well known, but still have fascinating stories. Israel Putnam's story was particularly interesting (that guy was really lucky!). The writer has a nice voice and makes the reading enjoyable without "dumbing it down" or becoming too academic. I think the book could be used in an Advanced Placement course."

— Timothy Thieke, High School AP History Teacher

"As I've traveled the nations of the world, I've noticed that the political history within each country is slanted in favor of the country in which it was written. It has been said that written history always favors the victorious nation. While this is true to a degree, I was extremely impressed with the non-biased research in the book, *Irreconcilable Differences* by Leslie Mironuck.

When I received the preliminary manuscript, my intention was to scan through the pages and get a general idea of the content. However, as I began to read, I could not put the manuscript down. It was so insightful and well-written that I sat at length marveling at the magnitude of this work. It revealed details not found in most current historical writings.

The quality of *Irreconcilable Differences*, along with the character and integrity of the author, puts this book in the category of books that should be in every home and library. I want to give my congratulations to the author for this exceptionally excellent work and I look forward to reading his future works in this American Patriot Series, *Liberty or Death* and *Dawn of a Nation*."

— Dr. Larry Ollison, International Speaker, Osage Beach, Missouri

The American Patriots Series

IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES

Profiles of the Founding Fathers

1750 – 1776

Leslie G. Mironuck



Waynesville, MO

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Lafayette Publishers
25575 Ridgeview Lane
Waynesville, MO 65583
www.lafayettepublishers.com

ISBN
978-0-9976625-0-4 soft cover
978-0-9976625-1-1 hard cover
978-0-9976625-2-8 e-book

Design: Julie Murkette
www.juliemurkette.com

Publisher's Cataloging-In-Publication Data
(Prepared by The Donohue Group, Inc.)

Names: Mironuck, Leslie G.

Title: Irreconcilable differences : profiles of the Founding Fathers : 1750-1776
/ Leslie G. Mironuck.

Other Titles: Profiles of the Founding Fathers : 1750-1776

Description: Waynesville, MO : Lafayette Publishers, [2017] | Series: The American patriots series | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: ISBN 978-0-9976625-0-4 (softcover) | ISBN 978-0-9976625-1-1 (hardcover) | ISBN 978-0-9976625-2-8 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Statesmen—United States—History—18th century. | United States—Constitution—Signers. | United States—Politics and government—18th century.

Classification: LCC E302.5 .M57 2017 (print) | LCC E302.5 (ebook) | DDC 973.3/092/2—dc23

Printed in the United States of America

To My Wife:
Oksana Mironuck

And My Children:
Christopher Chad Mironuck
Nicole Danielle Thurman
Tyler James Mironuck

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Larry Ollison who took the time to read one of my early manuscripts. His endorsement of my book's content was very reassuring, and his encouragement was greatly appreciated. Dr. Larry Ollison is founder and Senior Pastor of Walk on the Water Faith Church and founder of Larry Ollison Ministries. He has been laboring in God's field for over forty years, through radio, television, internet and daily email devotions. Not only has he authored seven books, but he is also a popular speaker on a national and international level.

I am extremely grateful to Judith Learmann, BS, MA, who proofread my manuscript and provided preliminary editorial review. Judith chaired the language arts department at Waynesville High School and was also an adjunct English instructor at Drury College.

I also appreciate the fine work of Reg Parsons and Eva Yatt, the artists who sketched the entire collection of portraits.

And for the finishing touches—the interior layout and the cover artwork—a special thanks to Julie Murkette. I greatly appreciate her subtle creativity and attention to detail.

Thanks to Sharon Castlen, my book marketer and publishing consultant for her valuable direction. She helped me bring out the book I had envisioned and is now moving me forward on the marketing journey.

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FOREWORD

by Jim Simmons, M.Ed., retired

Congratulations! Having this book in your hands is a wise choice on your part (or perhaps divine intervention.) Either way, *Irreconcilable Differences* is nothing short of a gift to anyone with even the slightest interest in the patriots who put their fortunes and their lives at risk to provide the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity. It is a gift from someone who is more than an author. Leslie Mironuck's passion for American History has become a vocation. Through painstaking and detailed research of primary source documents, he has gathered, organized, and produced a superb collection of biographies for readers from middle school upward. I wish I had this resource when I started teaching. Having retired after 38 years from a career of teaching, I crossed paths with Leslie Mironuck and immediately connected through a love of history. I was honored, pleased, and excited to be offered an opportunity to read the manuscript for this book before it went to print. I am doubly honored and happy to write this foreword.

