

History and Facts on Virginia

HISTORY AND FACTS ON VIRGINIA

Capitol Building, Richmond



Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office

In 1607, the first permanent English settlement in America was established at Jamestown. The Jamestown colonists also established the first representative legislature in America in 1619. Virginia became a colony in 1624 and entered the union on June 25, 1788, the tenth state to do so. Virginia was named for Queen Elizabeth I of England, the “Virgin Queen” and is also known as the “Old Dominion.” King Charles II of England gave it this name in appreciation of Virginia’s loyalty to the crown during the English Civil War of the mid-1600s. Virginia is designated as a Commonwealth, along with Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. In 1779, the capital was relocated from Williamsburg to Richmond.

The cornerstone for the Virginia Capitol Building was laid on August 18, 1785, and the building was completed in 1792. Modeled after the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, France, the Capitol was the first public building in the United States to be built using the Classical Revival style of architecture. Thomas Jefferson designed the central section of the Capitol, including its most outstanding feature: the interior dome, which is undetectable from the exterior. The wings were added in 1906 to house the Senate and House of Delegates. In 2007, in time to receive the Queen of England during the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown Settlement, the Capitol underwent an extensive restoration, renovation and expansion, including the addition of a state of the art Visitor’s Center that will ensure that it remains a working capitol well into the 21st Century. The Virginia state Capitol is the second oldest working capitol in the United States, having been in continuous use since 1788.

More information on the Capitol building can be found at <http://www.virginiacapitol.gov>

Eight U.S. Presidents were born in Virginia: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor, and Woodrow Wilson, giving Virginia the nickname the “Mother of Presidents.”

Virginia is also known as the “Mother of States.” All or part of the following eight states were formed from western territory once claimed by Virginia: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

WHY VIRGINIA IS A COMMONWEALTH

Virginia was first designated a Commonwealth during the Interregnum (“between reigns”) while Oliver Cromwell was the Lord Protector of England. Under Cromwell’s leadership, the colony of Virginia enjoyed greater freedom in self-government than it had before. From 1660 until the end of the American Revolution in 1781, Virginia was considered a royal British colony along with the other twelve colonies established in North America before the English Civil War.

Virginia’s first constitution was passed on June 29, 1776. The constitution directed that “Commissions and grants shall run, in the Name of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and bear teste by the Governor with Seal of the Commonwealth annexed.” It also states “Government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people...” and “That all power is vested in and consequently derived from, the people...” These statements are the foundation and heart of the meaning of the “Commonwealth of Virginia.” The delegates at the Williamsburg convention decided to name their new form of government the Commonwealth of Virginia, probably in deference to the rebellion against the Crown and the relative freedom they had enjoyed as a colony over one hundred years before and during the Interregnum.

While Virginia was the first Commonwealth, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania became Commonwealths after the War of Independence. Kentucky, formerly part of Virginia, kept the Commonwealth distinction when it was formed in 1792.

This piece is a compilation of texts written by Thomas M. Moncure, Jr. of George Mason University and Louise A. Arnatt, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth of Virginia for Governor Mark Warner. Both texts were compiled by Anne Forsythe.

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Statewide Statistics:

Population	8,260,405
Rank in Country	12th
Density per Square Mile.....	202
Land Area (Square Miles).....	39,490
Rank in Country	35th
Capital City	Richmond
Population	211,172
Rank in State	4th
Number of Counties	95
Number of Independent Cities	38
Number of Incorporated Towns	191

Congressional Delegation:

U.S. Senators.....	2
U.S. Representatives	11
Electoral College Votes.....	13

State Legislature:

Senators.....	40
Delegates.....	100

Official State Emblems and Symbols:

State Flower	Dogwood Blossom
State Tree	Dogwood
State Bird	Cardinal
State Dog.....	American Foxhound
State Fish (Freshwater)	Brook Trout
State Fish (Saltwater)	Striped Bass
State Shell	Oyster
State Folk Dance	Square Dance
State Insect.....	Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly
State Fossil.....	Chesapacten Jeffersonius
State Motto.....	<i>Sic Semper Tyrannis</i> (Thus Always to Tyrants)
State Bat.....	Virginia Big Eared Bat
State Boat.....	Chesapeake Bay Deadrise
State Beverage	Milk

