THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

BY BART McDOWELL

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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AMERICA'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

By BART MCDOWELL
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, *Senior Editorial Staff*

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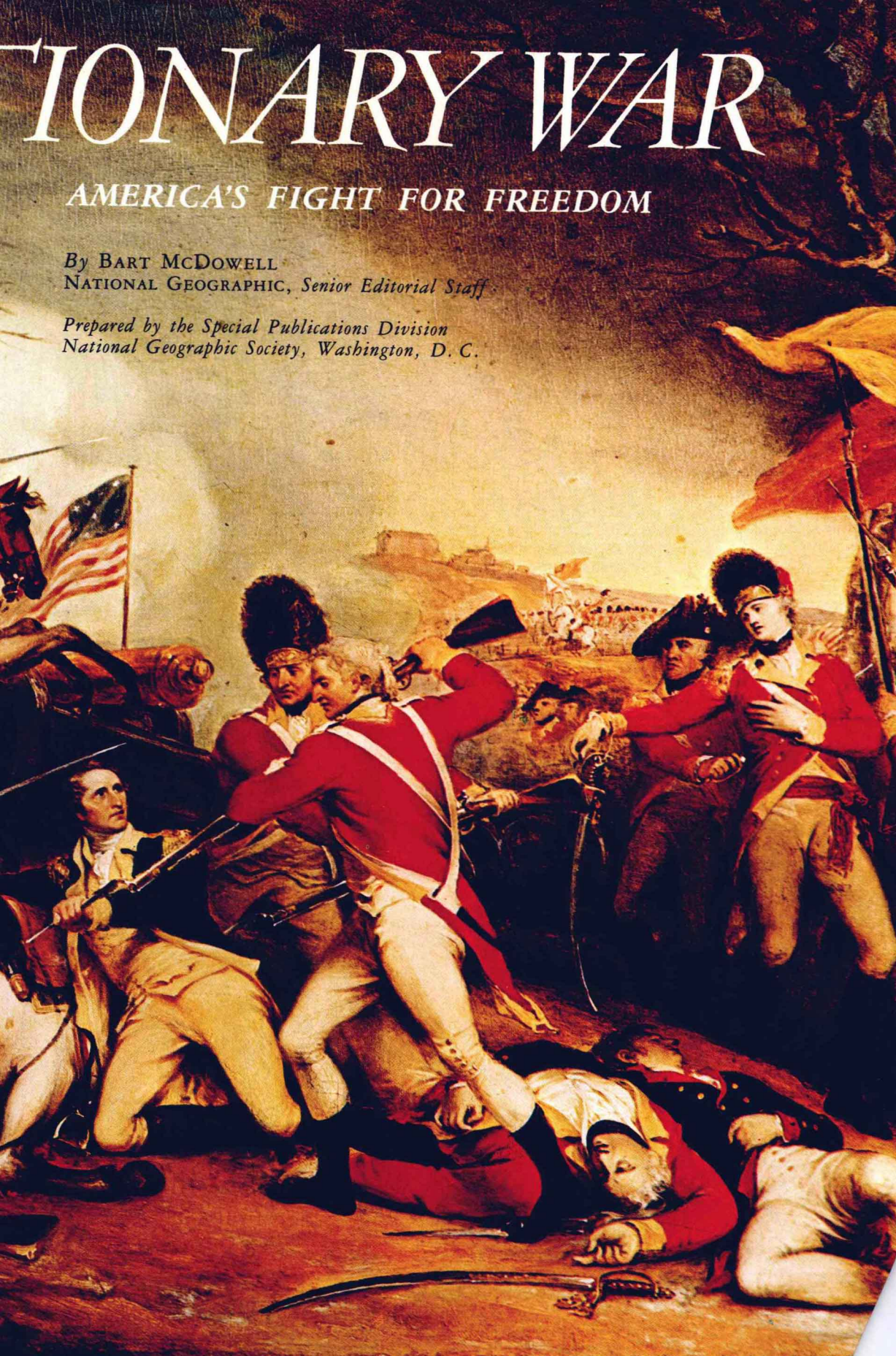

