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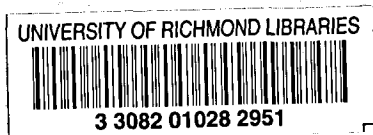
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COLONEL FIELDING LEWIS

By
Emeline Lee Stearns
Westhampton College
May 10, 1924.

History

COLONEL FIELDING LEWIS

. There is a two-fold reason for the assertion that to the student of American History, and especially of those chapters dealing with the Old Dominion, a study of the life of Fielding Lewis should prove one of value and intense interest. First, there is the contribution which this colonial patriot made to the Revolutionary Cause. To too great an extent we associate heroism in a time of strife with courage on the battlefield. The life of Fielding Lewis is a story of courage on the side lines, a courage none the less true because it lacks military glory as a setting. But aside from his personal contribution, the associations of Fielding Lewis with the Washington family make him an interesting figure to those who would analyze the factors that played a part in the life and work of the "father of his country." A study of his life can be little more than that of a series of episodes. As such it will be told, with the hope that through these the reader can catch the spirit of the man and of the time and place which bred him and his fellows.

According to a tradition in the Lewis family in America, the name "Lewis" originated in France, and was originally spelled "Louis" meaning strong or brave. After the family removed to Wales the name became Anglicized and was changed to "Lewis."¹

General Robert Lewis, the progenitor of the American branch of the Lewis family, was the son of Sir Edward Lewis, knighted by James I in 1603, and Lady Anne, daughter of the Earl of Dorset. Around 1636 he left Brecon, Wales, and went to reside in London,

¹ The Genealogy of the Lewis Family. According to Mr. Peyton in his History of Augusta County, the family were originally French Huguenots who fled from France after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, 1685. All other authorities I have consulted on this matter state that the first Lewis^{to} come to America, left Wales about the middle of the 17th century.

where he desired to practice law. A short time thereafter, having obtained a grant from Charles I, under whom he had previously served, of 33,333 1/3 acres of land in Gloucester County, Virginia, he emigrated to America and settled in Abingdon or Ware parish, Gloucester, where he lived until his death. His son, John Lewis, Senior, was born in England where later he received his education. In 1616, he married Isabella Warner, probably the daughter of the Captain Augustine Warner, also a Welshman, who was a member of the House of Burgesses from York County in 1652, and again from Gloucester in 1658, '59, and a member of the Royal Council in 1659, '60.¹ Isabella Warner was the heiress of the famous mansion in Gloucester known as Warner Hall, and it was here that she and John Lewis lived until his death in 1725.² Major John Lewis, Junior, the son of John Lewis and Isabella Warner, was born in Gloucester, Virginia, November 30, 1669. He was the lawyer with whom Chancellor Wythe, the famous teacher of Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, James Monroe and Henry Clay, studied, and was prominent in his day as a burgess and member of the Royal Council.³ He married Frances Fielding (supposed surname) who died in 1731. Fielding Lewis, the subject of this study, was the third son of their union. He was born on July 7th, 1725.

1. T. M. Green, Historical Families of Kentucky, pp. 84-85

2. Robert A. Lancaster, Historical Virginia Homes and Churches, pp.

The Memoires of the Long Island Historical Association, Vol. IV, give a different story, i.e. that Warner Hall was built by John Lewis

3. Memoires of the Long Island Historical Association, Vol. IV.

Of the early life of Fielding Lewis nothing definite has been written, and a study of available material has brought to light no information on this subject. However, there is no reason to suppose it was in any vital way different from that of the son of the average Virginia gentleman of the early 18th century. Warner Hall where he probably spent his boyhood, has been described as "a mansion" of twenty-six rooms."¹ Around 1676 a certain Henry Peasley left six hundred acres in Gloucester County for the maintenance of a school for the children of Abingdon or Ware parish. This school, which became known as the "Peasley School", continued its work for eighty years, that is, until about 1756, and it is possible that the young Lewises, whose home was in Abingdon parish, were among the scholars who attended there.² It is also possible that Major John Lewis, having several sons, followed the example of other Virginia planters and employed a tutor. When his elementary education was completed, Fielding probably sought the higher learning at one of two places. It is possible that he attended the College of William and Mary, which had been established at Williamsburg in 1693, a charter having been granted from the English Crown as a result of the efforts of the clergy and burgesses under the direction of Commissary James Blair.³ The other possibility is that young Fielding Lewis went to England to receive his education at the institution which his grandfather,

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1. Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Association, Vol. IV.
 2. Chandler and Thames, Colonial Virginia, page 107.
 3. Ibid, page 108. According to Mr. E. G. Swann, the present librarian of the College of William and Mary, the name of Fielding Lewis is not on the printed list of students of the early years. This, however, should not be considered conclusive proof that he was not a student there, as the list of students of the first fifty years is exceedingly incomplete, the manuscript records of the college for that period having been almost all destroyed.

John Lewis, Senior, had attended.

In 1746 Fielding Lewis went to Fredericksburg, Virginia. With him went his bride, Katherine Washington, the daughter of John Washington of "Highgate" in Gloucester County, and of Catherine Whitney, and a cousin to the later famous George Washington. In Fredericksburg the young couple settled in a comfortable home on Charles Street. Fielding set up as a merchant and became a very successful business man. Katherine Lewis only lived three years after her marriage. Of the three sons born of this union, John, born June 22, 1747, Francis, November 26, 1748, and Warner, November 27, 1749, only one, John, survived his infancy. On May 7, 1750, the young widower remarried, this time to George Washington's only sister, Betty, then "a handsome maiden of seventeen."¹ Around 1735 Augustine Washington had left Wakefield and moved, with his second wife, six sons, and daughter Betty to Pine Grove, a large plantation located on the banks of the Rappahannock opposite Fredericksburg. In 1743 Augustine Washington died, and from that time on, Mary Washington, not yet thirty-six, managed the large estate, and performed the part of both father and mother to her large family of sons and her spirited daughter.² As Betty was only sixteen months younger than her brother George, it is probable that he of all the brothers was most often her playmate and companion. This companionship is a delightful field for the historian's imagination. One writer has given us a charming picture in saying that, "when he cut the cherry tree down, threw the stone across the river and broke

