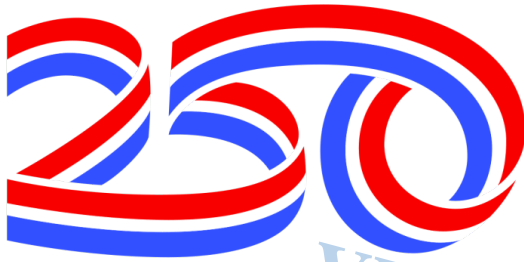


## Life, Liberty and Property (A Series)

### Description

# AMERICA



### ***The VLTA Explores the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and Contemporary Issues Concerning the Citizen's Bundle of Property Rights***

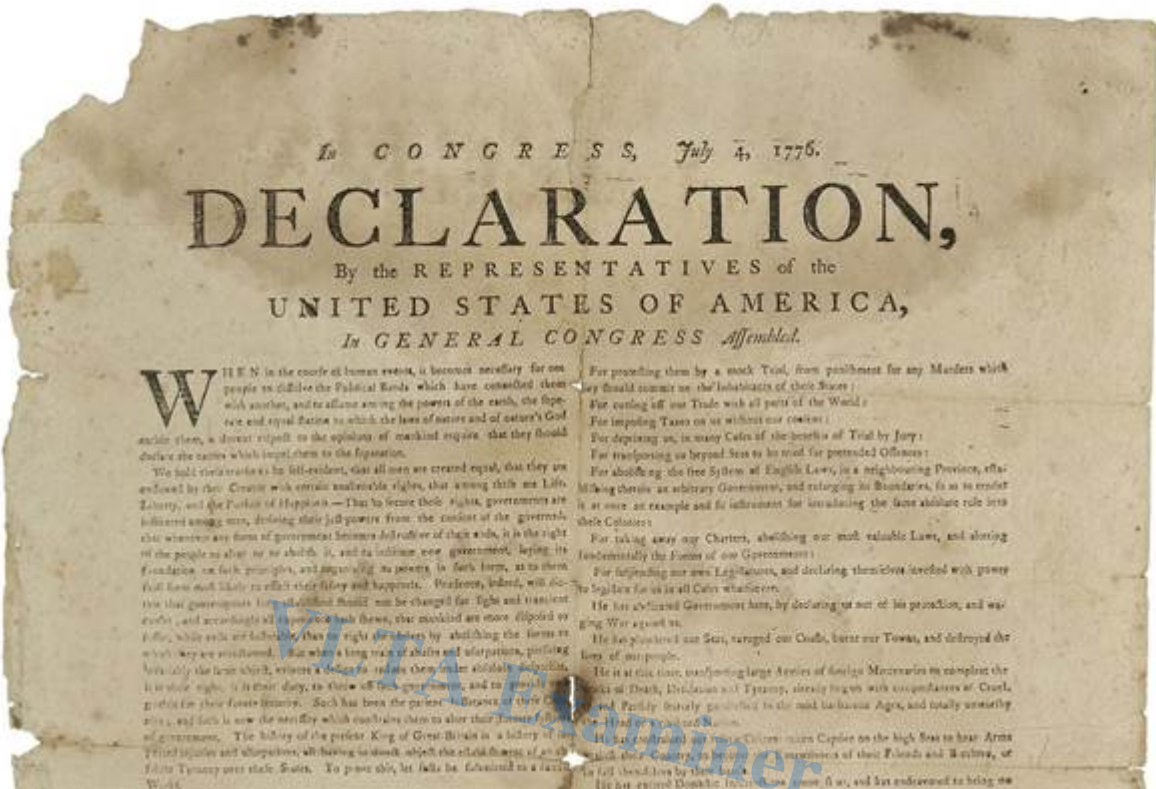
"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and Property."<sup>[1]</sup> The Declaration of Independence ends that transcendent sentence with "and the pursuit of Happiness." It would not, however, have been surprising to see "Property" written there. Eighteenth Century's liberal thinkers frequently included "property" 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 Jefferson'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 250<sup>th</sup> 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 "United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States."<sup>[2]</sup> 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, "mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." In honor of our 250<sup>th</sup> 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 "our Fortunes."



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 “Lives, Fortunes and sacred Honor” on the Colonies and their citizens.<sup>[3]</sup> 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 Washington’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; “the commons”; Anglican Church lands; and the comparative lives of the plantation owner, landowning free farmers, and merchants and laborers, who owned land.<sup>[4]</sup>

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



[1] Unalienable is in the original; Property is not.

[2] United Colonies appears in the Declaration as a capitalized expression. On the other hand, united States of America has a lower case letter beginning united.

[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 United States 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 States (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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