The author presents the story of American Independence by weaving together the progress and growth of the revolutionary spirit through its people, events, and documents. Details flow seamlessly within the presentation of the contributions and achievements of each of the founding fathers. Their relationships to one another are laid out as pieces of a puzzle, each connecting to several others. Like this book, the revolution itself was well organized. *Irreconcilable Differences* clearly explains colonial efforts to achieve independence and Britain's attempts to prevent it. Mr. Mironuck's talent for writing about the founders of freedom is on par with the best. His work is well-supplied with footnotes and references. Within the text are interesting and appropriately placed quotations and anecdotes.

Irreconcilable Differences clearly shows how the founding fathers guided the framework of the government we have today. The reader will get insight into the individual efforts of each founding father, as details are shared that are typically omitted from today's textbooks. Most students are not even exposed to the scope of the political windings from which our government was created. The richness of each patriot's life is revealed and tied to the

Irreconcilable Differences: Profiles of the Founding Fathers

common cause. Even before there was such a thing as political parties, colonials were setting precedent for today's leaders.

Biographical information includes ancestors, education, political and military involvement, and post-war activity. Each is concise, yet informative. Examples are given to demonstrate how the founding fathers were honorable, dignified, passionate, and dedicated to the cause of independence. More than once, Mr. Mironuck relates how the wives of our founders made it possible for those men to leave home for extended periods of time to participate in the revolutionary cause. Though this book is not about those women, he is quick to point out their invaluable contribution.

Having read excellent history books by Doris Kearns Goodwin, Jon Meacham, Ken Burns, Ron Chernow, and many others, I would have to say that Leslie Mironuck is an equal. For me, *Irreconcilable Differences* will get multiple readings. It will prove to be a very good reference and resource for history teachers, students and buffs. I found the book to be educational and inspirational. My patriotism is deepened. I personally appreciate that Mr. Mironuck is not worried about the political correctness that prevents many authors from including the deep faith that guided the lives of our founding fathers. As a teacher of American history, I was myself less worried about political correctness and more concerned with the factual information available that showed these people to be human. I am looking forward to reading Volumes II and III of the American Patriot Series. I also would highly recommend that this series of books become a part of any personal collection and school resource room.

— Jim Simmons, M.Ed.

PREFACE

What makes the United States of America such a great nation? The answer to this question is largely found in our rich history. The United States is the longest-running constitutional republic in the history of the world. We have had virtually the same Constitution for well over two hundred years now. Compare that to the eight France has had or the fifty-four Italy has had during the same time frame. Years alone, however, do not provide the main ingredient in our rich history. The main ingredient is traced to our nation's birth, to the great men who won our freedom, framed our founding documents, and set this nation in motion. These men are known as our Founding Fathers.

The Founding Fathers are often alluded to these days, especially when discussing constitutional matters. We often hear that our Founding Fathers would have wanted this or would have intended that. This is an important consideration if we, as a nation, wish to perpetuate our national inheritance. The problem with this consideration is that an alarming number of Americans do not know who the Founding Fathers were, let alone what they stood for. We should not be surprised by this ignorance because the Founding Fathers, as a group, have been absent from the curriculum of our public schools for many decades.

The purpose of this book is to profile America's Founding Fathers so readers may learn who they are, what they stood for, and what their characteristics and beliefs were. Through knowing the Founding Fathers, readers will have a good idea of what they would have wanted and intended for our country. A further benefit of knowing the attributes of our nation's early patriots is that readers can then add those attributes to their own and in so doing, be justified in labeling themselves patriots.

My definition of a Founding Father is one who provided distinguished leadership, exerted significant influence, or substantially impacted the establishment of America during its founding era. My definition will be further limited to the following: the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence, the fourteen presidents of Congress who served prior to our federal Constitution, thirty-three prominent generals who served during the Revolutionary War, the thirty-nine signers of the federal Constitution,

the first chief justice of the Supreme Court and his three associate Supreme Court justices, and twenty of the most influential statesmen who helped frame the Bill of Rights. Other patriots like Patrick Henry, James Otis, and Thomas Paine, who are not part of any of the above groups, but still qualify under my broader definition, also will be included. Based on these criteria, I have identified 151 Founding Fathers (150, plus George Washington), whom I will profile in the ensuing pages of this three-volume series. (Please note that the total number of Founders will be less than the sum of the above groups, due to some overlap.)