1. Mrs. Pryer, *The Mother of Washington and Her Times*, pp. 90-112. Augustine Warner was the grandfather of Fielding Lewis, and of Betty, George, and Katherine Washington. All four were thus first cousins.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-112.

the neck of his mother's favorite colt, she was right there, faithful and admiring, with sunbonnet tied on tightly, sheep-skin mittens, and perhaps a flannel mask to preserve her complexion."¹ When George and Samuel crossed the ferry to Fredericksburg to study under Parson Marye, Betty went with them "to a Dame School, where she was taught French, English, the use of globes, and fine stitchery."¹ At a later date, when she had left childhood behind, she was described by Mr. Custis as "a most majestic woman, and so strikingly like the Chief, her brother, that it was a matter of frolic to throw a cloak around her, and then place a military cap on her head, and such was the perfect resemblance that had she appeared on her brother's steed battalions would have presented arms, and senates risen to do honor to the Chief."² As Mrs. Washington was a devout churchwoman, the marriage probably took place in the parish church. It is quite natural to suppose that George, then about eighteen years of age, gave his sister away.³ On the fourteenth of February, 1751, a little son was born to Fielding Lewis and Betty Washington. He was called Fielding after his father. George Washington and a Mr. Robert Jackson were godfathers, and Mrs. Mary Washington and a Mrs. Francis Thornton, godmothers.³ The second son, Augustine, was born January 22, 1752, his uncle, Charles Lewis, and Charles Washington, godfathers, and his aunt, Lucy Lewis, and a Mrs. Mary Taliaferro, godmothers.³ The following June

1. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, The Story of Kenmore, page 3.

2. Quoted in Mrs. Pryor, The Mother of Washington and Her Times.

3. The Willis Family in Virginia, the division dealing with the Lewises.

Fielding Lewis bought the land on which Kenmore, the mansion destined to become famous as the home of George Washington's only sister, was to be built.¹ This land, 861 acres in all, was purchased from a Mr. Richard Wiatt Royston of Peisworth Parish, Gloucester county, for the sum of 861 pounds current. It was surveyed by George Washington who had recently returned from the Barbadoes whither he had gone with his step-brother, Lawrence Washington.² The plantation joined the town of Fredericksburg. The mansion erected thereon is a solid structure of brown brick, a "magnificent example of this type of colonial architecture, the type consistent with the culture, wealth and attainments of its illustrious occupants." The interior decoration of Kenmore is one of its most interesting features. There is a story that the beautiful stucco work, consisting of the mantels and ceilings, was done by two Hessian soldiers, artisans, whom Washington took as prisoners after the battle of Trenton, December 26, 1776, and whom he sent to his sister. It is said that Washington himself designed the over-mantel in the reception room, in which is represented the fable of the fox, the crow and the piece of cheese, in order to teach his young nephews to beware of flatterers.³ After the death

1. It is thought that the name of "Kenmore" was given to the mansion by the Gordons into whose hands it soon passed after the death of Mrs. Betty Lewis in 1797. The original name is unknown.

2. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, *The Story of Kenmore*, page 5. A statement of the purchase is recorded in the deed book of Virginia County Records, Vol. 1, Spottsylvania, 1721-1800.

3. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, *The Story of Kenmore*, pages 5 & 6. On pg. 9 & 10 is an account. About 1914 Kenmore was on the market, and was bought for commercial purposes. It was thought that the owner intended to cut the ground up into building lots (for some of the estate had already been sold for that purpose) and to turn the mansion into an apartment house. In 1922, when the organization

of his brother Lawrence in 1752, Washington seems to have spent much time with his mother and sister. "He was keenly interested in the home and its setting and helped to plant the trees and shrubs, some of which still survive. It is said that the horse chestnuts were brought from Ohio and planted by him."¹ Time and family affection soon made sacred the new home. Here nine of Betty Washington's eleven children first saw the light of day. From here four little ones were taken to be laid to rest in the burying-ground on the Lewis plantation.²

Before leaving home for the Continental Congress, Washington persuaded his mother to leave her lonely home in Stafford and remove to Fredericksburg. Betty and her husband urged that she

3 (cont.) from page 6.

of the Washington-Lewis Chapter of the D. A. R. was authorized by the State Regent, Dr. Kate Waller, who came to Fredericksburg for that purpose, the ladies of the organization started the movement to save Kenmore. The price was \$30,000, \$10,000 of which had to be paid by September 1st, 1922. On May 7th, 1922, the 172nd Anniversary of Betty Washington's wedding day, the charter of the Kenmore Association was issued. Mrs. James H. Campbell of Michigan gave the first dollar, and Colonel I. N. Lewis, maker of the Lewis Machine Gun, gave the first thousand. Fredericksburg gave six thousand, and by September 10th, the remainder of the ten thousand was raised, and Kenmore was saved. Since then eleven thousand dollars more has been paid. It is hoped that the last payment will soon be made, and the mansion rehabilitated and endowed. President (then Vice-president) Coolidge who came to Fredericksburg with other distinguished men and women from Washington on July 6, 1922, to launch the Kenmore Campaign, said, "Kenmore should be saved for its own sake. It must be saved for the sake of patriotic America."

1. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, The Story of Kenmore, page 6.

2. This burying-ground is now marked by the monument to "Mary, the Mother of Washington."

come to live with them, but she would not yield to any amount of loving insistence. She selected a comfortable home on Charles Street, adjoining the Kenmore estate, and here she lived until her death in 1789.¹

On December 27, 1753, Fielding Lewis became a member of the Fredericksburg Lodge Number 4, of the Masonic Order.² It was this same lodge into which George Washington had been initiated in 1752, and it was here that he took all three degrees of Masonry. In 1754 Fielding Lewis is recorded as treasurer of the Order, the business ability which made him the successful merchant and afterwards a successful commissioner of the Gunnery being displayed thus early in his career, for at this time he was but twenty-nine years of age. It is probable that he had been initiated before leaving Gloucester, so George Washington did not have the pleasure of seeing his cousin and brother-in-law ride the goat.

