

Vol. 5 No. 1 Spring 2026

PIETAS

A Journal of Tradition, Place, and Things Divine



The Declaration of Independence at 250

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Bob Subrick

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by Michael Driscoll

On the Philosophical Significance of Mary as New Eve
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Colleges and Universities as Talent Magnets*
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Letter From the Editor



Declaration of Independence (1819), by John Trumbull; Public Domain

In this issue of *Pietas* we commemorate July 4th and the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by beginning with five essays that attempt to follow John Adams’s advice to explicate the “means and measures” of the Revolution. Many thanks to F. Cooper Adamo, John W. Grant, Kevin Slack, Bob Subrick, and Thomas G. West, who challenge us to reflect on the meaning of the greatest of American holidays.

In our first featured article, Michael Driscoll seeks to provide answers to longstanding scholarly interpretive problems in John Locke’s theory of happiness. In his careful reading of Locke’s works, focusing on the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Driscoll stresses Locke’s teaching of degrees of happiness, whose gradations are informed by a standard of higher goods. Thus, Locke’s rejection of the “summum bonum”—the phrase

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appearing twice with two different meanings in the *Essay*—is “not a repudiation of the argument that there are goods that are more or less conducive to happiness.”

Marco A. Andreacchio writes on the philosophical significance of the ancient identification of Mary as “New Eve.” Classical Mariology, he argues, is a theology that embraces the natural reason of ancient Platonism. And far from a solely speculative matter, this notion of reason “proves to be providential in the government of human affairs.” Andreacchio distinguishes between a Christian midwifery of rationalism and modern forms of voluntarism, first in the Machiavellian rejection of “common sense” and turn to “rationalizing the irrational” in the “system of cunning we call technocracy.” Islam, he argues is also “an essentially voluntaristic doctrine,” “the most formidable traditional enemy of ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,’ where liberty is key to happiness.” It is only in New Eve that nature is renewed: “what is hidden can become apparent to us; for what is eternally hidden in nature, what hides by its very nature as truth (aletheia) is disclosed.”

Justin Lyons connects the iconic Tarzan stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs to the philosophical literature on nature and natural law. Across his many novels, Burroughs portrays his own quite comprehensive version of natural man, which Lyons compares to the accounts of Aristotle, Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Lyons focuses on man’s capacities for reason and speech, sociability, and ultimately the problems and desirability of civil society. But some of the accounts of the state of nature resonate with Burroughs’s intention more than others. Pointing to the lessons we might glean from reflections on human nature, Lyons argues that ultimately Tarzan has “more in common with Aristotelian and Thomistic ideas of a natural inclination toward society and a guiding natural law.”

Finally, we are proud to include Miriam J. Dawson’s English translation and interpretive essay of Cen Shen’s “Armies on the March”—reflections by the great Tang poet on the chaos of war. Cen Shen, known for his frontier poetry, was granted permission to leave his post on the western border to help subdue the An Shi Rebellion in the east. He later held a mid-level position in the court. Dawson’s interpretive essay connects the poet’s somber works to the decline of the civilization and culture he loved: “The An Shi Rebellion was a great tragedy. It was eight years of death and destruction wrought upon the central plains of China. The chaos destroyed the lives of the people and shattered the peace and prosperity that the centralized imperial court of the Tang Dynasty Empire had created.”

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In our book reviews Ben Peterson appraises Josiah Osgood's *Lawless Republic: The Rise of Cicero and the Decline of Rome*—a provocative and necessary account for all members of our society named after Cicero. Especially fitting for July 4th, Peter Cross reviews Richard Ferrier's *The Declaration of America: Our Principles in Thought and Action*. Marisol Balderas reviews Thomas J. Tacoma's *The Political Thought of Calvin Coolidge: Burkean Americanist*. And Jacob Hiserman reviews David J. Staley and Dominic D.J. Endicott's *Knowledge Towns: Colleges and Universities as Talent Magnets*.

* * *

On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee motioned for a resolution in the Continental Congress “that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states.” He was acting on instructions from the fifth Virginia Convention’s report from May 15, 1776 (see below). The “Lee Resolution” contained a declaration of independence, a call to form foreign alliances, and a plan for confederation. On June 11, 1776, the congress created three different committees to draft a declaration of independence, prepare a plan “for forming foreign alliances” (John Dickinson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Benjamin Harrison, and Robert Morris) and “prepare and digest the form of a confederation” (a committee with one member from each of the states). Many members of the congress, responding cautiously to the Lee Resolution, wanted instructions from their colonies before voting. On June 24, the Pennsylvania Congress resolved that the states should be independent (see below).