The readers will benefit from my extensive research. The facts used in writing the following pages were almost completely derived from primary sourced material—the historical books listed in the bibliography. I believe this historical research material is much more reliable than more recently written material because it was written at a time when the facts could have been challenged by eyewitnesses, or in some cases the subjects themselves, if not completely accurate. Also, contemporary research material, for the most part, is nothing more than hearsay. Let me explain what I mean. A historian records an event that took place in his time, which years later is recorded by another historian, which is subsequently recorded by yet another historian, each using the previous source rather than the original source. The result is a modern version of history that is often dramatically distorted from the actual events. It is precisely for this reason that hearsay is not admissible evidence in a court of law. And therefore, hearsay should not be used to rewrite history either.

Two good examples of hearsay—or, generally accepted anecdotes—are the George Washington/cherry tree legend and the allegation that Thomas Jefferson fathered a child with Sally Hemings, one of his slaves. Both of these examples of hearsay have origins that date back more than two hundred years—and nowadays both are generally accepted as factual. The Washington/cherry tree legend first appeared in an elementary school textbook that was used for teaching students lessons about morality. The Jefferson/Hemings allegation first hit the tabloids during Jefferson's presidency, and was written by a political enemy. The former anecdote enhances the reputation of the subject, while the latter piece tarnishes the character of the subject. However, neither of these generally accepted anecdotes qualifies for inclusion in my three-volume series because they

Preface

weren't mentioned in any of the primary sourced material that I used for my research. These two examples of hearsay are only two among many. The American Patriot Series is fact-based and, therefore, hearsay—rumors, legends, gossip, folklore, and anecdotes—will be ignored.

In an attempt to maintain credibility, I have left most of the quotes used in the original text, including grammar, punctuation, spelling, and the vocabulary consistent with the eighteenth-century lexicon that occasionally may appear foreign to modern readers.

The study of the lives of this great company of men is a study of the history of their time, a time that has become known as the founding era (1750–1799). For obvious reasons, the featured biography in this trilogy will be that of the quintessential George Washington, the father of our country. His public life played a part in almost every major event of the founding era. He served in the 1750s as a general during the French and Indian War, he attended the First Continental Congress, and he was the commander in chief of the Continental Army. He presided over the Constitutional Convention, he became the first president of the United States, and under his leadership, Congress created the Bill of Rights. His death late in 1799 brings a fitting close to the founding era. The profiles of the other Founding Fathers will be inserted into Washington's biography at the time when their lives made a great impact. For example, the biography of Thomas Jefferson will be inserted at the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, and the biography of Thomas Paine will be inserted with the publishing of *Common Sense*.

This volume in *The American Patriots Series* will span the period of 1750 through 1776. It will include the life stories of fifty of the Founding Fathers and describe how they came to grips with their *Irreconcilable Differences* with Great Britain.

TIME LINE: THE FOUNDING ERA

1750-1776

January 30, 1750

Reverend Jonathan Mayhew published his sermon—*Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers*—which quietly ushered in the founding era.

July 4, 1754

Colonel George Washington surrendered to the French after a skirmish at Fort Necessity.

July 4, 1754

Benjamin Franklin's *The Albany Plan of Union*, for the defense of the British American colonies, was approved by a special colonial Congress. The plan was similar to the current US Constitution.

July 9, 1755

This date marked the beginning of the French and Indian War. General Edward Braddock set out to conquer the French at Fort Duquesne.

July 13, 1755

The British forces were defeated at Farmington, Pennsylvania, a few miles from Fort Duquesne. General Braddock was killed during the battle. The death of this British general had no impact on the outcome of the French and Indian War.

February 10, 1763

The Treaty of Versailles was signed, bringing an end to hostilities in the French and Indian War. Great Britain became almost the sole mistress of the North American continent.

December 12, 1763

Patrick Henry won the famous legal case known as the Parson's Cause.

May 30, 1765

Patrick Henry delivered his defiant Stamp Act speech in the House of Burgesses. He stated, “If this be treason, make the most of it.”

August 14, 1765

Samuel Adams gathered the Sons of Liberty—a group that eventually became the organizational hub of the Northern resistance—under the Liberty Tree in Boston to protest the Stamp Act. This was their first official action.

