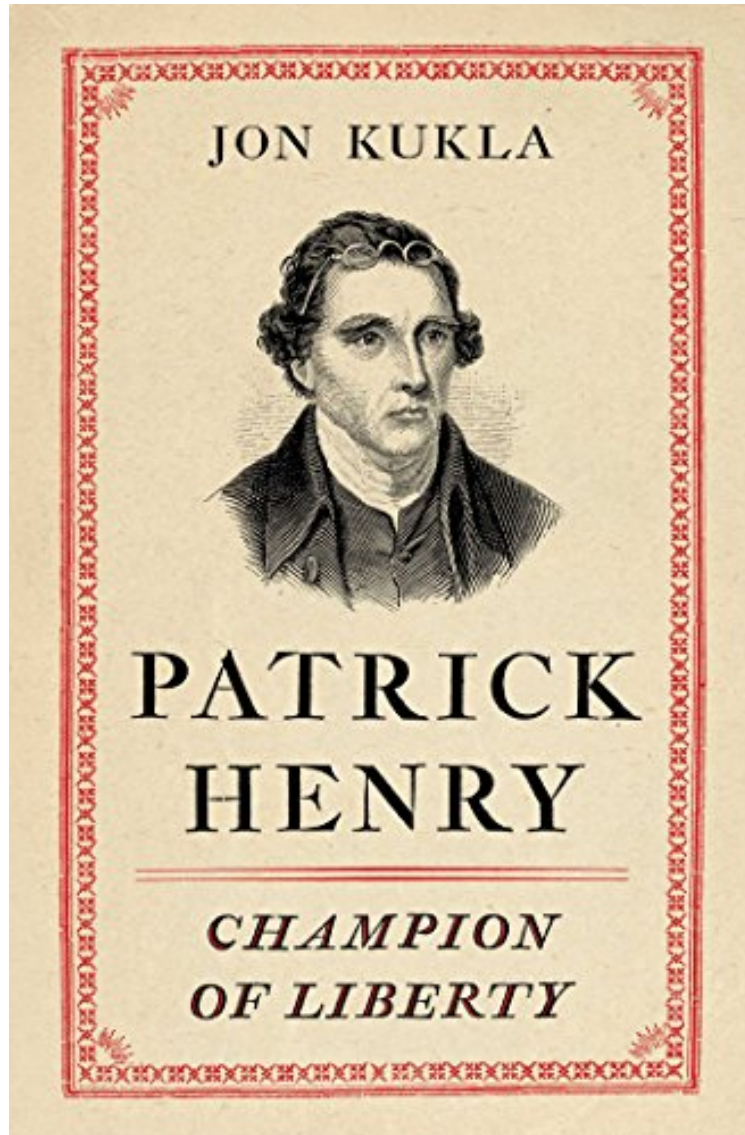


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## Patrick Henry: Champion of Liberty

Jon Kukla

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**Jon Kukla : Patrick Henry: Champion of Liberty** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Patrick Henry: Champion of Liberty:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. CATO OF THE REPUBLIC By John S. Carter This is the best bio on Henry which I have read. Mr. Kukla shows a founder that only as been remembered for one speech for independence. Henry has been totally overlooked as his contribution to the true founding of this nation. A true Cato, of the Republic from the very beginning for the cause til the very end of life. The very fears of the Constitution

contributed to the States Rights movement of latter days .While being a man of Virginia he was also concerned about the authority being invested in the central government on the states and even on the individual rights. One will gain a more insightful view of this time and this man as far as the anti federalist movement and not one written by a federalist historian. Cicero thought that he could deal with Augustus, Cato was willing to challenge Caesar, even in the face of defeat in order to save the Republic. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An excellent history on events that led up to the Revolutionary War. By Beth A Jensen Excellent book .I am a history buff and was not aware of the many restrictions England placed on the colonies. I also was not aware of the many years of the colonies' discontent. 3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring, wonderful book. By Boomer Wonderful book, a terrific biography of an American Founder who fought against tyranny, oppression and cronies, P. Henry was a stud, so intelligent, and fearless!! Awesome book