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Author Bart McDowell steadies George Washington's own spyglass for his 4-year-old son Rob at Mount Vernon, Washington's home in northern Virginia. Mrs. McDowell, daughter Tina, age 12, and Josh, 10, wait their turns as 15-year-old Kel props the telescope on his head. Visits here kindled an interest in 18th-century history that inspired the McDowells to retrace the footsteps of those patriots who fought and won the Revolutionary War.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER WINFIELD PARKS

OVERLEAF—RIDING INTO THE MIDST OF A BRITISH BAYONET ATTACK, GENERAL WASHINGTON RALLIES HIS MEN TO VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON (PAINTING BY JOHN TRUMBULL, YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY). PAGE 1—BRONZE MEDALLION FROM A DOOR TO THE SENATE WING OF THE U. S. CAPITOL: A NEW JERSEY FARMER STRUGGLES WITH A HESSIAN MERCENARY.

Foreword

CANDLES threw a gold, quivering light around the rebuilt House of Burgesses as we took our seats. My wife and I were revisiting Williamsburg, Virginia, and we had brought a friend from Ceylon to show her this favorite vignette of America's colonial past. But now, everything seemed so different, so much more alive.

I had just read Bart McDowell's fascinating manuscript and reviewed the splendid illustrations for this book. The 18th century had absorbed me. For the first time I was truly conscious of the individuals who had made history here: young, freckle-faced Tom Jefferson, the untidily dressed Patrick Henry, and that towering tight-lipped planter George Washington.

The essence of this book is personal involvement. As readers, we travel in the shadow of people who waged the Revolutionary War. We overhear their gossip, read newspapers over their shoulders, even browse through their letters. We look at the sketches and paintings that their artists made; we see color photographs of their homes, their money, their weapons, their maps. Soon their viewpoints—and even their ideals—become more meaningful.

Everyone will find his own favorite character in this book, for here are people in all the variety of life itself. Paul Revere is not just a distant, galloping horseman; he tells his adventure story for himself. Here is that good and grizzled warrior Dan Morgan with his battle scars still visible. And here Rebecca Motte offers to burn down her own home to drive out the redcoats—then generously invites her British prisoners back to dinner!

Throughout our book we rediscover life in the 1770's and '80's. The McDowell family travels to the battlefields and historic sites to visit not just places, but also times and seasons. On horseback they ride Paul Revere's famous route, and shiver in Christmas snow at Trenton just as Washington did. Readers will share this personal adventure and perhaps even find a new family hobby. For this book was planned for the home library, and the illustrated format will appeal to readers of any age.

I believe every American family should be steeped in the traditions of our founding fathers and should know, too, how those traditions took shape from the very face of our country. For our land—its mountains, rivers, and valleys—deeply influenced the lives of the patriots, as it has our nation's growth. But I am far from the first to voice this belief.

Soon after our Declaration of Independence, John Adams wrote his wife, "America is our Country, and . . . Knowledge of its Geography, is most important to Us and our Children." Adams then promised to send a list of all available maps: "You will ask me why I trouble you with all these. . . . I answer, that I may turn the Attention of the Family to the subject of American Geography."

So be it done, Mr. Adams.

Gilbert M. Grosvenor

Redcoats sack a New England home before the eyes of a helpless family. Such acts throughout the war

Contents

PAINTING BY ALFRED WORDSWORTH THOMPSON, CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

embittered patriots and caused them to renounce irrevocably their allegiance to the British Crown.

Raising a liberty pole, cheering colonists demonstrate their opposition to tyranny and their devotion to

1774: "The Rebellious Disposition"

ENGRAVING BY JOHN C. McRAE AFTER A PAINTING BY F. A. CHAPMAN, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

freedom. After July 4, 1776, liberty poles stood for a new union of thirteen embattled American states.

A MIZZLING APRIL MIST had dampened the three-cornered hats, the muskets, and the Minutemen. Now a stern voice ordered retreat.

"No battle today!" the voice called out. "Our powder is getting wet. We will have no re-enactment of the Battle of Concord."