October 7-25, 1765

Elected representatives from most of the colonies met in New York to discuss the Stamp Act. That gathering became known as the Stamp Act Congress.

June 29, 1767

Parliament enacted the Townshend Act, after which the colonies responded by passing non-importation and non-exportation agreements.

August 1768

Reverend John Witherspoon—father of the Founding Fathers—accepted the presidency of Princeton University. Princeton was eventually called the Seminary of Sedition by many in the British Parliament.

September 5, 1769

A gang of British soldiers attempted to assassinate James Otis.

March 5, 1770

After a scuffle with some Boston youths, a few British soldiers fired shots into the crowd, killing five. The incident became known as the Boston Massacre.

November 2, 1772

Samuel Adams established the first Committee of Correspondence. Almost simultaneously, Richard Henry Lee established a Committee of Correspondence in Virginia. All other colonies eventually followed their example and created their own committees. In doing so, a colonial shadow government was established.

Time Line: The Founding Era

December 16, 1773

In protest of the duties levied by Parliament on tea imported to the colonies, the Sons of Liberty disguised themselves as Indians, boarded three British ships in Boston Harbor, and tossed fifteen thousand pounds of tea overboard. The event became known as the Boston Tea Party.

June 1, 1774

Parliament enacted the Port Act, one of the Intolerable Acts, which closed Boston Harbor.

September 5, 1774

Delegates from twelve colonies met in Philadelphia for the First Continental Congress. They decided to formally—and respectfully—petition the king by way of preparing a list of grievances and violated rights. The petition was then sent to England, after which Congress adjourned.

September 9, 1774

Joseph Warren of Boston authored and presented the Suffolk Resolves to the Massachusetts Assembly. The Resolves declared the Intolerable Acts to be unconstitutional and therefore void. The Resolves spoke against violence and riots, and further declared that the people of Boston would submit only to the authority of Congress.

September 17, 1774

Congress endorsed the Suffolk Resolves.

September 20, 1774

Congress adopted the Articles of Association, which took effect on December 1, 1774.

January 18, 1775

King George III decided not to reply to Congress's petition. Instead, he and Parliament decided to quash the American rebellion.

March 23, 1775

In Virginia, Patrick Henry delivered his “Give me liberty or give me death” speech.

April 19, 1775

The British forces (eighteen hundred soldiers) attacked the colonial militia at Lexington—"the shot heard round the world." The British forces then marched on to Concord, where they were routed by 130 minutemen.

May 10, 1775

The Second Continental Congress convened. The first order of business was to discuss Parliament's response—or lack thereof—to Congress's petition of grievances.

May 10, 1775

Ethan Allen and his eighty-three Green Mountain Boys captured the British fort at Ticonderoga, a remote stronghold in northern New York.

June 15, 1775

Congress commissioned George Washington to be the commander in chief of the Continental Army. He was commissioned to defend the American colonies against British aggression.

June 17, 1775

The British attacked the colonial forces at Bunker Hill. The Royal Army suffered 1,054 casualties, while the colonials lost only 139.

November 12, 1775

General Richard Montgomery completed his congressionally ordered expedition into Canada. He captured the British forts at Chambly, St. John's, and Montreal.

December 31, 1775

Under the leadership of Benedict Arnold, the Continentals were defeated while attempting to capture the British fort at Quebec.

January 9, 1776

Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* was released. Tens of thousands of copies were distributed all over the colonies, provoking thousands of previously uncommitted citizens to rethink their neutrality in favor of liberty. Continental Army enlistments skyrocketed.

January 21, 1776

Reverend Peter Muhlenberg delivered an army-recruiting sermon from the pulpit of his Woodstock, Virginia church. He recruited three hundred patriots, men who eventually became the 8th Virginia Brigade. Similar recruiting sermons were delivered throughout the colonies.

March 5, 1776

General Washington chased the British out of Boston Harbor, his first victory, without spilling a drop of blood. The previous night, General Henry Knox had mounted sixty cannons on a hill overlooking Boston. Knox had retrieved the heavy artillery from Fort Ticonderoga.

Spring 1776

Parliament employed nine thousand German mercenaries and sent them, along with over twenty thousand British soldiers, to North America with the intent of snuffing out every vestige of colonial resistance.

June 7, 1776

On the floor of Congress, Richard Henry Lee proposed a resolution for colonial independence.