This authoritative biography of Patrick Henry, the underappreciated founding father best known for saying, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" restores him and his fellow Virginians to their seminal place in the story of American independence. Born in 1736, Patrick Henry was an attorney and planter, and an outstanding orator in the movement for independence. A contemporary of Washington, Henry stood with John and Samuel Adams among the leaders of the colonial resistance to Great Britain that ultimately created the United States. The first governor of Virginia after independence, he was re-elected several times. After declining to attend the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Henry opposed the Constitution, arguing that it granted too much power to the central government. Although he denounced slavery as evil, like many other southern slave-owners he accepted its continuation. Henry pushed vigorously for the ten amendments to the new Constitution, and then supported Washington and national unity against the bitter party divisions of the 1790s. He was enormously influential in his time, but his accomplishments, other than his oratory, were subsequently all but forgotten. Kukla's biography restores Henry and his Virginia compatriots to the front rank of advocates for American independence. Jon Kukla has thoroughly researched Henry's life, even living on one of Henry's estates. He brings both newly discovered documents and new insights to the story of the patriot who played a central role in the movement to independence, the Revolution, the Constitutional era, and the early Republic. This book is an important contribution to our understanding of the nation's founding.

Jon Kukla restores Patrick Henry to the front rank of American Revolutionary patriots. *Patrick Henry: Champion of Liberty* is a magnificent achievement, the best biography by far of the great orator and statesman who played such a crucial role in shaping the course of Revolutionary Virginia's history. Kukla's *Patrick Henry* will not be surpassed. (Peter S. Onuf, Thomas Jefferson Professor of History, Emeritus, University of Virginia; and coauthor, with Annette Gordon-Reed, of *Most Blessed of the Patriarchs: Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination*) Before the Declaration of Independence, before Lexington and Concord, Patrick Henry spoke treason to power and chose liberty over death. Jon Kukla tells the story of the first founding father, a passionate populist, devout Christian and first-class legal mind. (Richard Brookhiser, author of *Founders' Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln*) "A brilliant orator, a firebrand for freedom and individual rights, Henry stands as an American luminary, and Kukla's magisterial biography shines the glow of achievement on subject and author alike." (Jay Strafford *Richmond Times Dispatch*) Kukla has written a compelling biography that serves his subject well. . . . A detailed, lively, probably definitive biography of a revolutionary figure who merits more recognition. (Kirkus) Patrick Henry provided much of the fire that lit the American Revolution in 1775 and 1776, and remained true to his democratic principles through a life of service to his country. In this wise and learned biography, Jon Kukla gives us the authoritative account of this essential figure in the creation of America. (David O. Stewart, author of *Madison's Gift and The Summer of 1787*) "An informational and enlightening biography of the great agitator for democracy." (*Library Journal*) About the Author Jon Kukla is the author of *Patrick Henry, Mr. Jefferson's Women*, and *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America*, as well as many scholarly articles and reviews. An authority on early American history, he has directed research and publishing at the Library of Virginia and served as executive director of the Historic New Orleans Collection and of Red Hill-The Patrick Henry National Memorial in Charlotte County, Virginia. He lives in Richmond, Virginia. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Patrick Henry CHAPTER ONE A Serious Loss AFTER SWALLOWING A DOSE of liquid mercury on Thursday morning, June 6, 1799, Patrick Henry sat calmly near a window at the northeast corner of his modest house in Charlotte County, Virginia. As he pondered the blood congealing under his fingernails, Henry whispered words of comfort to his wife and children and waited for the mercury to cure him or kill him. Henry was sixty-three. He had been seriously ill since early April, when he described his symptoms to physician George Cabell, of Lynchburg, as something like the Gravel. Kidney stones large and small, the stone and the gravel were common afflictions in the eighteenth century, painful or annoying but rarely fatal. Pharmacy ads in the *Virginia Gazette* touted cures and treatments such as tincture of goldenrod, Blackies Lixivium, and Swinsens Electuary for the Stone and Gravel. By the first of June, Dr. Cabell's diagnosis was more grim. Henry was now suffering from a life-threatening intestinal obstruction called intussusception. Part of his intestine had telescoped into itself, blocking the digestive tract. Infection and death were imminent unless the blockage could be