Ten Largest Counties*:

Fairfax	1,116,897
Prince William.....	431,258
Loudoun	347,969
Chesterfield	326,950
Henrico.....	316,973
Arlington	227,146
Stafford.....	135,141
Spotsylvania	125,555
Albemarle	102,731
Henrico.....	101,702

Ten Largest Cities*:

Virginia Beach.....	449,628
Norfolk	246,392
Chesapeake.....	232,977
Richmond	211,172
Newport News.....	183,412
Alexandria	151,218
Hampton	139,032
Roanoke.....	98,913
Portsmouth	96,871
Suffolk.....	87,831

* Populations estimates by Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

GOVERNORS OF VIRGINIA

I. Virginia under the London Company, 1606-1624

Edward Maria, Wingfield, President of the Council	May 14-September 10, 1607
John Ratcliffe, President of the Council.....	September 10, 1607-July 22, 1608
Matthew Scrivener, President of the Council.....	July 22-September 10, 1608
John Smith, President of the Council.....	September 10, 1608-September 1609
George Percy, President of the Council	September 1609-May 23, 1610
Thomas West, Baron De La Warr, Governor.....	1609-1618
<i>"Held title until his death, June 7, 1618; represented for most of his term by deputies":</i>	
Sir Thomas Gates, Governor	May 23-June 10, 1610
Thomas West, Baron De La Warr, Governor in Virginia	June 10, 1610-March 28, 1611
George Percy, Deputy Governor	March 28-May 19, 1611
Sir Thomas Dale, Deputy Governor	May 19- August 16, 1611
Sir Thomas Gates, Lieutenant Governor	August 1611-March 1614
Sir Thomas Dale, Lieutenant Governor	March 1614-April 1616
George Yeardley, Deputy Governor	April 1616-May 15, 1617
Samuel Argall, Deputy	May 1617-April 1619
Sir George Yeardley, Governor	April 18, 1619-November 18, 1621
Sir Francis Wyatt, Governor	November 18, 1621-May 1624

II. Virginia under the King, 1624-1652

Sir Francis Wyatt, Governor and Captain General.....	1624-1626
Sir George Yeardley, Governor and Captain General	1626-1627
Francis West, President of the Council and Acting Governor.....	1627-1629
John Pott, President of the Council and Acting Governor.....	1629-1630
Sir John Harvey, Governor and Captain General, resided in Virginia	1630-1635
John West, President of the Council and Acting Governor.....	1635-1637
Sir John Harvey, Governor and Captain General, resided in Virginia	1637-1639
Sir Francis Wyatt, Governor and Captain General.....	1639-1642
Sir William Berkley, Governor and Captain General.....	1642-1644
Richard Kemp (Kempe), President of the Council and Acting Governor	1644-1645
Sir William Berkley, Governor.....	1645-1652

III. Virginia under the Commonwealth of England, 1652-1660

Richard Bennett, Governor, elected by the General Assembly	1652-1655
Edward Digges (Diggs), Governor, elected by the General Assembly	1655-1656
Samuel Matthews, Jr., Governor, elected by the General Assembly	1656-1660
Sir William Berkley, Governor, elected by the General Assembly	1660

IV. Virginia again a Royal Province, 1660-1776

Sir William Berkeley, Governor	1660-1661
Francis Morrison (Moryson), Lieutenant Governor	1661-1662
Sir William Berkeley, Governor	1662-1677
Thomas Culpeper, Governor.....	1677-1683
Represented by duties during his absence for the following terms:	
Sir Herbert Jeffreys (Jeffries), Lieutenant Governor	1677-1678
Sir Henry Chicheley, Deputy Governor.....	1678-1680
Thomas Culpeper, Governor, resided in Virginia	May-August 1680
Sir Henry Chicheley, Deputy Governor	August 1680-December 1682
Thomas Culpeper, Governor.....	December 1682-May 1683
Nicholas Spencer, President of the Council	1683-1684
Francis Howard, Baron of Effingham, Governor resided in Virginia	1684-1689
Represented by the following individuals in his absence:	
Nathaniel Bacon, President of the Council	June-September 1684
	July-September 1687

