

A Guide to the Records of the Committee of Safety, 1775-1776

Series I: General Correspondence, 1775-1776.
1775-1776

A Collection in the Library of Virginia 30003a
Library of Virginia
2025

History

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Title Statement

A Guide to the Records of the Committee of Safety, 1775-1776

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Collection: 30003a

Author: Maria Shellman

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid created in EAD by Maria Shellman, 05 March 2025

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Accession Number

30003a

Language

English

Creator

Virginia. Committee of Safety.

Extent

1.6 cu. ft. (4 boxes)

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Please use microfilm (Misc. Reels 301, 619-620).

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Acquisition information unavailable.

Processing Information

The collection was mostly processed years before a finding aid was created. The encoding archivist maintained the order in which the items were originally arranged by the processing archivist.

Preferred Citation

Virginia. Committee of Safety. Records, 1775-1776. Accession 30003a, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Historical Information

Between August 1, 1774, and July 5, 1776, five extralegal conventions directed the political and military affairs of Virginia. These bodies gradually assumed legislative, executive, and judicial functions as the royal government disintegrated. By the time of the adjournment of the fifth convention, troops had been raised and armed at public expense, a constitution adopted, and Patrick Henry elected the first governor of the Commonwealth. The Virginia Revolutionary Convention Records consist of minutes, journals and papers such as letters, petitions, drafts of both resolutions and ordinances, committee reports and Tory and British intercepted letters. Each convention's records are filed separately and papers are arranged by the date of consideration.

On August 16, 1775, the third convention created a Committee of Safety, charging it with "carying into complete and full execution all....ordinances and resolutions of the convention." In December, the committee was authorized to imprison Tories, seize their property, and to act as an appellate court. Initially the committee was to function only during the convention's recess. However, in December 1775, the fourth convention authorized the committee to act during the session and ordered it to maintain records and place them before the convention.

Scope and Content

Records of the Committee of Safety, 1775-1776, include correspondence, minute books, and an account book. These records document the activities of the Committee of Safety.

The correspondence has been digitized and is available online at [Virginia Committee of Safety, 1774-1776. Digital Collection](#)

Related Material

An additional Committee of Safety ledger can be found in the [Revolutionary War Military Service Pay Records of the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts](#) collection. The APA ledger is possibly an incomplete copy of the ledger in Series II.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into four series:

- Series I: General Correspondence, 1775-1776;
- Series II: Accounts, 1775-1776;
- Series III: Journal, 1776;
- Series IV: Minutes, 1776;

Contents List

Series I: General Correspondence, 1775-1776.

Boxes 1-2 (box)

Extent

Extent: 0.7 cu. ft. (2 boxes).

Scope and Content

Series I: General correspondence, 1775-1776, includes letters, proclamations, proceedings, and resolutions relating to the Committee of Safety. Each item in the collection has been cataloged individually with

descriptive notes. This inventory was created to have a place where each item in the collection was listed. Letters discuss a wide array of topics, such as business, military, and community matters. This includes descriptions of the purchase, movement, status, and seizures of goods (thread, shoes, leather, ammunition, salt, molasses, grain, gun powder, livestock); intelligence gathering relating to the British and Lord Dunmore; militia commissions and appointments; locations and movement of minutemen; and military discharges. There are letters related to prisoners, requests for trials, and prisoner exchanges. The papers also detail punishing British loyalists (such as burning their homes and seizing their property) and brief back-and-forth disagreement on whether loyalists should be relocated to more interior parts of the colony. There are also concerns about enslaved people, particularly those enslaved by the British or British loyalists.

Williamsburg, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Yorktown, Hampton, and Fredericksburg are referenced most often. There are also mentions of Dinwiddie, Culpeper, West Augusta, Isle of Wight, Lester's Ferry, Amelia, Southampton, Nansemond, Surry, Prince George, Charles City, Prince William, Henrico, Pittsburgh, Pittsylvania, Princess Anne, and St. Eustatius.