June 11, 1776

After four days of debate, Congress established a committee to put Lee's resolution in written form. Thomas Jefferson, Lee's protégé and fellow Virginian, was made chairman of the committee, because Lee was absent due to his wife's illness.

June 11, 1776

Congress established a committee—consisting of one member from each colony—to consider, debate, and investigate the question of confederation.

June 28, 1776

Nine British ships of war sailed into Charleston Harbor with the intent of occupying Charleston and immediately came under attack from the South Carolina militia, positioned on Sullivan's Island. After an eleven-hour battle, the defeated British fleet retreated out to sea and returned to New York.

July 4, 1776

Congress voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence, copies of which were sent throughout the colonies, Canada, and Europe.

July 12, 1776

The Confederation Committee completed their assignment and presented their draft articles on the floor of Congress. The articles were debated daily for a month, resulting in a political impasse. It was decided that before progress could be made, all the state governments needed to be organized and solidified.

August 2, 1776

A signing ceremony was held on the floor of Congress—each of the delegates present signed the Declaration.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the following biographies is to familiarize ourselves with the Founding Fathers. However, before we begin to study the primary participants of the founding era, I believe it is imperative that we understand the theater in which they acted and the circumstances that brought them to that point in history.

The discovery of America, as far as the Europeans are concerned, occurred in 1492, when Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the West Indies during his first highly controversial, but providential, exploratory expedition to the extremities of the Atlantic Ocean. The purpose of that voyage is described in his writings:

Our Lord opened to my understanding (I could sense his hand upon me) so it became clear to me that it [the voyage] was feasible . . . All those who heard about my enterprise rejected it with laughter, scoffing at me . . . Who doubts that this illumination was from the Holy Spirit? I attest that He [the Spirit], with marvelous rays of light consoled me through the holy and sacred Scriptures . . . they inflame me with a sense of great urgency . . . No one should be afraid to take on any enterprise in the name of our Savior if it is right and if the purpose is purely for His holy service . . . And I say that the sign which convinces me that our Lord is hastening the end of the world is the preaching of the Gospel recently in so many lands.¹

Columbus's well-publicized discovery encouraged other explorers, financed by other European countries—as well as by private entities—to set out and stake their claims in the new continent. Brave and determined settlers who were motivated by their desire for religious liberty subsequently colonized those claims. This is evident by the Mayflower Compact, the governing charter drafted by the Pilgrims, who in 1620 landed in Massachusetts Bay, which became the first permanent settlement in America. It states,

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Having undertaken for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith . . . [we] combine ourselves together into a civil body politic for . . . furthermore of the ends aforesaid.²

About a decade later, the Puritans arrived in America under the leadership of John Winthrop, who declared,

We are a company professing ourselves fellow-members of Christ . . . Knit together by this bond of love . . . we are entered into covenant with Him for this work . . . for we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us.³

In 1636, Roger Williams, an Anabaptist minister whose Christian views were too radical to be welcome in New England, purchased land from the Indians and established Providence, Rhode Island. The charter of Rhode Island eventually stated,

Pursuing with peace and loyal minds, their sober, serious and religious intentions of Godly edifying themselves and one another in the holy Christian faith . . . a most flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained . . . with a full liberty in religious concernments.⁴

In 1653, the Quakers settled in Carolina, and their charter stated,

Excited with laudable and pious zeal for the propagation of the Christian faith . . . in the parts of America not yet cultivated or planted, and only inhabited by . . . people who have no knowledge of Almighty God.⁵

The Anglicans, along with the Calvinists and Methodists, settled in Virginia. William Penn, a Quaker, established Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, and promised the Lutherans and Catholics freedom of worship within the colony. As a result, America was being flooded by Christian settlers of various sects, who by the courage of their convictions

Introduction

took responsibility for their future and left England (as well as other European countries) in pursuit of their religious liberties.

Christianity continued to flourish in America through the remainder of the seventeenth century and eventually birthed the Great Awakening in 1740. That movement attracted evangelical titans such as George Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley to America. The revival intensified the dissenting bias that already existed against church hierarchy in Great Britain and initiated the breaking down of the walls of separation between the many different Christian denominations, which helped unite the colonies. The dissenting bias against church hierarchy carried over and sparked a similar bias against British government hierarchy and monarchism. It was from the pulpit that the first argument was made against British tyranny. The argument was made—and justified—by scripture. The pulpit belonged to Reverend Jonathan Mayhew, a Harvard graduate called the prophet of the American Revolution by many historians. His landmark sermon was given in 1750 and quietly ushered in the founding era.