relieved. The remedy was risky. With luck the weight of a large dose of liquid mercury, which is 20 percent heavier than lead, might unravel the intestinal knot, pass through his bowels, and save Henry's life. If the blockage persisted, however, Henry's body would absorb the mercury, the muscles of his chest would fail, and he would die by suffocation. Family members who gathered at Red Hill that morning left a poignant record of the final conversation between the dying patriot and his physician. I suppose, doctor, this is your last resort, Henry said as he accepted the vial of mercury. I am sorry to say, governor, that it is, Dr. Cabell replied. Acute inflammation of the intestines has already taken place; and unless it is removed mortification will ensue, if it has not already commenced, which I fear. What will be the effect of this medicine? Henry asked. It will give you immediate relief, or... Cabell was unable to finish his sentence. You mean, Henry said, that it will give relief or will prove fatal immediately? You can only live a very short time without it, Cabell explained, and it may possibly relieve you. Excuse me, doctor, for a few minutes, Henry replied, drawing his silk cap down over his eyes. Holding the vial of mercury in his hand, Henry prayed briefly for his family, his country, and himself. He swallowed the medicine and spoke quietly for a while with his family and physician. Finally he breathed very softly for some moments and died. For half a dozen years Patrick Henry had regarded Red Hill, the last of the twelve places he had lived since his birth in Hanover County in 1736, as one of the garden spots of the world. Five hundred feet above sea level, the plantations 2,900 acres straddled the line between Campbell and Charlotte counties. The southern vista from his house looked down on the ferry across the Staunton River and the wooded hills of Halifax County. Just beyond the southern horizon lay the Virginia-North Carolina border, drawn in a 1728 feat of exploration celebrated in William Byrd II's History of the Dividing Line. To the north, through the window nearest the corner where he spent the last hours of his life, Henry could see a century-old osage-orange tree, which has since grown into the gnarled giant designated as an American champion for the species. Visible to his right were young figs ripening along the walkway that linked Henry's house and its adjacent kitchen, a small clapboard shed dominated by its massive brick fireplace and oven, with the two-room frame structure that served as his law office. There, on his desk, Patrick Henry had left two messages for posterity—testaments both to his private religious faith and his hopes for America's future. Patrick Henry's will, written entirely in his own hand, provided his widow and his seventeen children with legacies sufficient to support them in comfort and independence. After disposing of his property—including nearly eighty slaves—Henry's will also conveyed a private assurance to his wife and children: This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family, its final clause explained. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed. On the desk next to his will Henry had left a sealed envelope addressed to his executors. It contained a single sheet of paper. One side bore the text of his 1765 resolutions against the Stamp Act, which men and women of his day acknowledged as a starting point of the American Revolution. The other side offered a message to his fellow citizens that Henry knew could only be read after his death. Henry's message to posterity began with a short commentary about the past. His Stamp Act Resolutions had spread an alarm throughout America with astonishing quickness, Henry recalled. They had successfully united the thirteen colonies behind the great point of resistance to British taxation that brought on the War which finally separated the two Countries and gave Independence to ours. Then Henry turned his thoughts toward the future on a subject he had been thinking about since 1765 or 1766. Whether [independence] will prove a Blessing or a Curse, he wrote, will depend on the Use our people make of the Blessings which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If American citizens act with wisdom, he believed, they will be great and happy. If not, he warned, they will be miserable. Righteousness alone can exalt them as a Nation. The message closed with a final admonition: Reader! whoever thou art, remember this, and in thy Sphere, practice Virtue thyself, and encourage it in others. P. HENRY At his death as through his life, Patrick Henry affirmed the interaction of personal faith and civic responsibility—Christian virtue and classical-republican virtue that sustained many eighteenth-century Americans. Patrick Henry was only sixty-three when he died, but he had outlived virtually all the leaders who had challenged Parliament and the crown in the early 1760s. John Dickinson, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, and James Otis, Jr., were dead as were such Virginia comrades as Richard Bland, Landon Carter, George Mason, Richard Henry Lee, and Peyton Randolph. Only three other prominent men from the very earliest controversy over the Stamp Act were still alive when Patrick Henry died: George Washington, George Wythe, and George III. Hundreds of younger American participants in the American Revolution, such as Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Gouverneur Morris, and even John Adams, were relative latecomers to the struggle against England as were such living Virginians as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Marshall, Edmund Pendleton, and Edmund Randolph. The Patrick Henry that most people remember today was the eloquent slaveholder who defied George III and Great Britain with his call for liberty or death in 1775. The spellbinding orator who insisted a few weeks before the patriots at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, fired the shots heard round the world that the war is actually begun! The man who called Virginians to arm themselves in defiance of Parliament and king by predicting that the next gale that swept from the north would bring to their ears the clash of resounding arms! Students of the Constitution and its ratification by the states also remember Patrick Henry, a dozen years later, as the critic whose thundering arguments nearly kept Virginia from ratifying the plan and whose political clout kept James Madison out of the new Senate and forced him to promise the voters a Bill of Rights and push it through Congress. The great debates of 1787-1788 remind us again of Henry's long career on the center stage of American history. Of all the major participants in the drafting and ratification