But a moment later—in an interval just long enough for curiosity to twitch at a trigger—I heard a shot: close, loud, anonymous. With a father's reflexes, I grabbed for the hands of my two nearest children.

"The battle must be on again!" someone shouted in the roiling crowd. Many Minutemen had come to the same conclusion, and plainly not all of the powder was wet. Muskets thundered all around, flashing red flame and spewing sulphuric smoke. I steered the children from the bridge toward a safe grassy slope. The scent of gunpowder clung to us, and our ears were ringing.

"I thought they had called off the battle," said my daughter Tina. And then she asked

the same simple question that is forever the goad of historians: "How did it all start?"

All of us wondered the same thing. The six of us—my wife Martha and our four children—had come to Massachusetts as proper sightseers to watch an orderly pageant recalling the first battle of the American Revolution. Instead we had ourselves taken part in a spontaneous jumble of men and guns.

"How did it all start?" Tina had asked.

"Accidentally," I conceded. "And also because everything was ready for it. Just like the real Revolutionary War."

Our interest in the American Revolution had also started accidentally. We live in Virginia's Fairfax County. These are the same green hills hunted and tilled by our late neighbor George Washington and admired by each of his Presidential heirs. History hems us in: The Potomac defines one county line and Bull Run another. Often we take a houseguest to see Mount Vernon; on weekends we visit Williamsburg and Philadelphia.

Our oldest son Kel studied American history in seventh grade with a gifted teacher who, as it happened, is a British subject. The class turned into a year-long, zestful, successful rebellion. While preparing rebuttals for his teacher, Kel even found a history hero: the artillery general, Henry Knox.

"Think of it," said he. "Knox was only a fat bookseller—and he learned everything about guns from his own books!"

We, too, relied on books, but not entirely. Tina, our horse-happy daughter, at first found the Revolution exciting because of the transportation. From Paul Revere's ride to the exploits of Light-Horse Harry Lee, Tina rarely heard the cannon over the jangle of spurs. Josh, two years younger than his sister and quite the soldiering boy, arranged battles with model Minutemen and lead redcoats.

The youngest of us was our toddler and only illiterate, Robert. At first he was a burden to us all, but as he gradually became a happy traveler, he joined in our family hobby