I N C O N V E N T I O N,

Present 112 members.

WEDNESDAY, May 15, 1776.

FORASMUCH as all the endeavours of the UNITED COLONIES, by the most decent representations and petitions to the King and Parliament of Great-Britain, to restore peace and security to America under the British government, and a re-union with that people upon just and liberal terms, instead of a redress of grievances, have produced, from an imperious and vindictive administration, increased insult, oppression, and a vigorous attempt to effect our total destruction. By a late act, all these colonies are declared to be in rebellion, and out of the protection of the British crown, our properties subjected to confiscation, our people, when captivated, compelled to join in the murder and plunder of their relations and countrymen, and all former rapine and oppression of Americans declared legal and just. Fleets and armies are raised, and the aid of foreign troops engaged to assist these destructive purposes. The King's representative in this colony hath not only withheld all the powers of government from operating for our safety, but, having retired on board an armed ship, is carrying on a piratical and savage war against us, tempting our slaves, by every artifice, to resort to him, and training and employing them against their masters. In this state of extreme danger, we have no alternative left but an abject submission to the will of those overbearing tyrants, or a total separation from the crown and government of Great Britain; uniting and exerting the strength of all America for defence, and forming alliances with foreign powers for commerce and aid in war: Wherefore appealing to the SEARCHER OF HEARTS for the sincerity of former declarations, expressing our desire to preserve the connection with that nation, and that we are driven from that inclination by their wicked councils, and the eternal laws of self-preservation,

RESOLVED Unanimously, That the Delegates appointed to represent this colony in General Congress be instructed to propose to that respectable body TO DECLARE THE UNITED COLONIES FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, absolved from all allegiance to or dependence upon, the crown or parliament of Great-Britain; and that they give the assent of this colony to such declaration, and to whatever measures may be thought proper and necessary by the Congress for forming foreign alliances, and A CONFEDERATION OF THE COLONIES, at such time, and in the manner, as to them shall seem best. Provided, that the power of forming government for, and the regulations of the internal concerns of each colony, be left to the respective colonial legislatures.

RESOLVED Unanimously, That a Committee be appointed to prepare A DECLARATION OF RIGHTS, and such a plan of government as will be most likely to maintain peace and order in this colony, and secure substantial and equal liberty to the people.

EDMUND PENDLETON, President.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Extract from the Minutes,

CHARLES THOMPSON, Secretary.

*The DECLARATION of the DEPUTIES
of PENNSYLVANIA, met in PROVINCIAL
CONFERENCE at Philadelphia, June 24, 1776.*

WHEREAS George the Third, King of Great-Britain, &c. in violation of the principles of the British Constitution, and of the laws of justice and humanity, hath by an accumulation of oppressions unparalleled in history, excluded the inhabitants of this with the other American Colonies from his protection: And whereas he hath paid no regard to any of our remonstrances and dutiful petitions for redress of our complicated grievances; but hath *lately* purchased foreign troops to assist in enslaving us, and hath excited the Savages of this country to carry on a war against us, as also the Negroes to embroil their hands in the blood of their masters, in a manner unpractised by civilized nations; and moreover hath lately insulted our calamities by declaring that he will shew us no mercy until he has subdued us: And whereas the obligations of allegiance (being reciprocal between a King and his subject) are now dissolved on the side of the Colonists by the despotism and declaration of the said King, insomuch that it now appears that loyalty to him is treason against the good people of this country: **AND** WHEREAS not only the Parliament, but there is reason to believe too many of the people of Great-Britain have concurred in the aforesaid arbitrary and unjust proceedings against us: And whereas the public virtue of this Colony (so essential to its liberty and happiness) must be endangered by a future political union with, or dependance upon a crown and nation so lost to justice, patriotism and magnanimity:

WE THE DEPUTIES of the people of Pennsylvania, assembled in **THE** Provincial Conference for forming a plan for executing the Resolve of Congress of the 15th of May last, for suppressing all authority in this Province derived from the crown of Great-Britain, and for establishing a government upon the authority of the people only, **DO**, in this public manner, in behalf of ourselves, and with the approbation, consent and authority of our Constituents, **UNANIMOUSLY** declare our willingness to concur in a vote of the Congress, declaring the **UNITED COLONIES FREE AND INDEPENDANT STATES**: Provided the forming the government, and the regulation of the internal police of this Colony, be always reserved to the people of the said Colony: And we do farther call upon the nations of Europe, and appeal to the great Arbiter and Governor of the empires of the world to witness for us, that this Declaration did not originate in ambition or in an impatience of lawful authority, but that we were driven to it in obedience to the first principles of nature by the oppressions and cruelties of the aforesaid King and Parliament of Great-Britain, as the only possible measure that was left us to preserve and establish our liberties, and to transmit them inviolate to posterity.