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	February 1689-June 1690
Colonel Francis Nicholson, Lieutenant Governor	June 1690-September 1692
Sir Edmund Andros, Governor	1692-1698
Colonel Francis Nicholson, Governor.....	1698-1705
Represented by the following during brief absences:	
William Byrd, President of the Council.....	September-October 1700
	April-June 1703
	August-September 1704
Edward Knott, Governor.....	1705-1706
Edmund Jennings, President of the Council.....	1706-1708
Robert Hunter, Governor, captured by the French and never reached Virginia	1707-1709
Edmund Jennings, Lieutenant Governor and Deputy to Hunter	1708-1710
George Hamilton, Earl of Orkney, Governor	1710-1737
Never went to Virginia and was represented by the following:	
Alexander Spotswood, Lieutenant Governor.....	1710-1722
Hugh Drysdale, Lieutenant Governor.....	1722-1726
Robert Carter, President of the Council.....	1726-1727
Sir William Gooch, Lieutenant Governor.....	1727-1749
James Blair, President of the Council (acted during Gooches absence)	1740-1741
William Anne Keppel, Governor	1737-1754
Never went to Virginia and was represented by the following deputies:	
Thomas Lee, President of the Council.....	September 1749-November 1750
Lewis Burwell, President of the Council	November 1750-November 1751
Robert Dinwiddie, Lieutenant Governor	1751-1758
John Cambel, Earl of Loudoun, Governor	1756-1759
Never went to Virginia and was represented by the following deputies:	
John Blair, President of the Council	January-June 1758
Francis Fauquier, Lieutenant Governor	1758-1768
Sir Jeffrey Amherst, Governor	1759-1768
John Blair, President of the Council	March-October 1768
Norborne Berkeley, Governor.....	1768-1770
William Nelson, President of the Council.....	1770-1771
John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, Governor	1771-1775

V. Virginia in Revolt – The Convention Period

Peyton Randolph, President of the Virginia Convention of 1774, March 1775, and July 1775
 Edmund Pendleton, President of the Virginia Convention of December 1775 and May 1776

VI. Governors under the Commonwealth 1776-1852 (chosen by the State Legislature)

Patrick Henry, Governor.....	1776-1779
Thomas Jefferson, Governor.....	1779-1781
William Fleming, member of the Council of State acting as Governor	June 4-June 12, 1781
Thomas Nelson, Jr., Governor	June-November 1781
David Jameson, member of the Council of State acting as Governor	November 22-30, 1781
Benjamin Harrison, Governor.....	1781-1784
Patrick Henry, Governor.....	1784-1786
Edmund Randolph, Governor	1786-1788
Beverly Randolph, Governor	1788-1791
Henry Lee, Governor	1791-1794
Robert Brooke, Governor.....	1794-1796
James Wood, Governor.....	1796-1799
Hardin Gurnley, member of the Council of State acting as Governor.....	December 7-11, 1799
John Pendleton, member of the Council of State acting as Governor	December 11-19, 1799
James Monroe, Governor.....	1799-1802
John Page, Governor.....	1802-1805
William H. Cabell, Governor.....	1805-1808
John Tyler, Sr., Governor	1808-1811
George William Smith, member of the Council of State acting as Governor....	January 15-19, 1811
James Monroe, Governor	January 19-April 3, 1811
George William Smith, member of the Council of State	