In 1760 William Waller, the burgess from Spottsylvania County, died some time before the March session of the General Assembly of Virginia. On March 4th, it was ordered by the Assembly that "an address be made to the Governor, to order a new writ to issue for electing a Burgess to serve in this present General Assembly for the County of Spottsylvania."³ In the course of time the election was held and Fielding Lewis was sent to Williamsburg to succeed Waller. Here he soon made for himself a place, and when the Assembly met for the March session in 1761 it was ordered that Mr. Lewis be added to the Committees of

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1. Selection from sketch of Mrs. Ella Bassett Washington given in The Geneology of the Lewis Family.
 2. Records of Fredericksburg Lodge Number 4.
 3. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1758-1761, page 159.

Propositions and Grievances, and of Trade. Since 1758 he had been serving his County as County-lieutenant, and since 1761, as commander-in-chief of the county militia.¹ Now a broader field of service had been opened to him. We shall see how, when the hour of peril came, a still broader field of service is opened to this man who stood out among the men of Colonial Virginia, prominent because of a business ability which enabled him to fight financial battles on the side lines while his brothers won military glory in the center of the strife. The work of the committee on Propositions and Grievances, as it met from day to day, was to consider all propositions and grievances that came legally certified to the General Assembly, and report their proceedings with their opinions thereupon to the House.² The work of the Committee of Trade, meeting from day to day, was to consider all things relating to the trade of the colony, together with all matters referred to them by the House.² From time to time reports were made to the House upon the proceedings of the committee and its opinion upon commercial matters of current interest. From this time until 1768 Fielding Lewis is recorded as a member of the House of Burgesses from the County of Spottsylvania. It is not shown by the journal of the House that

1. Virginia County Records, Vol. 1, Spottsylvania, 1721-1800. The position of County-lieutenant in Colonial Virginia was modeled on that which had existed in England from the time of the ~~Tudor~~ ~~sovereigns~~. A search among available material has revealed practically no light on the duties and powers of this official in Virginia. It seems that in England he was the head of the County militia and also a semi-administrative official. The position carried with it a certain amount of social prestige.

2. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, Vol. 1761-1765, page 69.

he was present during the sessions of 1763, 1765, and 1768. At all other times during this period he is shown to be present and officiating as a member of the two committees to which he was appointed in 1761. Among the other members of the Committee of Propositions and Grievances we read the familiar names of Messers Edmund Pendleton, Wythe, Mercer, and Richard Henry Lee. By far the largest portion of the service rendered by Fielding Lewis as a Burgess, points to the business ability we have already noticed. On November 30, 1764, it was ordered that the report of the committee appointed to ascertain the price of sundry Indian goods belonging to the public he referred to Messers Edmund Pendleton, Fielding Lewis, Hartwell Cocke, Walke, and Walker, which gentlemen were to inspect the same and report their opinion to the House.¹ Again, in 1766 Fielding Lewis is recorded as a member of a committee of six burgesses appointed to ascertain the prices of sundry Indian goods belonging to the public.² At this same session of the Assembly a bill to vest certain entailed lands in Ralph Wormerly, esquire, in fee simple, was committed to Messers Pendleton, Washington, and Lewis, together with the members from York, Elizabeth City, and Loudoun.

But in this year of 1766 political as well as economic problems loomed before the Assembly. In these matters also the gentleman from Spottsylvania lent a helping hand. Already the thunders of war had rolled across the sunny skies of the Old Dominion. In April, 1763, George Grenville had succeeded Bute as the head of the British cabinet, "devoted heart and soul to the old Colonial system", by which England carried out her policy of rendering her colonies subservient to her commercial interests. This colonial system was a development of the British merchantile policy, which had been begun by England as early as 1660. The backbone of this system consisted of three vertebrae, namely,

1. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1761-1765, page 280
2. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1760-1769, page 29

the Navigation Acts, designed to protect English shipping against foreign competition, the Acts of Trade, designed to secure to English merchants a monopoly of Colonial Commerce, and the Acts giving to English manufacturers a monopoly of colonial markets. As no British minister up to the time when Grenville began to read the American dispatches had seen to it that these acts were enforced, the colonies had not found them particularly irksome. When Grenville read the neglected dispatches from the colonies he learned that the duties paid in America did not cover the expense of collection. The Stamp Act passed in the spring of 1765 was but one item of the program of the awakened ministry. Among other plans were included the rigid enforcement of the navigation laws, the raising of revenue in the colonies by direct and indirect taxation, and the stationing of a British standing army in America. The Stamp Act was the first move to carry out this policy. Its passage was greeted in America by a storm of protests. In the House of Burgesses Patrick Henry had succeeded in getting his Stamp Act Resolutions passed by the Assembly, and had made his immortal comparison of George III with Caesar and Charles I. To the Stamp Act Congress held in New York, October 7, 1765, had come messages of encouragement from Virginia and other States where official participation was forbidden. The odious measure was repealed in the December session of Parliament, and for a time the storm subsided.¹ When the General Assembly met in the winter of '66 a committee was appointed, of which Fielding Lewis was a

1. For above sketch of Revolutionary preliminaries see Bassett, Short History of the United States, pp. 162-170 and Howard, Preliminaries of the Revolution, pp. 47-67.

member, to prepare an inscription for an obelisk which it was intended should be raised to express the gratitude of the colony to the "several noble and worthy patriots who distinguished themselves in both Houses of Parliament of Great Britain in procuring the Repeal of the Stamp Act."¹ But peace was not to be for long. Before the next session of the Assembly Charles Townshead, the head of the British exchequer since the fall of the Rockingham ministry, had secured the passage of three acts which rendered null the peace secured by the repeal of the Stamp Act, and the storm was on again. On the 10th of April Fielding Lewis was added to the committee appointed by the General Assembly, "to draw up an humble address to be presented to his majesty."² It is perhaps not insignificant that in 1764 the General Assembly appointed George Washington, Fielding Lewis, William Green, Thomas Marshall, and Thomas Rutherford commissioners for the counties of Hampshire, Frederick, Culpepper, Prince William, Loudoun, and Fauquier, "to examine, state, and settle the accounts of such pay, provisions, arms, and necessaries for the militia of the county." It was required by the House that at least three of these gentlemen meet from time to time until all the accounts of the said militia were settled. The Commissioners, or any two of them, were required to certify the accounts to the governor, or commander-in-chief who issued his warrant to the treasurer of the colony for payment thereof.³

1. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1776-1769, page 53.

2. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1766-1769, page 129.