Signed by order of the Conference.

THOMAS M'KEAN, PRESIDENT.

IN CONFERENCE held at Philadelphia, 25th
June, 1776.

PIETAS

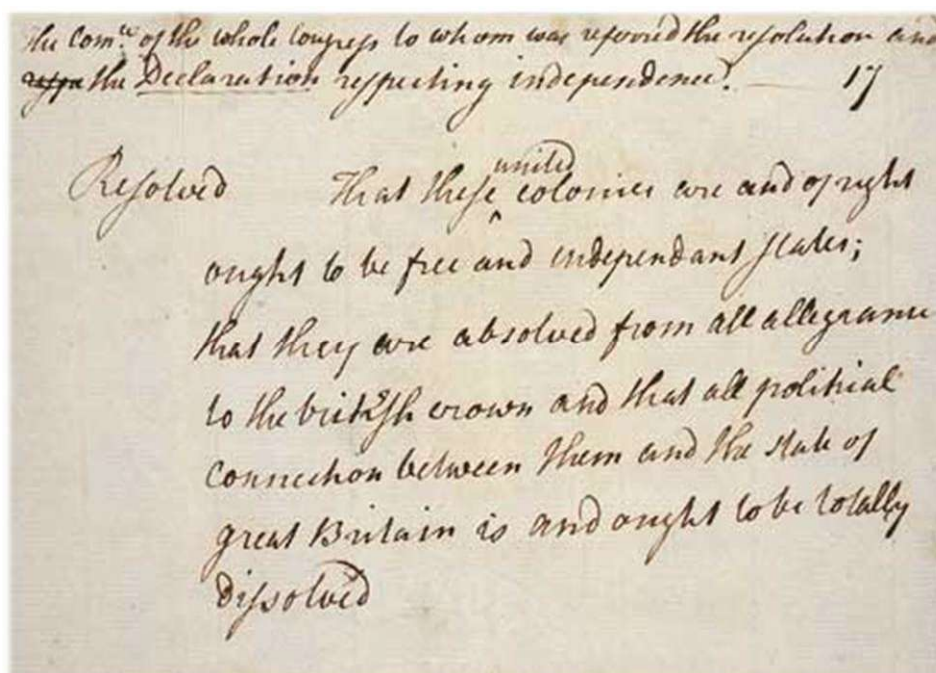
The task for drafting a declaration of independence was given to John Adams, delegate from Massachusetts. He organized a “Committee of Five” that included himself, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, Robert Sherman, and Thomas Jefferson, whom Adams asked to write the draft because of his talents as a writer and his good reputation. Thomas Jefferson was renting quarters at the Graff House in Philadelphia, where for just over two weeks, from June 11 to June 28, 1776, he wrote the masterpiece of the Declaration of Independence.

On July 2, 1776, the “Committee of Five” presented Jefferson’s draft, or “The Resolution for Independence,” to the Continental Congress. The committee of the whole voted:

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.

That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances.

That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation, Congress adopted the first part (the declaration). The words of the Lee Resolution are echoed in the Declaration of Independence.



The Com^{tee} of the whole Congress to whom was referred the resolution and
~~upon~~ the Declaration respecting independence? — 17

Resolved That these ^{white} colonies are and of right
ought to be free and independant states;
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Credit: Adoption of the Resolution Calling for Independence from England; 7/2/1776; Reports on Administrative Affairs of the Congress; Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, Record Group 360; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Twelve colonies voted in favor. New York abstained until receiving instructions from its Convention, which voted in favor on July 9, 1776. The Treaty plan was not approved until September 1776. The plan of confederation, introduced first by Franklin a year before, was not passed until November 1777.



“The resolution for independency, agreed to July 2. 1776”

Congress revised the document over the next two days. On July 4th, it adopted the Declaration of Independence, which provided the reasons for the resolution of July 2. The *Pennsylvania Evening Post* published the Declaration that evening (see below). The *Pennsylvania Gazette* published it the following day (see below).