Individuals referenced in the letters include but are not limited to Morgan Alexander, William Aylett, John Banister, James Barbour, George Blair, Thomas Bullitt, William Cabell, Maximillian Calvert, Paul Carrington, William Christian, William Dalrymple, Dudley Digges, Jacob Elligood, William Finnie, Francis Goode, Bartlett, John Goodrich, John Goodrich Sr., William Goodrich, Alexander Gordon, James Green Jr., Francis Haines, Richard Hanson, Erasmus Haynes, Charles Henley, James Henley, Patrick Henry, Joshua Hopkins, Robert Howe, Joseph Hutchings, Neil Jemmison [Jamieson], Claiborne Lawson, Anthony Lawson, Charles Lee, Willias [Willis] Lee, Joseph Lindsey [Lindsay], Paul Loyall, Thomas Ludwell, William Lux, Silass [Silas] McCraghan, Andrew Meade, James Mercer, James Murdaugh, Christopher Neale, Thomas Olds, John Page, Josiah Parker, John Pendleton Jr., Edmund Pendleton, Dorsey Pentecost, William Randolph, Thomas Reynolds Walker, Willis Riddick, William Robinson, William Roscow Wilson Curle, William Sclater, Thomas Scott, Robert Shedden, Andrew Sprowle, John Tabb, James Taylor, Richard Taylor, John Thorowgood, Arthur Upshur, Abraham Van Bibber, Isaac Candam, Anthony Walke, William Wishart, and William Woodford.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically, with undated fragments filed at the end.

Commission of James Barbour 1775 October 2

Box 1

Folder 1

Order of the Committee of Safety 1775 October 3

Box 1

Folder 2

Commission of John Banister 1775 October 10

Box 1

Folder 3

Order of the Committee of Safety 1775 October 13

Box 1

Folder 4

Order re: James Mercer 1775 October 24

Box 1

Folder 5

Order re: Second Regiment and Culpeper Battalion 1775 October 24

Box 1

Folder 6

Letter of Edmund Pendleton to Patrick Henry re: Mr. Hanson 1775 October 24

Box 1

Folder 7

**Letter of Edmund Pendleton to Patrick Henry re: Order for powder 1775
October 24**

Box 1

Folder 8

Order 1775 October 27

Box 1

Folder 9

Order 1775 October 28

Box 1

Folder 10

Appointment of William Finnie as quarter master general 1775 October 28

Box 1

Folder 11

Resolution re: Capitol 1775 November 8

Box 1

Folder 12

Resolution re: Culpeper Battalion 1775 November 8

Box 1

Folder 13

**Letter of Edmund Pendleton to Patrick Henry re: Prisoners 1775 November
9**

Box 1

Folder 14

**Letter of Edmund Pendleton to Patrick Henry re: Armorer 1775 November
9**

Box 1

Folder 15

Letter of Edmund Pendleton to Col. William Christian 1775 November 13

Box 1

Folder 16

Letter of John Hanson 1775 November 25

Box 1

Folder 17

Letter of Samuel L. McCroskey 1775 November 25

Box 1

Folder 18

Letter of William Aylett 1775 December 9

Box 1

Folder 19

**List of companies ordered into service since the sitting of the Convention
1775 December 10**

Box 1

Folder 20

Letter of R. W. Curle 1775 December 12

Box 1

Folder 21

Order re: Company regulars from Pittsylvania 1775 December 13

Box 1

Folder 22

Order re: Company of minutement from Aemlia 1775 December 18

Box 1

Folder 23

Order re: Public Magazine 1775 December 20

Box 1

Folder 24

Resolution re: Col. Woodford 1775 December 22

Box 1

Folder 25

Order re: Capt. Anderson's Company 1775 December 23

Box 1

Folder 26

Resolution 1776 January 8

Box 1

Folder 27

Extract of proceedings of the Committee on Safety 1776 January 31

Box 1

Folder 28

Affidavit of Patrick Henry 1776 February 29

Box 1

Folder 29

Recommendation of Claiborne Lawson 1776 February 29

Box 1

Folder 30

Letter of Paul Loyall, Anthony Walke, and James Taylor 1776 March 8

Box 1

Folder 31

Letter of Abraham Van Bibber 1776 March 11

Box 1

Folder 32

Resolution concerning the inhabitants of Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties 1776 April 10