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Acting as Governor.....	April 3-December 6, 1811
George William Smith, Governor.....	December 6-26, 1811
Peyton Randolph, member of the Council of State	
Acting as Governor.....	December 27, 1811-January 4, 1812
James Barbour, Governor.....	1812-1814
Wilson Cary Nicholas, Governor.....	1814-1816
James P. Preston, Governor.....	1816-1819
Thomas Mann Randolph, Governor.....	1819-1822
James Pleasants, Governor.....	1822-1825
John Tyler, Jr., Governor.....	1825-1827
William B. Giles, Governor.....	1827-1830
John Floyd, Governor.....	1830-1834
Littleton Waller Tazewell, Governor.....	1834-1836
Wyndham Roberts, member of the Council of State	
Acting as Governor.....	March 1836-March 1837
David Campbell, Governor.....	1837-1840
Thomas Walker Gilmer, Governor.....	1840-1841
John Mercer Patton, member of the Council of State acting as Governor.....	March 20-31, 1841
John Rutherford, member of the Council of State	
Acting as Governor.....	March 1841-March 1842
John M. Gregory, member of the Council of State	
Acting as Governor.....	March 1842-January 1843
James McDowell, Governor.....	1843-1846
William Smith, Governor.....	1846-1849
John Buchanan Floyd, Governor.....	1849-1852

VII. Governors under the Commonwealth 1852-Present (Elected by Popular Vote)

Joseph Jonson, Governor.....	1852-1856
Henry Alexander Wise, Governor.....	1856-1860
John Letcher, Governor.....	1860-1864
William Smith, Governor.....	1864-1865
Francis Harrison Pierpoint, Provisional Governor.....	May 1865-April 1868
Henry H. Wells, Provisional Governor.....	April 1868-September 1869
Gilbert C. Walker, Provisional Governor.....	September 1869-December 1869
Gilbert C. Walker, Governor.....	1870-1874
James Lawson Kemper, Governor.....	1874-1878
Frederick W. M. Hilliday, Governor.....	1878-1882
William E. Cameron, Governor.....	1882-1886
Fitzhugh Lee, Governor.....	1886-1890
Philip W. Mckenny, Governor.....	1890-1894
Charles T. O'Ferrall, Governor.....	1894-1898
James Hoge Tyler, Governor.....	1898-1902
Andrew Jackson Montague, Governor.....	1902-1906
Claude A. Swanson, Governor.....	1906-1910
William Hodges Mann, Governor.....	1910-1914
Henry Carter Stuart, Governor.....	1914-1918
Westmoreland Davis, Governor.....	1918-1922
E. Lee Trinkle, Governor.....	1922-1926
Harry F. Byrd, Governor.....	1926-1930
John Garland Pollard, Governor.....	1930-1934
James H. Price, Governor.....	1934-1938
George C. Peery, Governor.....	1938-1942
Colgate W. Darden, Jr., Governor.....	1942-1946
William M. Tuck, Governor.....	1946-1950
John Stewart Battle, Governor.....	1950-1954
Thomas B. Stanley, Governor.....	1954-1958
J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., Governor.....	1958-1962
Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., Governor.....	1962-1966
Mills E. Godwin, Jr., Governor.....	1966-1970
A. Linwood Holton, Governor.....	1970-1974
Mills E. Godwin, Jr., Governor.....	1974-1978

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John N. Dalton, Governor	1978-1982
Charles S. Robb, Governor	1982-1986
Gerald L. Baliles, Governor	1986-1990
Lawrence Douglas Wilder, Governor	1990-1994
George Allen, Governor.....	1994-1998
James S. Gilmore, III, Governor	1998-2002
Mark R. Warner, Governor	2002-2006
Timothy M. Kaine, Governor	2006-2010
Robert F. McDonnell, Governor	2010-2014
Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor	2014-2018

It is difficult to compile a clear and comprehensive list of governors for the colonial period because of the governmental and administrative changes made in England, and due to the proxy system whereby the person bearing the title of Governor often resided in England while a deputy resided in the colony. During the exploration or pre-colonization period, the territory that became Virginia was directly under the crown. Under the charter granted to the London Company, the early government of Virginia was a company appointed council and president, often spoken of as governor. The first man ever to have the title "governor" was Lord Delaware, appointed in 1609. When the London Company lost its charter in 1624, Virginia became a royal colony, and the governor was appointed by the crown. Those appointed to the position often resided in England and were represented in Virginia by deputies. During this period Virginia still remained a resident council and if the governor or deputy governor was absent from the colony the president of the council served as acting governor. There was a break in royal control after the Civil War in England when Parliament allowed the colony to be almost completely self-governed. From 1652 to 1660 the General Assembly elected four Governors. Royal authority was restored in 1660, and from that date until the American Revolution in 1776 the Governors were appointed by the crown.