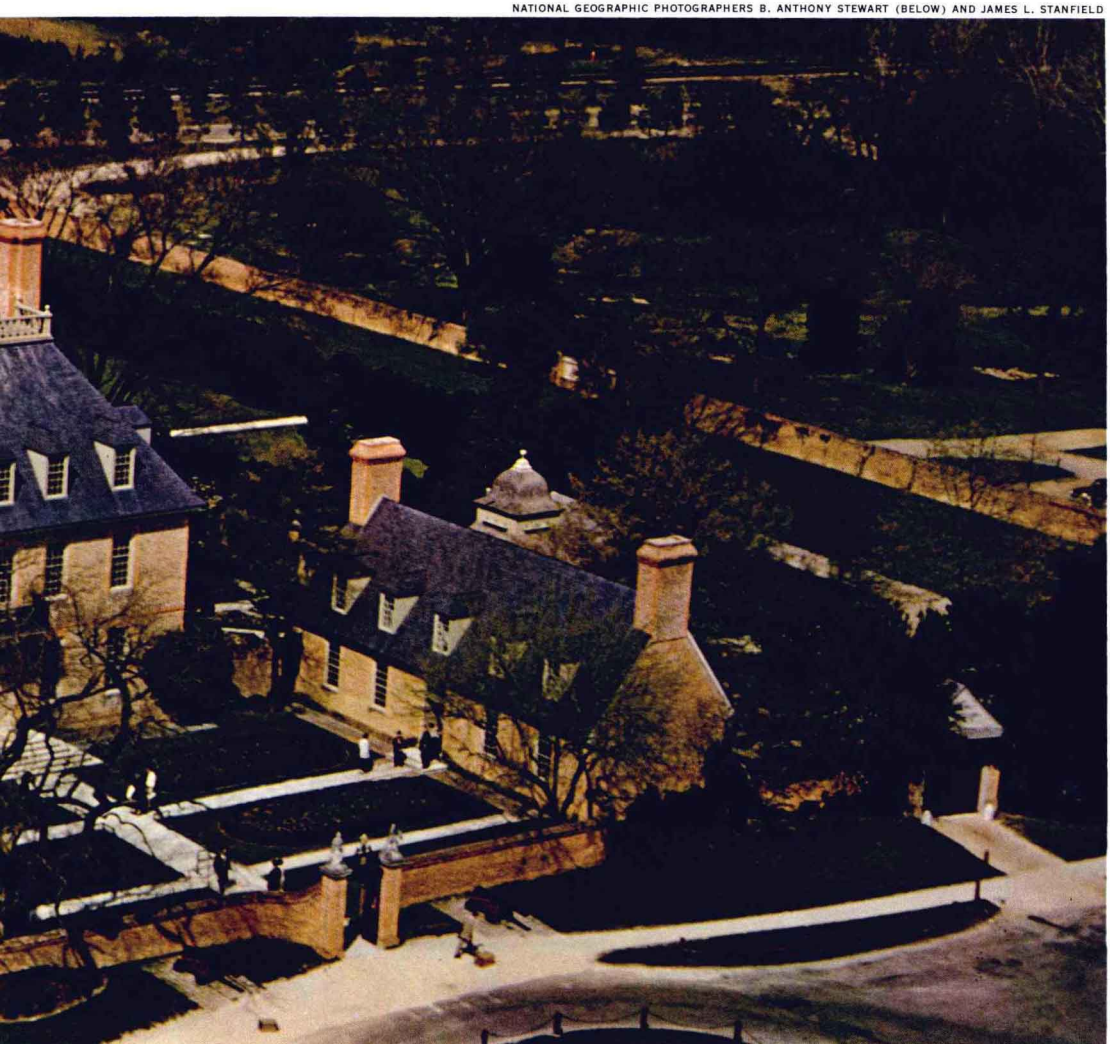
and understood far more than we expected.

On holidays we traveled to Revolutionary War sites. We could not, of course, take each battle in its chronological sequence, starting with Lexington and ending with Yorktown. But we did try to see each site at its own most appropriate season. We visited Philadelphia and Independence Hall on the Fourth of July; and—although Valley Forge was only 20 miles farther—made a special trip to see it in the chill of winter.

At first, we were interested mostly in the atmosphere, but soon we saw the importance

At Williamsburg, capital of Virginia till 1780, royal governors found a "Palace" worthy of the Empire, and colonists ready to stand up for their rights. From 1763 onward, in 13 colonies, policies made in London provoked discussion and dissent among Americans. And militia companies rehearsed the manual of arms, as citizens of Williamsburg perform it today on Market Square.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHERS B. ANTHONY STEWART (BELOW) AND JAMES L. STANFIELD



BOSTONIAN SOCIETY, OLD STATE HOUSE

"I rely on the hearts of my subjects, the only true support of the Crown," declared George III. Yet by his rigid views of royal duty he forfeited affection within his Empire and his own family. In 1771 Their Majesties George and Charlotte boasted six children (of an eventual 15); at left, in rose satin, stands the future George IV, who grew up to loathe his inflexible father. On official buildings in the colonies the Royal Arms evoked pride and loyalty—but revenue stamps of 1765, with the same device, stirred Americans to furious protests against taxation by Act of Parliament.

of season in the war itself. Monmouth was a battle fought in a blazing heat wave—hence the heroism of Molly Pitcher taking water to thirsty men. We visited the icy Delaware River and the scene of Washington's historic crossing as twilight died on snowdrifts; and only then could we understand the sacrifice patriots made to surprise the Hessians in Trenton. Thus we moved from the warm ooze of mossy Carolina swamps to the breathless, brittle cold of wintertime Quebec.

Scholars were our scouts. We collected

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY (LEFT) AND COPYRIGHT RESERVED (ABOVE)

solid books along with tricornes, firelocks, and postcards. Our family bulletin board on the kitchen wall grew heavy with War bulletins: pictures of Revolutionary uniforms, facsimiles of recruiting posters and contemporary newspapers.