The Declaration was no ordinary document. John Adams, in a letter to his wife, recognized the exceptional nature of the event:

The second day of July, 1776, will be memorable epocha in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations, as the great Anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp, shews, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward forever.

The PENNSYLVANIA EVENING POST.

Price only Two Coppers. Published every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday Evenings.

Vol. II.]

SATURDAY, JULY 6, 1776.

[Num. 228.]

In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.
A Declaration by the Representatives
of the United States of America,
in General Congress assembled.

WHEN, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God intitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, That all men are created equal; that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great-Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and, when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise; the state remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependant on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the military independant of and superior to the civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states:

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing taxes on us without our consent:

For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury:

For transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies:

For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments:

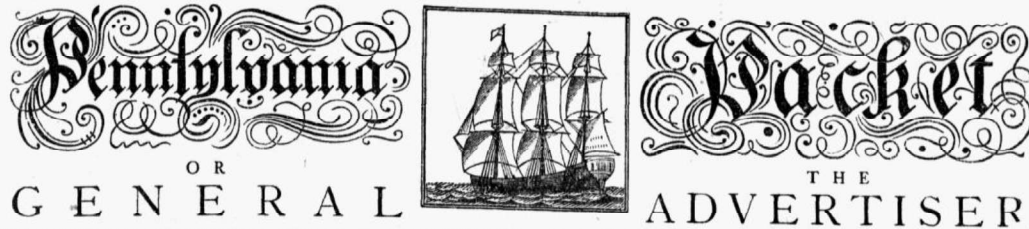
For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is, at this time, transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and

DUNLAP'S



MONDAY, JULY 8th, 1776.

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION by the REPRESENTATIVES
of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA,
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For transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pre-
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For abolishing the free system of English laws in a
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rary Government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as
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For taking away our charters, abolishing our most
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For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring
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He is, at this time, transporting large armies of for-
eign mercenaries to complete the works of death, deso-
lation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances
of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most
barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a
civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow citizens taken captive
on the high seas to bear arms against their country to
become the executioners of their friends and brethren,
or to fall themselves by their hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us,
and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our
frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known
rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all
ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned
for redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated
petitions have been answered only by repeated injury.
A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act
which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a
free people.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our Brit-
ish brethren. We have warned them from time to
time of attempts by their legislature to extend an un-
warrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded
them of the circumstances of our emigration and settle-
ment here. We have appealed to their native justice
and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the
ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpa-
tions, which, would inevitably interrupt our connec-
tions and correspondence. They too have been deaf to
the voice of justice and concinnity. We must,
therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces
our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of
mankind, enemies in war, in peace, and friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA, in GENERAL CONGRESS
assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the
World for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the
name, and by the authority of the good People of 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 dis-
solved; and that as FREE and INDEPENDENT
STATES, they have full power to levy war, conclude
peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to
do all other acts and things which INDEPENDENT
STATES may of right do. And for the support of
this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection
of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other
our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Signed by order and in behalf of Congress,
JOHN HANCOCK, President.
Attest: CHARLES THOMPSON, Secretary.

Philadelphia, July 8, 1776.
THE uncommon expence attending the
publication of this news-paper at this day,
obliges the Printer to inform those Gentlemen
indebted for this paper longer than Twelve
Months, that, without pay, it cannot be con-
tinued to them more than Four Weeks from this
date.—Subscribers at a distance can send their
money by letter (Post paid) or any other speedy
way that may suit them best: And Subscribers in
and near Baltimore will please to settle their ac-
counts with Mr. JAMES HAYES, of that place,
who is fully authorized to receive the same.

JOHN DUNLAP.

Just published and to be sold by JOHN DUNLAP,
in Market-street, Philadelphia,

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE
Nature of CIVIL LIBERTY, the Principles
of GOVERNMENT, and the Justice and
Policy of the WAR with AMERICA.

To which is added,
An APPENDIX, containing a state of the Nation-
al Debt, an estimate of the money drawn from the
Public by the taxes, and an account of the National
Income and Expenditure since the last War.

Heu miseri civis! non Hostem, inimicæque castra,
—Vestras Spes urit. VIRG.

By RICHARD PRICE, D.D.F.R.S.