3. Hening's Statutes, Vol. VIII, page 10.

A probable explanation of Lewis' absence from the Assembly in 1765 and 1768 is to be found in the fact that during this period he was serving his county in a judicial as well as a legislative capacity. In the State Archives of Virginia we find a record of the Justices of the Peace of Colonial Virginia, for the period from 1757-1775.¹ The name of Fielding Lewis is on every record of Spottsylvania County, the years covered being 1765, 1769, 1773. In the record for 1773 his name heads the list which, according to some authorities, indicates that he was the presiding magistrate. The courts held by the justices of the peace, who in Virginia were appointed by the Governor of the colony with and by the advice of the Council, were the lowest in the judicial hierarchy. The jurisdiction of the justices in civil matters extended to cases involving small amounts. In criminal matters it extended only to cases involving petty offenses against the law.²

1. This manuscript record was deposited in the archival annex of the Virginia State Library by Hon. Charles J. Johnston, the State Treasurer, for safe-keeping. In the introductory note, written by H. R. McIlwaine, we read the following: "It appears to be a record kept for convenience in the period immediately preceding the Revolutionary War by that official whom it most concerned to have at hand a list of all the justices of the peace of the various counties of colonial Virginia. The official was probably the Secretary of the Colony, whose duty it was to issue commissions to the justices, or it may possibly have been the clerk of the Executive Council, who acted also, no doubt, as the clerk of the Governor. Though the commissions were prepared by the Secretary of the Colony, as in his office, they were signed by the governor, who had the right of appointment with and by the advice of the Council."

2. Beard, American Government and Politics, pp. 12-13.

In May, 1771, occurred a great freshet which caused the overflow of several rivers.¹ In the devastation of the country, resulting from the overflowing of the low grounds, much tobacco was destroyed. As this was the great staple product of colonial Virginia, there ensued great distress among the planters. On the 13th of June, ~~for~~ the governor issued a proclamation for the meeting of the General Assembly on the 11th of July in order that the representatives of the people might have an opportunity to consider the situation of the sufferers.² When the Assembly met it passed an act for the relief of the sufferers, in which it resolved that the proprietors of tobacco damaged by the freshet, with the exception of that which had remained in the warehouses above a year, ought to be paid for their losses by the public.³ Twenty-three gentlemen, among whom were Fielding Lewis and Patrick Henry, were appointed commissioners for "taking, examining, and stating accounts, claims, and demands of the several proprietors of tobacco burnt in said respective warehouses which had not remained therein above one year before said tobacco was so destroyed, damaged or burnt."⁴ Before entering upon the execution of their duties the Commissioners were required to take an oath before the justice of the peace to "faithfully, impartially, and truly" perform the task laid upon them by the colony. The accounts of the claims were to be transmitted to the treasurer of the colony who was to pay upon warrant from the Governor or the commander-in-chief to the several proprietors of the damaged tobacco according to the amount of their respective claims

1. Hening's Statutes, Vol. VIII, pp. 494-498. According to the Virginia Gazette for May 30, 1771, the freshet in the James River at that time was the greatest ever known.

2. Virginia Gazette, June 13, 1771. 3. Ibid, July 18, 1771

4. Hening's Statutes, vol. VIII pp. 494-498

stated in the accounts, according to the rates fixed by the legislature.¹ Thus we see how in this time of financial distress the business ability of Fielding Lewis again came to the aid of his colony. In addition to stating the accounts and claims of the proprietors of the damaged tobacco, the commissioners were required to examine the condition of the warehouses at Quantico at the time the tobacco was destroyed. If they were not in sufficient repair the commissioners were to examine the cause thereof and report the matter to the Assembly at its next session.²

In February, 1772, the General Assembly appointed seven gentlemen, among whom was Fielding Lewis, as commissioners to strike a dividing line between the counties of Stafford and King George by marking out a line from the Rappahannock to the Potomac River. At the next session of the legislature the commissioners reported their proceedings, whereupon it was ordered by the House that, "leave be given to bring in a bill to alter and establish the boundaries of the counties of Stafford and King George according to the said report."³

In March, 1772, Fielding Lewis, at that time a vestryman of the Parish of St. George in Spottsylvania County, with other vestrymen of the same parish presented a petition to the House of Burgesses setting forth that the Church yard of the parish in the town of Fredericksburg, which lay for the most part on the side of a hill, was not a proper situation for the new church

1. Hening's Statutes, Vol. VIII, pp. 494-498

2. Ibid

3. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1773-1776, Also Hening's Statutes, Vol. VIII, page 601.

it would soon be necessary for the parish to build, and requesting that the petitioners be empowered to sell so much of the church yard as had not been used as a burying-ground, and to lay out the money arising from the sale, or as much of it as was necessary, for the purchase of other land situated more conveniently in the town.¹ The petition was granted by the House, Mr. Mann Page being directed to prepare and bring in the bill. However, for some reason, perhaps because of distant rumblings of the war that was soon to cloud the horizon of the parish, the permission granted by the assembly was not made use of. The present St. George's Church is still "lying, for the most part, on the side of a hill." These same rumblings of war now lead us to a consideration of the real life work of Fielding Lewis, his contribution to the cause of freedom.

In September, 1767, Charles Townshend, the afore-mentioned head of the English exchequer, died. He was succeeded by Lord North, who soon let it be known that the old policy was not to be relaxed. The revenue officials in Boston, finding it extremely difficult to collect the duties imposed by the mother country, sent home the request that troops be sent to the town.

1. Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1770-1772, p.261
In Goolrick's Historic Fredericksburg, page 182, we read the following: "St. George's Parish and the county of Spottsylvania were contemporaneously established in 1720. The first official record of the parish extant is the notice of the vestry meeting on January 16, 1726, at Mattaponi, one of the three churches then in the parish. It was not until the 10th of April, 1732, that Colonel Henry Willis contracted to build a Church on the site of the present St. George's, 75,000 pounds of tobacco being the consideration. After much discussion accompanied by the usual excitement, the State urging its claims and the vestry not indifferent as to who "His Honorable, the Governor" would send them, the Reverend Patrick Henry, uncle of the famous Patrick Henry, became minister. Colonel Henry Willis and Colonel John Waller, or he that first goes to Williamsburg' is desired to return thanks to his Honor."