After the colony declared independence, a constitution was adopted which provided for the election of the governor by the General Assembly for a one-year term. A governor could be reelected to serve a total of three consecutive years. He could be reelected again only after a break in service. From 1776 to 1852 the governor was chosen by the state legislature. When the office became vacant by death or resignation, the senior member of the Council of the State acted as governor until the Assembly was able to choose a successor. The Constitution of 1851 abolished the Council of State and provided for the popular election of the Governor for a four-year term. With the exception of the Reconstruction period 1865-1869, when provisional governors were designated by federal authorities, the governor has been elected by popular vote since 1852.

Information on Virginia Governors was obtained from A Hornbook of Virginia History, third edition, Edited by Emily J. Salmon, 1983.

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SECRETARIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Gabriel Archer, <i>Recorder</i>	1607-1609	Thomas T. Flournoy*	1880-1881
William Strachey.....	1610-1611	William C. Elam.....	1882-1883
Ralph Hamor, Jr.....	1611-1614	Henry W. Flournoy.....	1884-1893
John Rolfe	1614-1619	Joseph T. Lawless	1894-1900
John Pory	1619-1621	David Q. Eggleston.....	1901-1910
Christopher Davison.....	1621-1623	B. O. Jones.....	1910-1926
William Claiborne.....	1625-1635	Martin A. Hutchinson	1927-1929
Richard Kemp	1635-1649	Peter H. Saunders.....	1930-1937
Richard Lee.....	1649-1652	Raymond L. Jackson.....	1938-1941
William Claiborne.....	1652-1660	Ralph E. Wilkins.....	1942-1944
Thomas Ludwell	1661-1678	Thelma Y. Gordon, acting	1945-1946
Philip Ludwell.....	1678	Jesse W. Dillon	1946-1948
Daniel Parke.....	1678-1679	M. W. Armistead	1948
Nicholas Spencer.....	1679-1689	Thelma Y. Gordon.....	1948-1952
William Cole.....	1689-1692	Martha Bell Conway.....	1952-1970
Christopher Robinson.....	1692-1693	Cynthia Newman	1970-1974
Ralph Wormeley	1693-1701	Patricia Perkinson	1974-1978
Edmund Jennings	1702-1712	Stanford E. Parris.....	1978
William Cocke	1712-1720	Frederick T. Gray, Jr.....	1978-1981
Edmund Jennings	1720-1722	Marilyn Lussen, acting	1981-1982
John Carter.....	1712-1743	Laurie Naismith	1982-1985
Thomas Nelson	1743-1788	H. Benson Dendy, III.....	1985-1986
John Harvie	1788-1800	Sandra D. Bowen.....	1986-1990
Daniel L. Hylton	1801-1811	Pamela M. Womack.....	1990-1993
William Robertson	1811-1820	Scott Bates	1993
John Burfoot.....	1820-1821	Penelope Anderson, acting.....	1993-1994
William H. Richardson.....	1821-1852	Betsy Davis Beamer.....	1994-1998
George W. Munford.....	1853-1865	Anne P. Petera	1998-2002
Charles H. Lewis	1865-1867	Anita A. Rimler	2002-2006
John M. Herndon.....	1867-1869	Daniel G. LeBlanc	2006
Brevet Col. Garrick Mallery (<i>appointed under Special Orders No. 68, Hdqrs., First Military District</i>).....	1869-1870	Katherine K. Hanley	2006-2010
James McDonald.....	1870-1879	Janet V. Kelly.....	2010-2014
		Levar M. Stony.....	2014-2018

**From 1801-1830 this official was designated only as "Clerk of the Council of State" or "Clerk of the Privy Council"; later the phrase "Keeper of the Public Seal" was added.*

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