of the Constitution, only Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, and Benjamin Franklin had been prominent in the opposition to the Stamp Act a quarter of a century earlier. Throughout his life, Patrick Henry adhered to a cluster of five tactical ideas that drove him and his neighbors first to resist and then to declare themselves independent of Great Britain. He believed that the burgesses and councilors who comprised Virginias legislative assembly spoke for the people of Virginia just as members of the House of Lords and House of Commons served as the constitutional legislature for the people of England, Scotland, and Wales and that Parliament had no legitimate authority in Virginias internal government. Second, he acknowledged allegiance to the British monarch based on the compact, enshrined in the coronation oath, by which kings promised to protect their subjects in exchange for their allegiance and by which, as John Locke had written, a monarch who broke that promise forfeited his subjects allegiance and degenerated from a king into a tyrant. Third, Henry believed that the protection of American liberty demanded unanimity between the people of Virginia and their compatriots in the other colonies or states. Fourth, Henry recognized the necessity of invoking sanctions against enemies of the community in defense of liberty and the common good. And finally, Henry genuinely respected the will of the people when expressed fairly through democratic institutions. None of these ideas was unique to Henry, and many other ideas figured prominently in his life and career (including concepts of liberty, equality, rule of law, freedom of conscience, religious toleration, representation, federalism, separation of powers, and the list of republican virtues he enshrined in the Virginia Declaration of Rights: justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, virtue, and a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles). In support of these and other civic principles, nevertheless, the five tactical elements sustained Patrick Henrys course during Virginias transition from the oldest and largest of Great Britains American colonies when he was born in 1736 to the largest and arguably still most influential of the American states when he died in 1799. When Patrick Henry left the copy of his 1765 resolutions in his law office at Red Hill he was reasonably confident that his contemporaries remembered their back story and recognized their significance. Henry saw no need to explain how his words (or the five concepts behind them) had eventually brought on the War which finally separated the two Countrys, for countless Americans equated Virginias resistance to the Stamp Act with the beginning of the American Revolution. Typical was the Harvard-educated author Jeremy Belknap, a founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society, who believed that his two-volume chronicle, *History of New Hampshire*, required this grateful nod toward Patrick Henry and the Old Dominion: The first proposal [for a union of the colonies] came from Virginia, Belknap declared, where American liberty was first publicly asserted when it was flagrantly violated by the stamp-acta contribution to the destiny of the Granite State for which Belknap believed the name of Patrick Henry will ever be illustrious. Dorothea Dandridge Henry buried her husband at the edge of a garden east of the house and law office at Red Hill. Virginia has sustained a very serious loss, wrote John Marshall, the future chief justice, when he conveyed news of Henrys death to George Washington. Not only Virginia, Washington replied, but our country at large has sustained a very serious loss. I sincerely lament his death as a friend, and the loss of his eminent talents as a patriot. Thomas Jefferson and his friends kept silent, but one Richmond newspaper, the pro-Federalist *Virginia Gazette*, mourned the great orator. Its editor put heavy black borders around the obituary. As long as our rivers flow, or mountains stand, proclaimed the *Gazette*, Virginia... will say to rising generations, imitate my HENRY. Decades later Patrick and Dorotheas youngest son, John, marked his fathers grave with a marble tablet, visible today at Red Hill, with the simple inscription His fame his best epitaph. Patrick Henrys fame endured throughout the nineteenth century, despite some political enmity from Jefferson and his supporters, so long as Americans continued to appreciate the powers of great oratory. But fame is fleeting at best a transient epitaph and written texts outlast spoken words. Patrick Henry could leave a copy of his Stamp Act Resolutions in his law office, and he could write a message to posterity about virtue, but some of the powerful speeches with which he made history were lost forever. Jeremy Belknap and other Americans remembered that Henrys resolutions had rallied the colonies to resist Great Britain in 1765 and 1775, but few Americans knew how Henrys earlier participation in the Parsons Cause of 1763 set the stage for Virginias decisive reaction to the Stamp Act. And fewer still could see beyond his oratorical prowess to his frequent acts of statesmanship. Even today, more than two centuries after Patrick Henrys death, it remains true that the American Revolution in Virginia (as Richard R. Beeman wrote in 1974) has, surprisingly, produced numerous specialized works, but very few synthetic, interpretive books. And throughout those centuries, Henrys proper place in American history has been obscured by the popular myths concocted by his first biographer, William Wirt, in 1817. Readers who are familiar with modern scholarship about the American Revolution, or specialized studies of Virginia, or the biographies of Henrys famous contemporaries, will likely be surprised (as I often was while laboring to get this story right) by the accuracy of Thomas Jeffersons grudging admission, ten years before his own death, that Mr. Henrys transcendent eminence as an Orator and Statesman, and especially his unquestioned primacy in bringing on the revolution, give him a mass of fame sufficient to satisfy any ambition.