From this time on events leading to revolution occur in a rapid series. It is not necessary, in a study of this kind, to describe in detail the "Boston Massacre" of March 5, 1770, the "Boston Tea Party" of December 16, 1773, and of the First Continental Congress, called by Virginia, meeting at Philadelphia in September, 1775. An account of them can be found in any text book on American History. Before the Second Continental Congress assembled the battles of Lexington and Concord had been fought, and the war was on. The Congress assembled at Philadelphia May 10, 1775, could only unite in a declaration of "the Causes and Necessity for taking up Arms" and make a final address to the king. The New England volunteers, about twenty thousand in all, were taken into the pay of Congress, and Washington was appointed to the command.¹

Meanwhile, Virginia did not lag behind the other colonies in making her preparation against the coming struggle. In July, 1775, the delegates and representatives of Virginia enacted an ordinance providing for the erection of a manufactory of arms at or near Fredericksburg under the direction of certain commissioners and that a sufficient number of officers employed at public expense, be constantly employed in the manufacturing of arms so long as the necessities of the colony should require. The act further provided that Fielding Lewis, Charles Deck, Mann Page, Junior, William Fitzhugh and Samuel Selden, or any three of them be appointed commissioners for the superintendence of the manu-

1. Bassett, A Short History of the United States, pages 171-181.

factory, and appropriated the sum of twenty-five hundred pounds to the commissioners, together with such other sums as the Committee of Safety should from time to time direct.¹ The Gunnery established at Fredericksburg in compliance with this act is said to have been the first to be established in the colonies.² The need for arms and ammunition had already been felt by the Continental Army as the following letter, written by Thomas Jefferson to Fielding Lewis, reveals.

Philadelphia, July 16, 1775

" We were informed a few weeks ago that five thousand pounds of lead imported on account of our colony were landed at Fredericksburgh. There appears scarcely a possibility it should be wanting in Virginia, more especially when we consider the supplies which may be expected from the mines of that colony. The flying camp now forming in the Jerseys and which will be immediately in the face of a powerful enemy, is likely to be in great want of that article. Did their wants admit of delay of an application to the Governor we should have applied to him and have not a doubt he would have ordered it hither. But circumstances are too pressing, and we are assured we should incur the censures of our country were we to permit the public cause to suffer essentially while the means of preventing it (though not under our immediate charge) are within our reach. We, therefore take the liberty of desiring you to stop so many of the powder wagons now on their way to Williamsburg as may be necessary and return

1. Hening's Statutes, Vol. IX, page 72

2. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, Historic periods of Fredericksburg, page 19

them immediately with this lead^y, and whatever you can collect, sending the powder on by the other wagons. But should the lead have been sent to Williamsburg the wagons may then proceed on their journey and the governor, to whom we have written, will take care of the matter.¹

This letter also reveals the esteem in which Fielding Lewis was held by the Revolutionary leaders which led them to entrust to him so important a mission. But to return to the Gunnery, what became of Messers Fitzhugh, Page, and Selden is not explained in any of the records, but so far as I am aware of, they were never again alluded to. The whole work of the manufactory fell to the lot of Colonel Fielding Lewis and Charles Dick, and faithfully they performed their duties, even after the means to carry on the work ceased to come from the poverty-stricken treasury of the State. The two commissioners purchased from Richard Brooke, of Smithfield, a tract of land adjoining Fredericksburg, with a "noble spring, and a spacious garden, which supplies necessary greens and roots".² They also leased from a Mrs. Lucy Roots Dixon a millhouse on Hazel Run, which was converted to the use of Grinding bayonets. Within one year the necessary buildings had been erected, and the factory was in good running order. In March 1776, Colonel Fielding Lewis wrote to George Washington as follows:

1. Ford, Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. IV, pgs. 265-266

2. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, Historic Periods of Fredericksburg, 1608-1861, pages 19-20. The original source of this and other information on the Gunnery quoted from Mrs. Fleming is the letters of Charles Dick and Fielding Lewis on the Fredericksburg Gunnery, which were found by Mr. James Ekinrode and Mr. William Clayton Torrence of Richmond, Va.

"..... Our manufactory has not yet made one musquet; the Hands have been employed in repairing the old gunns from the magazine which Ld. Dunmore took the Locks from, and repairing the Gunns belonging to the several companys that have passed thro' this Town. We have a great many Barrels ready forged which we are now preparing for the stockers; our men had the business to learn, begin to be expert at Lockmaking about Thirty of which pr. week we now make that are equal to the English; and what Barrels are ready I think are better."

The running expenses of the factory were estimated at 2,958 pounds annually, which included stock, a master workman and thirty others, besides negroes to do the drudgery, and work the garden, rent for the mill, and other small extra items. All the workmen dined daily at the Gunnery hence the need of the "noble spring", and the "spacious garden."¹

At first money came from the colonial treasury to the commissioners to defray the expenses of the manufactory. In the Accounts of the Committee of Public Safety of Virginia for May 7, 1775, we read that the Committee of Public Safety directs the sum of 500 pounds to be paid cash to the commissioners of the Fredericksburg manufactory by Fielding Lewis Esquire.² Again on May 4, 1776, the Committee directed that 1,111 pounds, 18 shillings, and 6 pence be paid to Fielding Lewis Esquire, "his account for the purchase and outfit of sundry vessels for the importation of arms and ammunition on public account."³ In the

1. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, Historic Periods of Fredericksburg, pages 19-20.

2. Accounts of Committee of Public Safety, 1775-1776, page 19.

3. Accounts of the Committee of Public Safety, 1775-1776, page 62.

Journal of the Committee of Public Safety for July 1st, 1776, we read of the order to issue a warrant to Joseph Jones Esquire for the use of Fielding Lewis Esquire for 1800 pounds upon amount, "to enable him to pay the private adventures their share of the goods lately imported into the Rappahannock, and taken into the public stores, also 1000 pounds upon amount for the expense of the navy in Rappahannock, and 5000 pounds upon amount for the use of the commissioners of the gun manufactory."¹ In addition to these sums a small amount of money came to the factory for the compensation of the commissioners. No salary had been attached to the position at the time of their appointment, but at the end of the first year, 1776, the factory having men established on an "extraordinary good footing", the commissioners were allowed 182.10 pounds for their services.² In 1777 they were allowed 300 pounds each, which, after the depreciation as settled by Congress was deducted, amounted only to 54.18 pounds. For the year 1779 they were allowed 1000 pounds each, worth only 43 pounds.³ How adequate these sums were to meet the expenses of the manufactory in the first years of the war is unknown. But we do know that at this time the funds stopped coming in from the State Treasury. Also the value of the money issued by the Continental Congress depreciated in value until it became almost worthless. On April 4th, 1780, Fielding Lewis

1. Accounts of the Committee of Public Safety, of Virginia, June 5, 1776 to July 5, 1776, page 76. In regard to the vessels on the Rappahannock we learn on page 77 that "Colonel Fielding Lewis is directed and empowered to average the wages of the officers that sailed from Rappahannock River on the public account as well as on account of the private adventures."

2. Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. I, page 456.

3. Ibid, also Auditor's Account Book, 1779-1780, page 159

wrote to General Washington, ... "You judge right regarding our paper currency as I find by a late resolution of the Congress that it's reduced to one fortieth part of its nominal value. This regulation I suppose was necessary however unjust it may appear to the world; after the assurances lately given by Congress in their publication, I did not expect so great a discount as forty for one would so soon have taken place.- I cannot say but I shall be among the sufferers."¹ It was at this crisis that Fredericksburg showed the moral fibre of which her citizens were made. Fielding Lewis staked his personal fortune to run the factory. In a letter to Colonel George Brooke, Treasurer of Virginia, dated February 9, 1781, in which he requests aid from the State in his financial distress his patriotic generosity had brought upon him, he said

"I expected to have received by Mr. Dick,- the money I have advanced for the Public Gun Factory at Fredericksburg, for which he had a warrant on the Treasury. No man is a better judge of the loss I must at any rate sustain, by not receiving my money than you are. Most part of it was advanced as early as July, and without such advance the factory must have been discontinued, as no money could be had of the Treasury or so little that the business must have suffered greatly. Had I suffered that factory to have stopped, I know the public would have blamed me for it, although I should not have been blamable as the cause would have been the want of money. You may remember that I was desired to

1. Quoted in Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, Vol. IV, pp. XLIX-LXX.

borrow all the money I could for the use of the State. I think I procured between 30 and 40 thousand pounds, 7000 of which I lent the State, being all I had at that time on hand. By these advances I have distressed myself greatly and at this time am not able to pay the collector of my taxes, and continue my business in the usual manner. I shall be greatly obliged to you to send me the money by Mr. James Maury who has the warrant. Can it be expected that the State can be well served when its best friends are used in the manner I have been treated."¹ When we consider the fact that during the last years of the Revolution, from 1778-1781, the big campaign was being fought in the South and that the decisive fighting in this campaign centered in Virginia we realize how vitally important to the success of the continental troops was the continuation of this factory. If we couple with this thought that of the scarcity of arms and ammunition in the Revolutionary army, we may be able to see Fielding Lewis' sacrifice for his nation in its true prospective. In this time of need the whole citizen body came to the aid of the patriotic commissioners. In January, 1781, Major Charles Dick wrote to the Governor,

"I have just time to acquaint you that the gentlemen of this town and even the Ladys have very spiritedly attended the Gunnery and assisted to make up already above 20,000 cartridges with Bullets, from which the Spottsylvania militia and the militia from Caroline have been supplied, as also above 100 good guns from this factory."² It was not the first time the citizen

1. Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. 1, pp. 502-503

2. Ibid, page 416

body had shown its revolutionary spirit. As early as April 29, 1775, Fredericksburg leaders had gotten together in the reception room at Kenmore, and formulated what was tantamount to a Declaration of Independence, closing with the words, "God save the liberties of America."¹

But already the strain and toil of the six years of the war together with anxiety for the welfare of the manufactory as well as for that of his family (due to the financial losses his patriotism had involved) had begun to leave their mark upon a body that had never been over strong. As early as April, 1780, Fielding Lewis had written General Washington that, "the bad state of my health prevents my paying that attention to my own business that it requires."² For almost a year from this time he kept up, attending the business and making the necessary sacrifices. However, before the winter of '81 was over the work had to be relinquished. On February 26, Mr. Charles Dick wrote to the Governor acknowledging the receipt of his Excellency's letter appointing him director of the Gun Factory at Fredericksburg.³ From this time on Dick had to bear the entire responsibility of the enterprise. But Fielding Lewis lived to see the victory of the cause for which he had sacrificed himself assured. Throughout the long months from February to October the light of his life flickered bravely on, and it was not until October 19, the day of the decisive victory at Yorktown, that it went out. He was buried in the graveyard of Old St. George's

1. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, The Story of Kenmore, page 7.

2. Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, Vol. IV, pp. XLIX-

3. Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. I, pag 542.

under the steps of the present church.¹ In addition to the money which he had put into the Gunnery, Fielding Lewis possessed great landed estates. In his will, probated Jan. 17, 1782, he left to his wife the use during life of all his lands in Spottsylvania County, except that part rented by his son John. The remainder was divided among his six sons and a son-in-law.²

Meanwhile Charles Dick had carried on his partner's work bravely. The following letter dated September 5th, written to Colonel George Muter, Commissioner of war, shows the struggle that the manufactory had to put up for its existence.

"I received your favour by Captain Carter, with the warrent for six thousand pounds on account of the Gun Factory, as he was not so fortunate as to receive the money for it. The disappointment is great, and I am afraid will be an injury to the service, tho' I shall do all I can to prevent. A gentleman travelling your way with a sum of money, would not let me have it without an order on a private person, which was not in my power to do - I am sorry to see public credit sink so low -

First opportunity of a good hand shall send the warrent to your address; in the meantime I beg you will contrive to send me the money by any gentleman coming this way, for to send on purpose and be balked is very expensive -

I think there might be a correspondence kept up from two or three faithful watchmen in each county, much to the advantage

1. It was not until several weeks ago that the Washington-Lewis chapter of the D.A.R., organized in Fredericksburg in 1922, erected a tablet to mark the resting place of this colonial patriot
2. Virginia County Records, Vol.1, Spottsylvania. For will in full see appendix.