At the beginning of the founding era, America led the world in education and social economics. Colleges such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and William & Mary had been established as seminaries, and as such, all graduates were considered theologians. Scholarships and tuition work programs were offered liberally, availing higher education to commoners, which resulted in more college graduates per population than any other country in the world. Nine out of ten adults owned land, and unemployment was almost nonexistent, creating a ballooning middle class and a firm foundation for capitalism.

Through immigration and procreation, the population of the various colonies grew at a rate that far outpaced their transatlantic counterparts. With each passing year, the colonists became more and more economically important to their homelands. From the late seventeenth century until 1754, two of the great world powers, Great Britain and France, struggled for control of the vast lands of America. At that time, the English controlled most of the coastal regions, but very little of the interior. France had settled north of the Saint Lawrence River in the territory that is today part of eastern Canada, as well as in Louisiana and throughout the Mississippi Valley areas that linked its northern and southern colonies. The French strategy was to surround the English colonies and cut them off from settling west of the Appalachians, which if successful, would leave France with the greater part of America.

Irreconcilable Differences: Profiles of the Founding Fathers

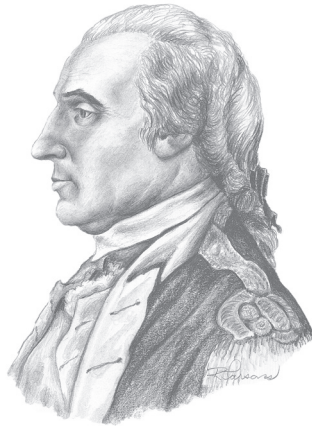
In 1755, the final conflict for American supremacy erupted and became known to the English colonies as the French and Indian War. The English colonies obviously allied with Great Britain, and the Indians sided with France. Previously, the colonies always had acted independently of each other, each having their separate governments, religion, cultures, and so on. But for the first time, the individual colonies rallied together to oppose one common foe.

The colonial troops made several valuable observations during the French and Indian War. First, their many perceived differences were diminished by their shared patriotism. Second, although the British troops had more military training, the militias from the various colonies outperformed them, presumably because they were defending their families and personal property. In the years to come, while contemplating independence, those observations would help to build the confidence of the American people.

PART I

The Stage Is Set

A HERO IS BORN



George Washington

February 22, 1732 – July 4, 1754

The family name of “Wassington”—the ancient spelling of “Washington”—had been prominent in Durham County, England, as early as the twelfth century. In 1529, Lawrence Washington relocated to Northamptonshire, where he became a successful wool merchant. Lawrence acquired an estate-type property and built a large house that he named Sulgrave Manor. The manor remained in the family holdings for at least fifty years. Lawrence Washington’s great-grandson and namesake was born at the family seat in 1604. Young Lawrence was given an excellent education, culminating in his theology degree from Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1623. Soon after receiving his degree, he became the rector^a of a parish in Purleigh, a small village in Essex County, where he later married and started a family. Lawrence’s son, John—the great-grandfather of George Washington—was born in 1634.

^a Lawrence’s career in the ministry was not unusual for the Washington clan. In fact, working in God’s field was a well-established tradition in the Washington family lineage. As proof of that fact, consider that the Washington family coat of arms is displayed on a stained glass window in a fifteenth-century monastery located in Yorkshire, England.

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At age twenty-three, John Washington emigrated from Northern England and arrived in Virginia, where he settled down and married Anne Pope. Anne's father, Colonel Nathaniel Pope, was a wealthy plantation owner who gave the happy couple some land in Westmoreland County as a wedding gift. John put the land to good use and became a successful agriculturalist. The young couple soon built a modest four-room house that became known as Wakefield, the place where the next few generations of descendants would be born. John expanded his interests to include politics and military tactics—serving in the House of Burgesses and as a colonel in the Virginia militia.

In September 1659, Anne gave John a son, the first of the Washington clan to be born in America. They named him Lawrence, after his paternal grandfather. Being the firstborn, much attention was given to the lad's education. His parents sent him to England, where he studied law. At the completion of his education, Lawrence returned to Virginia and became a lawyer and, like his father, he also found time to become involved in politics. It is presumed that he primarily focused his attention on his career and politics, as the family's landholdings did not expand under his watch. However, he did find time to pursue romance, which resulted in his marriage to Mildred Warner in 1688. They eventually increased their family by the addition of three children: John, Augustine, and Mildred. During the same year that Mildred was born, Lawrence died. He was only thirty-eight years old.