Box 2

Folder 1

Letter of Abraham Van Bibber 1776 April 30

Box 1

Folder 33

Petition of the chairman and committee of Princess Anne Co. 1776 April 22

Box 1

Folder 34

Letter of Richard Taylor 1776 April 24

Box 1

Folder 35

Report of the North Carolina Committee of Inquiry 1776 April 27

Box 1

Folder 36

Proceedings 1776 May 3

Box 1

Folder 37

Resolution 1776 May 3

Box 1

Folder 38

Letter of Charles Lee 1776 May 4

Box 1

Folder 39

Letter of William Goodrich 1776 May 7

Box 1

Folder 40

Letter of Robert Shedden 1776 May 14

Box 1

Folder 41

Letter of Dorsey Pentacost 1776 May 15

Box 1

Folder 42

Proceedings [of the Northampton Committee] 1776 May 20

Box 1

Folder 43

Letter of Dorsey Pentacost 1776 June 2

Box 1

Folder 44

Letter of Dorsey Pentacost 1776 June 4

Box 1

Folder 45

Letter of Charles Henley 1776 June 6

Box 1

Folder 46

Fragments undated, circa 1775-1776

Box 1

Folder 47

Series II: Accounts, 1775-1776.

Box 3

Extent

Extent: 1 v.

Scope and Content

Series II: Accounts, 1775-1776, contains a ledger with entries from 1775 September 18 through 1776 July 5. Entries contain information relating to army and provision expenses. Sections include but are not limited to general expenses for the army, provincial troops, the minute service, arms bought for public use, the public, and the militia. Sections also include pay, arms, forage, fuel, wagon hire, entrenching tools, bedding, and gunpowder ("saltpeter"). There is also a section of accounts for Honorable Delegates in Congress.

Committee of Safety Account Book 1775 September 18 - 1776 July 5

Box 3

Series III: Journal, 1776.

Box 4

Extent

Extent: 1 v.

Scope and Content

Series III: Journal, 1776, contains a single volume that documents Committee of Safety meeting minutes from 1776 June 5 through 1776 July 5. The minutes largely document orders for purchases and other expenses to be paid. Expenses include supplies and provisions such as gun powder, guns, bread, blankets, pots, shovels, horses, wagons, medicine, building construction, clothing, and wages. Other topics include business matters such as leadership appointments, engagements, employment, resignations and discharges; organizing groups of minutemen; allowing goods and individuals to travel across or through the colony; approving exports; summoning individuals to present testimony or evidence; distributing arms; stationing troops; and discussing prisoners.

This journal appears to be a longhand copy of the minute book in Series IV (1776 February 7 - 1776 July 5). While the journal entries appear to largely match the contents of the minute book, the July 5 minute book entry includes two additional line items and a final note that the committee was dissolved by the adjournment of the convention that are otherwise absent from the journal.

Committee of Safety Journal 1776 June 5 - 1776 July 5

Box 4

Series IV: Minutes, 1776.

Box 4

Extent

Extent: 1 v.

Scope and Content

Series IV: Minutes, 1776, contains a single volume that documents Committee of Safety meeting minutes from 1776 February 7 through 1776 July 5. The minutes largely document orders for purchases and expenses to be paid. Expenses include supplies such as guns, medicine, wood, clothing, wagons, tobacco, and other provisions. Other topics include business matters such as hires, appointments, and resignations; letters received or sent by the committee; prisoners; recruiting services; the movement of supplies around the colony; information and reports presented to the committee; appearances before the committee; and

examinations of cases.

This volume appears to be the original meeting minutes, as the minutes were written in shorthand. There are overlapping entries between this minute book and the journal in Series III (1776 June 5 - 1776 July 5). While the journal entries appear to largely match the contents of the minute book, the July 5 minute book entry includes two additional line items and a final note that the committee was dissolved by the adjournment of the convention that are otherwise absent from the journal.

Committee of Safety Minutes 1776 February 7 - 1776 July 5

Box 4

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