Life, Liberty and Property (A Series)

Description



VLTA Examiner

The VLTA Explores the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and Contemporary Issues Concerning the Citizenâ??s Bundle of Property Rights

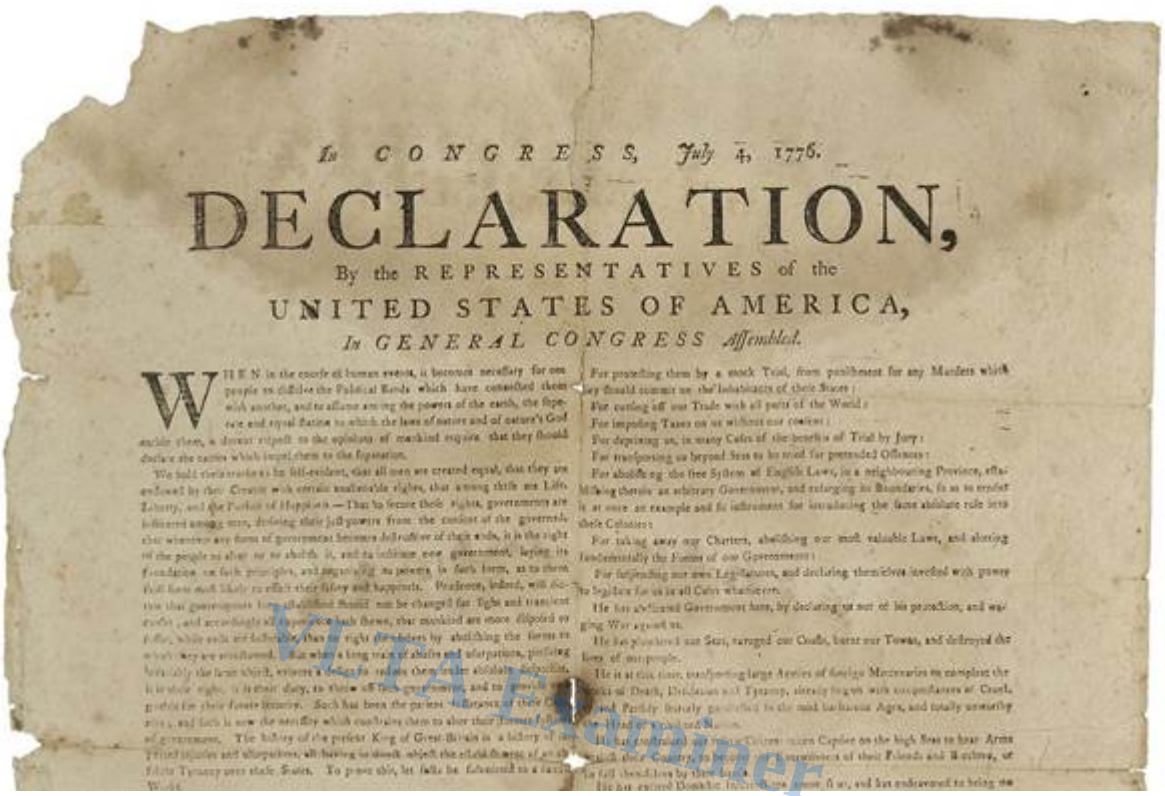
â??We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Libertyâ?¦â?• and Property.[1] The Declaration of Independence ends that transcendent sentence with â??â?¦and the pursuit of Happiness.â?• It would not, however, have been surprising to see â??Propertyâ?? written there. Eighteenth Centuryâ??s liberal thinkers frequently included â??propertyâ?? as a natural right of the citizen. Chief among these was John Locke, the English philosopher of the late 1600s, who is often credited with the inspiration for Thomas Jeffersonâ??s ideas on freedom and property rights. More on this subject in the *Examiner* soon.

On July 4, 2026, the United States of America celebrates its 250th birthday. On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was read to the public in Philadelphia. This document recognized the unanimous adoption by the Thirteen Colonies of a Resolution of the Second Continental Congress that declared that these â??United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States.â?• [2] Further stating that they were dissolved of all political connection with Great Britain, with full authority to conduct war, peace, commerce, and other acts which an independent nation could do on the world stage. Concluding, the member Colonies, â??mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.â?• In honor of our 250th Anniversary, the Virginia Land Title Association, through its *Examiner* magazine, offers a series of articles for the next couple of years, around the theme of freedom and â??our Fortunes.â?•



That is, the magazine will present several articles that will address various subjects related to real property at the time of the Revolutionary War. An article may acknowledge the economic, social, and political effect of the issue of property on the â??Lives, Fortunes and sacred Honorâ?? on the Colonies and their citizens.[3] Authors will be well-known writers and speakers from the title industry and beyond. The first two articles, coming in June 2026 and September 2026, respectively, focus on two of our Founding Fathers: Thomas Jefferson and his views on freedom and the right(s) of property, and George Washingtonâ??s time as a surveyor in the Colony of Virginia. Committed topics include the property rights of Colonial women, slaves as real property, and the then current relationship of ownership of land to Native Americans. You may anticipate these topics in 2027 or 2028. Other topics being considered and/or looking for an author are: common law real property concepts that were adopted, modified, or were rejected by the new Virginia government; â??the commonsâ??; Anglican Church lands; and the comparative lives of the plantation owner, landowning free farmers, and merchants and laborers, who owned land.[4]

Hopefully, you will find the series of articles on the 250th Anniversary of American Independence and property rights enjoyable and insightful. Happy Birthday, USA!



In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

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 entitle 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

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 compleat the works of Death, Desolation and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy

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[1] â??Unalienableâ?• is in the original; â??Property is not.

[2] â??United Coloniesâ?• appears in the Declaration as a capitalized expression. On the other hand, â??united States of Americaâ?• has a lower case letter beginning â??united.â??

[3] Note that the Declaration announced the independence of each colony, not a unified nation. Consequently, the later Treaty of Paris has signatures from thirteen (13) states/colonies, not just one from the United States of America. The USA did not exist in fact until the Constitution replaced the Articles of Confederation in 1789. To be noted, however, the Treaty of Paris does refer to the â??United Statesâ?? but, contextually, this appears to be a method to replace listing all thirteen former colonies repetitively. Also, the three representatives for the Americans, are identified as being residents of three different â??Statesâ?• (John Adams, Massachusetts; Benjamin Franklin, Pennsylvania; John Jay, New York).

[4] If you have a topic or author to suggest, please contact the VLTA.

Article provided and contributed by members of the ***VLTA Examiner Magazine Committee***. If you have any questions or would like to contribute to this article series, please reach out to John Mashack at John@loudouncommercialtitle.com or Emily Stephens at membership@vlta.org.

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