

James was not eager to return home when he graduated. The plantation would be dull after college life, and he did not know what he wanted to do. He stayed on at the college, taking more classes. Finally, his father wrote and told him to come home and teach his younger brothers and sisters.

Back at Montpelier in 1772, James was at loose ends. Aside from his teaching duties, he read and wrote to his friends. When he received news that a college friend had died, James became depressed. His parents worried about him and sent him to a health resort, but it didn't help. What did finally help was getting involved in the trouble that was brewing between Great Britain and the American colonies.



When James was growing up, the thirteen colonies in America lived under British rule.

The colonists were unhappy under British rule. The boiling point came when the British imposed taxes on the colonists to pay British war debts. The colonists fought back, and the king of England declared war.

James's poor health did not allow him to fight in the war, but he was appointed to the Orange County Committee of Safety, which made sure people in the county were prepared to fight. He became a part of the local **militia** but had a falling spell at his first drill.



Colonists were so angry with the British they pulled down a statue of the British king in 1776 in New York City.



James was elected to represent his county at the First Virginia Convention, and then to a committee to write a constitution for the state. The committee also urged the Continental Congress to issue a Declaration of Independence.

George Washington was chosen to be Commander in Chief to fight the British.