of the public service, was it encourgged, for I take it to be impossible for any Power or Department fixed to a certain spot, let them be ever so active and willing to know or do every-thing that is necessary to be done. I am led to this reflection by a want of Lead to prove green barrels with 2 oz. balls to every barrall, and tho' we endeavour to save them in Butts, yet there is a very great loss everytime. There is no lead to be brought, and none this way belonging to the public. Ever since Dunmore was up Potom^k I endeavoured to get some sent to this quarter, and at last about 18 months ago there were six pegs sent of 150 lb. each, in a little time after there came an order for them to be carried to the Ohio and not yet replaced -

Should the Enemy come up Potomack, what would be the consequence? The leads of our windows and shopweights are already gone, and in a hurry nothing is done well - Powder keeps better in cartridges than in Barrels, and was there a number made with Bullets to fit the musket, two sizes under to fit the country guns, it might be of infinite service - Salt here has already got to 70 lbs. pr. Bushell - this Factory ~~was~~ about 30 Bush^{es} pr. annum, in salting Brovisions, etc. including case hardening, which consumes a quantity - Please send me an Order on the Keeper of the Public Salt, not exceeding the above quantity, for even if we had money, it is too extravagent a Price - Please excuse this trouble."¹

When the war was over, and peace had once more spread its sheltering wings over the old town, the factory was turned over
1. Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. 1, page 572. In this same volume is one record of supplies sent to the gunnery by the State. In a meeting of the Governor's Council, Sept. 8, 1780, Thomas Jefferson endorsed the order that, "a ton of lead should be sent to Fredericksburg, in wagons returning empty to Mr. Washington who has the care of the powder - an order may be drawn on him also, for 30 bushels of Salt."

to the trustees of the town of Fredericksburg to found an academy for the education of the youth of the place.¹

Later the academy was sold and the money turned over to the Episcopal Charity School.¹

Colonel Fielding Lewis is recorded as a Brigadier-General of the Virginia militia at the beginning of the war.² It is probable that he continued to hold the position of commander-in-chief of the Spottsylvania militia, to which he had been appointed in 1761, through the first years of the Revolution before he was called upon to relinquish the military service in order to serve his nation as commissioner of the gun factory. The state of his health and the fact that one of his eyes was defective, together with the business ability for which he was noted, made him more fitted for the latter form of service.

There is a tradition among the admirers of Fielding Lewis that in addition to the financial aid he rendered the nation through the gunnery, he also maintained and equipped three regiments during the Revolution. The only documentary evidence which is found on this subject is an account of 690 pounds paid by George Baylor's Regiment of Dragoons to Fielding Lewis for money which he had advanced.³

1. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, Historic Periods of Fredericksburg, page 20. Also the unveiling address delivered by Mr. William Clayton Torrence at Gunnery Spring, July 4, 1916. The tradition of Gunnery Spring is "He who drinks of the water no matter where he may wander will certainly come back to Fredericksburg." In 1916, largely through the efforts of Mr. Torrence, the Sons of the Revolution placed a tablet above the spring giving its history.

2. Heitman, Historical Registrar of Officers of the continental Army during the War of the Revolution, April 1775 to December 1783, page 348.

3. Rejected Claims on file in the State Archives Department.

The month following the death of Fielding Lewis, Washington, his generals, and the French officers stopped in Fredericksburg on the way northward. In a letter to Col. Lewis Washington dated March 4, 1857, Mr. G. W. Parke Custis tells the following anecdote in connection with this visit. "When in 1781 the Chief, accompanied by the Count de Rochambeau, was en route for New York, following close upon the rear of the French army he halted in Fredericksburg, and having consigned the Count to the best hotel of the village, the commander-in-chief hastened to the residence of his sister. The lady had gone out to visit a neighbor. Judge of her surprise when on her return, she saw that her pleasant mansion and the area around it, the abode of peace, domestic happiness, and liberal hospitality had suddenly assumed the pomp and circumstance of glorious war. She entered the mansion, where her servants, struck dumb with amazement, could only point to her chamber door. She rushed in, and there discovered her beloved brother stretched upon the bed and asleep. She uttered a wild exclamation of surprise and joy.¹ It was on this visit that the memorable ball was given in the town hall in celebration of the final triumph.

As the estate of Colonel Lewis was deeply involved on account of his patriotic services, and also on account of the depreciation of the continental currency which he and other colonial gentlemen had put faith in, it was probably extremely difficult for Mrs. Lewis to continue living on her former social scale. Like so many noble American women on whom the wars in which our country has engaged have brought tribulations, she arose to fill the need of those about her. Most of her time was

^{LXI.}
1. Quoted in Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, pp. ^{XLIX}

devoted to her mother and children. At Kenmore, where in other days she had reigned as one of the belles of the society of old Fredericksburg, she now presided as the mistress of a small boarding school which she kept for the education of her daughter Elizabeth and the younger children.¹ In March, 1789, before leaving Virginia for the inauguration in New York, General Washington came to see his mother. It was a sad time for the little family, for the mother was dying of a cancer. She died August 25th, 1789. The following is taken from the letter Washington wrote to his sister at this time.

September 13, 1789.

"Awful and affecting as the death of a parent is, there is consolation in knowing that heaven has spared ours to an age beyond which few attain and favoured her with the full employment of her mental faculties, and as much bodily strength as usually falls to the lot of fourscore. Under the considerations and a hope that she is translated to a happier place, it is the duty of her relatives to yield submission to the decrees of the Creator. When I was last at Fredericksburg, I took a final leave of my mother, never expecting to see her more."² Such was Washington's confidence in the "clearness of her discernment and the sureness of her judgment" that he intrusted to his sister the settlement of his mother's estate.³

In 1791 when on his famous southern tour Washington stopped at Fredericksburg. "Not being apprized of his approach the citizens were disappointed in the opportunities of evincing their respect to this illustrious character, by meeting him previous to his arrival."⁴ As soon as his chariot and equipage

swept through the quiet town the place was all excitement over the news: "The President is here! He arrived at one o'clock and is staying at the home of his sister Elizabeth, Mrs. Fielding Lewis." Almost immediately preparations were begun for a reception and public dinner in his honor and carried rapidly forward. We are told by a contemporary print that "an elegant dinner was prepared at the town hall", and at two o'clock, Washington was "waited on by some of the officers and principal inhabitants of the corporation, conducted to the place of entertainment, received by the mayor, and introduced to those present."¹ After the introductions were over the mayor, a Mr. William Harvey, delivered on behalf of the corporation a congratulatory address, to which the President "makes a gracious reply, in terms consonant with the spirit of the address."²

In 1794, her large family of children grown and scattered, Mrs. Lewis sold Kenmore and went to live with her daughter Elizabeth who had married Charles Carter of Western View, Culpepper County. It was here that she died, March 31, 1797. Her grave is at Western View.