"That bulletin board is our time machine!" said Josh. He had a point, for breakfast conversation often shifted to the gossip of history. Robert was about three years old, I guess, the day he examined the portrait on a one-dollar bill.

"George Washington," he said solemnly. "He's dead, isn't he?" Then he added with stubborn loyalty, "But he's still our friend!"

ON EVERYDAY DRIVES to work or school or market, we cross Braddock Road. A traveler could follow it—and its tributaries—all the way to Pittsburgh. This was the route taken by the scarlet-coated Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock on his springtime journey in 1755. The dogwood was blooming when he left his headquarters in Fairfax County and marched

smartly northward toward disaster and death.

"Was General Braddock on our side?" Josh asked. I explained that Braddock fought in the French and Indian War 20 years before our rebellion against Britain. "Then why didn't we teach him to fight Indian style?"

The frontier French and their allied Indians, of course, did all the teaching. On July 9, 1755, on the forested banks of the Monongahela, they cut down the proud Britons and shot General Braddock through the lungs. He lingered for days, pondering his mistakes, then found breath to say, "We shall better know how to deal with them another time."

But time he did not have. When Braddock died, his aide, a young Virginian, buried the general in a road so that wagon tracks could hide the grave from victorious savages. Braddock's only monument was a dark memory that haunted a whole generation of soldiers.

What was it like, that terrifying ambush? Years later, the same Virginia aide told how he rode his horse through the battlefield at night among "shocking scenes... the dead, the dying, the groans, lamentations and cries along the road of the wounded for help...."

Those strangely moving words belong to a man never famous for eloquence or emotion. But George Washington was just 23 when he joined Braddock's staff; this was his first big battle. His later military service anointed him with glory and even with office, for he was elected in 1758 to the House of Burgesses, lower house of Virginia's legislature. Few of his comrades were so lucky.

From our perspective of two centuries, we can examine this moment of history, the men who made it, and the way their lives would braid with future events. Benjamin Franklin, for example, collected Pennsylvania wagons to carry Braddock's provisions.

"Maybe Franklin found the very wagon that Daniel Morgan drove!" suggested Josh. My second son was especially proud of the wagoner Morgan, our grizzled neighbor from Winchester, Virginia. Later, when Josh found that Morgan became a general, he took a personal pride in the wagoner's achievement.

In the same spirit–like the chorus in a Greek drama–we ticked off a list of other officers from the colonial conflict we call the French and Indian War. Typical of the personalities were two future generals who were wounded in Braddock's campaign. Now Thomas Gage and Horatio Gates had come to a fork in their fates. Gates would make his home in Virginia and cast his lot with America. Gage would remain in the service of the king and grow so greatly in rank and caution as to win a nickname, "the lenient general."

In Europe, where this struggle was called the Seven Years' War, a generation was trained and tested in battle. A German captain named von Steuben won a letter of thanks from Frederick the Great of Prussia, fighting with Britain against France and allied powers. But after the Battle of Minden a court martial of Britons found one lieutenant general "unfit to serve His Majesty in any military capacity whatsoever." The same man, as Lord George Germain, would become the wartime Secretary of State for the Colonies.

And what was this war's legacy for the very young? With the hindsight of history, we consult biographies today and see a French lad orphaned by the Battle of Minden and far too young for grief. Years will pass before the boy Marquis de Lafayette vows vengeance upon the British. But now we check another book and find a certain swarthy, pale-eyed youth who has deserted his military post on the American frontier. Is this just a juvenile muddle–or is it perhaps a portent? Our chorus knows and pities this youngster, for we read his name: Benedict Arnold.