* * * This learned judicious and liberal author had
the thanks of the Common Council, and the Freedom
of the City of London presented to him in a gold box,
for his his much admired most excellent pamphlet on
Civil Liberty—And for which he also deserves the
united thanks of America.

NOW to be disposed of by wholesale, on
reasonable terms for ready money, or short credit
(giving security if required) by JOHN MURRAY,
at the Trp, Philadelphia County, all the GOODS
he has now on hand, amounting to twelve hundred
pounds, or thereabouts.—Also to be disposed of, the
lease of the House and Stores now in his possession.

N.B. As said MURRAY intends quitting business in
that part of the country, he begs all those indebted to
him to send in their accounts and receive their money.

To be SOLD by PUBLIC VENDUE,
at Capt. Kendal Cole's, near Haddonfield, in New-
Jersey, on Monday, the 8th day of JULY instant, at
Ten o'clock in the morning,

BETWEEN sixty and seventy CATTLE, a large
part of which will consist of four years old steers and
sprayed heifers; the remainder dry cows, oxen, bulls,
young cattle, and cows and calves; at which time and
place the conditions of sale will be made known. †

Philadelphia, July 1, 1776.
To be SOLD by PUBLIC SALE,
on Monday the 22d instant, (July) at seven o'clock in
the evening, at the London Coffee-house,

A CERTAIN lot or piece of ground, situate on
the north side of Mulberry or Arch-street, between
Third and Fourth-streets, in this city, being 25 feet
front on said street, and 124 feet in depth. And on
Tuesday the 23d instant, at three o'clock in the after-
noon, will be sold at the sign of the Mermaid, in Ken-
nington, fifteen lots of ground, situate in Kennington
aforesaid, agreeable to a plan to be seen at the Coffee-
house and at the place of sale, viz. four lots 19 and a
half feet front each on a street 50 feet wide, called Queen-
street, and about 82 feet deep; five lots 20 feet front
each on a street, 30 feet wide, called Bishop street, and
78 feet deep; four lots 19 and a half feet front each on
a street 52 feet wide, being the first front from the river
Delaware and running parallel with it; one water-lot 78
feet front on the last mentioned street, and extending in
depth to low-water mark; also one lot situate on Marl-
borough-street, between Queen-street and the river De-
laware, being 20 feet front on said street and 100 feet
deep. All the said lots are clear of ground-rent. Late
the estate of Joseph Watkins, fen. deceased.

JOSEPH WATKINS, }
JAMES WATKINS, } Executors.
SAMUEL DAVIS, }

N.B. If the weather should prove unfavourable the
sale will begin on the next fair day. ‡

EIGHT thousand acres of good LAND
in the County of Albany and Province of New
York to be sold by CHARLES WHARTON.

Retired, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1826, by J. VANDERSMITH, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D.C.

PIETAS

Thirty-two years later, Adams reflected on the essence of the revolution to Hezekiah Niles, “The American Revolution was not a common event. Its effects and consequences have already been awful over a great part of the globe. And when and where are they to cease?” The Revolution, he wrote, was not the war, but “in the minds and hearts of the people, a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations.”

He also reflected on the annual orations that had become part of July 4th. Writing to posterity, he encouraged them to study the Revolution, but not simply for the “glorioles” of individual deeds and greatness. Rather historians should study the Revolution to learn the uniqueness of its combination of eternal principles and the traditions of a particular people.

To this end it is greatly to be desired that young gentlemen of letters in all the states, especially in the thirteen original states, would undertake the laborious, but certainly interesting and amusing, task of searching and collecting all the records, pamphlets, newspapers, and even handbills which in any way contributed to change the temper and views of the people and compose them into an independent nation....

In this research, the glorioles of individual gentlemen and of separate states is of little consequence. The means and the measures are the proper objects of investigation. These may be of use to posterity, not only in this nation, but in South America and all other countries. They may teach mankind that revolutions are no trifles; that they ought never to be undertaken rashly; nor without deliberate consideration and sober reflection; nor without a solid, immutable, eternal foundation of justice and humanity; nor without a people possessed of intelligence, fortitude, and integrity sufficient to carry them with steadiness, patience, and perseverance through all the vicissitudes of fortune, the fiery trials, and melancholy disasters they may have to encounter.

Perhaps there is no finer statement on the essence of American conservatism.

Many thanks to our authors and reviewers. We wish all our readers a happy Fourth of July.

The Editor