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1. Mrs. V. M. Fleming, The Story of Kenmore, pages 8
 2. Ford, Writings of George Washington, Vol. II, 1785-90, page 426
 3. Speech of Congressman R. Walton Moore given in Mrs. V. M. Fleming's The Story of Kenmore, page 22.
 4. Quoted in Henderson's Washington's Southern Tour 1791, page 140
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1. Henderson, Washington's Southern Tour, 1791, page 140
 2. Ibid, pages 141-43.

By no means the least important contribution of Fielding Lewis to the development of his nation was his large family of sons and daughters, fourteen in all, of whom eight lived to attain manhood or womanhood. It would take too long to go into the history of all of these, but several of them especially deserve mention at this time. Two of these, Captain Robert Lewis, the tenth son of Fielding and Betty, and Howell, the eleventh son of these worthy parents, were among President Washington's private secretaries. Washington's letter to Howell offering this position, and the latter's acceptance of the same have been preserved. They read as follows:

Philadelphia, April 8, 1792.

"My dear Sister,

If your son Howell is living with you and not especially employed in your own affairs and should incline to spend a few months with me as a writer in my office, if he is fit for it, I will allow him the rate of \$300 a year, provided he is diligent in discharging the duties of it from breakfast until dinner, Sundays excepted. This sum will be punctually paid him, and I am particular in declaring beforehand what I require and what he may expect, that there be no disappointment on either side. He will live in the family in the same manner his brother Robert did; if the offer is accepted he must hold himself in readiness to come on immediately on my giving him notice. Mrs. Washington unites with me in best wishes and love for you and yours, and I am, my dear sister, your most affec. Brother.

G. Washington."

Fredericksburg, April 24, 1792.

"Dear Uncle,

I should have done myself the pleasure of replying to your letter on its receipt, but was at that time engaged in business in Frederick. I consider myself extremely favoured by your proposal of a birth in your family, and shall accept it provided my probation is deemed satisfactory. I lament that I have not been more attentive to the improvement of my writing tho' I hope that I soon shall be qualified to do the business for which you mean to employ me. With best wishes to my Aunt, I remain most respectfully yours.

Howell Lewis."¹

This same Captain ^{Robert} Lewis was mayor of Fredericksburg from 1821 until the day of his death, February 11, 1829. It was he who delivered the address of welcome to General Lafayette on his visit to the town in 1824.²

George Lewis, the fourth son of Fielding Lewis and Betty Washington was a Captain in Baylor's Regiment of Dragoons, January 1, 1775, and commander of Washington's Life Guard. It is said that General Hugh Mercer, another of Fredericksburg's patriotic sons, expired in his arms after having received the fatal wound at the battle of Princeton. At a later date George Lewis was promoted to the rank of Major.³ According to the material filed as rejected claims in the State Archives Depart-

1. Ancestral Records and Portraits, pages 138 and 139.

2. Quinn, History of Fredericksburg, Virginia, pages 155-156

3. The Willis Family of Virginia, division on the Lewises.

ment, Fielding Lewis, the eldest of Betty Lewis' sons, was also a captain in Baylor's regiment, engaged in the recruiting service during the Revolution.

Lawrence Lewis, the ninth son, deserves mention as the favourite nephew of George Washington. He married the beautiful Nelly Custis, the darling of the Washington family, and resided with her at Mount Vernon after the death of Washington.¹

The crest of the Lewis Family (a dragon's head holding in its mouth a bloody hand) bears the motto, "Omnia solum forti patria est" (Every land is a brave man's country).² In passing let us realize that Fielding Lewis is one of those sons of the Old Dominion whose contribution to his nation's cause helped to make America such a country as brave men rejoice to call their own.

1. Lancaster, Virginia Homes and Churches, page 304.

2. For my knowledge of the Lewis crest I am indebted to Colonel John C. Lewis of Louisville, Kentucky, the great grandson of the subject of this study.

APPENDIX

Fielding Lewis - his will.

Died October 19, 1781, will probated Jan. 17, 1782.

Wit. George Noble, Benj. Sedwick, John Butler, Gerard Alexander, Will. Booth, William Carpenter. Ex. wife and my sons John, Fielding, and George. Leg. wife, Betty Lewis, during life the use of all my lands in Spots. Co. except that part rented to my son John; son John, after death of his mother, all my lands in Spots. Co. and in Fredericksburg; son Fielding, 1000 acres of my Frederick Co. lands on which he lives; son George, remainder of Frederick Co. lands bought of Robert Carter Nicholas except 1000 acres to my son Lawrence; son-in-law Charles Carter, Esqr; son Lawrence 1000 acres of land in Frederick Co.; son Robert 1/2 of 10,000 acres of land located for me in the Co. of Kentucky by Mr. Hancock Lee, and 1/2 of 20,000 acres located or to have been located for me by Nathaniel Randolph in the Co. of Kentucky; son Howell, the remaining half of above lands in Kentucky; all my lands purchased at the Land Office except what is already despised of, to my sons Robert and Howell equally; my share in the Dismal Swamp Co. my lands bought of Maumaduke Naughflett in partnership with General Washington; my lands bought of Dr. Wright and Jones in Hansemond Co.; in partnership with General Washington and Dr. Thomas Walker, and the 320 acres of land in Frederick Co. bought of George Mercer's estate, also my share in the Chatham Rope Walk at Richmond to be sold by executors and the money arising to be paid to my six sons before mentioned, in equal portions.

Codicil dated December 10, 1781, witnessed by Frances Willis, Jr.; Gerard Alexander, Fr. Keyes, George Ogelire, John Butler and William Carpenter; to son Robert Lewis a tract of land purchased over.

of Francis Willis Jr. adjoining a tract of 320 acres of land in Frederick Co. Also the said tract of 320 acres to son Howell Lewis, and the whole tract of 10,000 acres in Kentucky to son John."¹

1. Virginia County Records, Vol. 1, Spottsylvania, 1721-1800.

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