At Wakefield in 1694, Augustine, the father of George Washington, was born. Augustine—or “Gus,” as his friends and neighbors referred to him—was much like his grandfather, John, in that he was tall, possessed great physical strength, and was a shrewd land trader. Gus eventually expanded the family's landholdings to include a 2,500-acre parcel of land on Little Hunting Creek, later known as Mount Vernon. In 1715, Gus married Jane Butler, and they had four children. However, only two survived to reach maturity: Lawrence and Augustine Jr. Four years after Jane's death in 1729, Gus married Mary Ball, who was fourteen years his junior. Gus and Mary had five children; their firstborn was George Washington.

George Washington—the father of our nation—was born on February 22, 1732. Young George's childhood years were split between his many tedious farm chores and his education, which was limited to about five years in a common country school. It appears that he then continued his

education under the tutelage of his elder half-brother, Lawrence, who had been educated in England. George became skilled at handwriting and developed proficiencies in mathematics, trigonometry, and geometry. Those skills eventually helped him launch an early, short-lived career in surveying. His other areas of interest included geography, climatology, astronomy, and history. George also enjoyed reading and spent much of his time devouring all the popular books of his day.

When George was ten years old, his father died, cutting short his childhood and forcing him to mature quickly and to concentrate on his education. A few years later, George went to live with Lawrence, who by that time had married and had built his own house on a parcel of the Mount Vernon property. Lawrence's wife, Anne, was the daughter of Lord Thomas Fairfax, a British nobleman. While living with his half-brother, George became acquainted with Fairfax and eventually developed a close friendship with him. Fairfax hired George, who had been apprenticing as a surveyor, to map out his extensive landholdings, which extended more than a hundred miles west.

As George surveyed the land, he became familiar with the frontier by studying its topography, dealing with the Indians, and learning wilderness survival. He also gained the experience necessary to become a government surveyor, an occupation that paid very well. When the governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie, heard how pleased Fairfax was with George's work, he made George a public surveyor.

George's employment with Governor Dinwiddie opened new career doors. At nineteen, the six-foot-three-inch-tall George Washington was appointed one of the adjutant generals of Virginia, with the rank of major. Less than two years later, the government commissioned him for a mission that would require both the prudence of a senior statesman and the vigor of his youth. The governor of Virginia sent Washington to deliver an ultimatum to the French military, which had begun to occupy the Ohio Valley. The royal message to the French was to leave British soil or suffer the consequences.

In November 1753, George set out on his mission with his guide, Christopher Gist, a lifelong friend. The thousand-mile expedition would take them through the vast wilderness of the interior during the dead of winter. After delivering the message, he returned home; the entire journey had taken only two and one-half months. Upon hearing the exciting details

of the mission, Dinwiddie was so impressed that he had George's journal published. *The Journal of Major General Washington* was so widely read that the twenty-one-year-old Washington became the most celebrated hero in Virginia.

When the French responded negatively to the ultimatum, the Virginia Assembly raised a regiment of three hundred men for the purpose of defending the colony's frontier. Washington was appointed lieutenant colonel and sent out, in the spring of 1754, to expel the French from Fort Duquesne.^b After weeks of marching, Washington was only sixty miles from his destination when he received intelligence that the French were en route to attack his regiment. Finding a clearing, a spot known as the Great Meadows, he constructed a small makeshift stockade that he appropriately named Fort Necessity. Prior to its completion, twelve hundred French soldiers surrounded the fort and proceeded to open fire upon the Virginia militia. After a daylong siege, Washington was forced to surrender. On July 4, 1754, favorable terms of capitulation were negotiated, and the brave soldiers were allowed to return to Virginia. Once home, they received public thanks from the Virginia House of Burgesses for the bravery they demonstrated against such overwhelming odds.

During the same day that Colonel George Washington was negotiating his terms of surrender with his French enemy, his future friend and fellow statesman from Pennsylvania, Benjamin Franklin, had his Plan of Union for the defense of the British-American colonies approved by a special colonial congress that had gathered in Albany, New York.

^b The city of Pittsburgh was eventually built on the same site.