In its far-flung struggle, Great Britain, led

OCTOBER 31, 1765; HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Ominous parody announces the "expiring" issue of the Pennsylvania Journal. *It stopped publication to avoid buying the expensive stamps required by law for each edition.*

"If this *be treason, make the most of it!" Patrick Henry of Virginia flings down the gauntlet of defiance to the Stamp Act and the king who signed it. Fellow legislators cry out in horror. He had hinted that George III might die as a murdered tyrant. Peter Rothermel painted the Burgesses' chamber long after fire destroyed the Capitol; and 40 years after Henry gave his daring speech, a biographer set it down from old men's memories.*

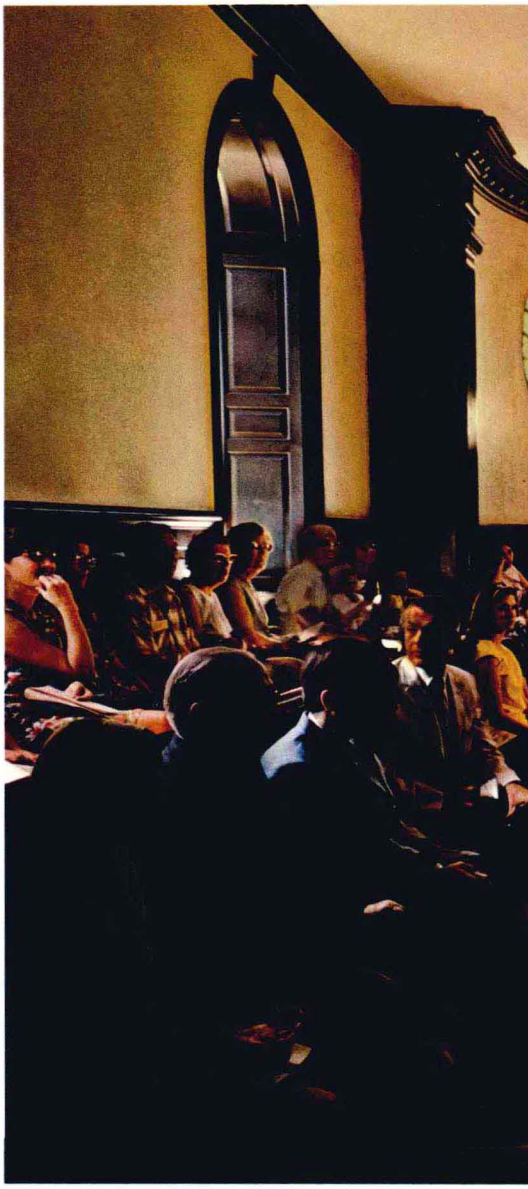
RED HILL SHRINE, BROOKNEAL, VIRGINIA

by William Pitt, finally won the war. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 settled the terms but not the problems of peace. The Bourbon king of France was humiliated; he gave the region beyond the Mississippi to Spain. Except for a few rocky islands, all of French North America was gone—all Canada went to Britain.

Great Britain's new king, the young, high-minded George III, now reigned over the mightiest empire in the world. True, his treasury had a larger national debt than any in its records: £130,000,000. But surely the American colonies could help pay for their own defense. Politicians considered methods: perhaps a sale of stamps? Or duties on imported goods? Meantime, there were leftover war supplies to tend, like those cannon out at Fort Ticonderoga on the New York frontier. Thus the debits and credits from one war would affect the fortunes of another.

WHEN I WAS A BOY studying American history, George III was presented as a black-hearted tyrant. The picture was false. "He was one of the most conscientious sovereigns who ever sat upon the English throne," wrote that great honorary American Sir Winston Churchill. "Simple in his tastes.... He possessed great moral courage...."

When I read these words to my youngsters, they remained skeptical; after all, Sir Winston was British. And so I showed my young doubters a commentary on King George's character that we called a report card. It comes to us from Lord Waldegrave, George's tutor-governor for four years, who penned it when his pupil had just turned 20.



Patrick Henry's words enthrall the author, his family, and other visitors as a Williamsburg guide recites them in the Hall of the House of Burgesses, heart of the rebuilt Capitol. Eyewitness notes on the speech came to light in 1921. A French agent had heard "henery" ask pardon for his boldness and profess perfect loyalty to the king as well as to "his Countrys Dying liberty." Yet Henry inspired the House to pass "resolves" against the Stamp Act; his own draft of them lies under glass on the clerk's table today. Newspapers throughout the colonies roused the public by reprinting them in full. At left, Josh and Tina McDowell watch a journeyman "beater" ink his type just as printers did in 1765.