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Fathers of Founders

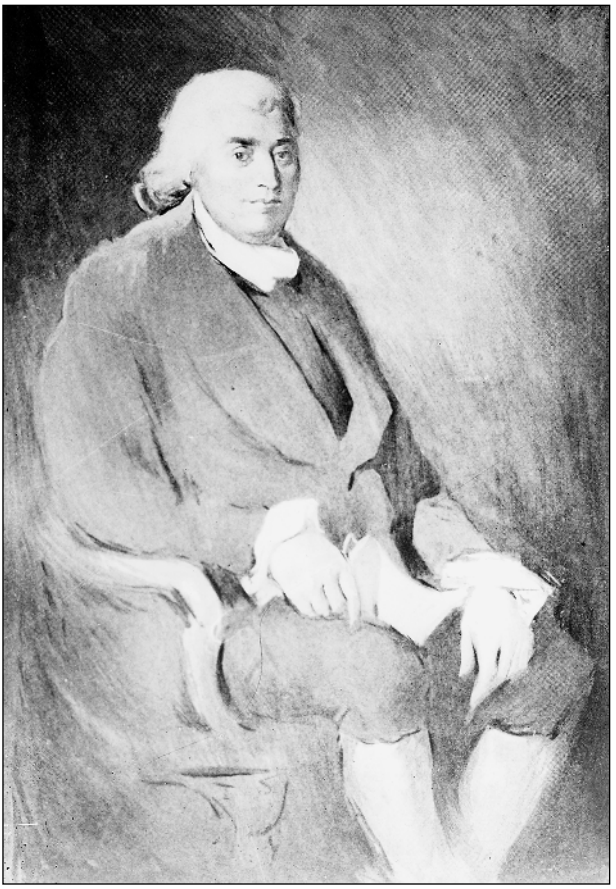
Augustine Washington • John Adams Sr. Peter Jefferson • James Madison Sr. Spence Monroe

IN MASSACHUSETTS AS IN VIRGINIA, the upwardly mobile fathers of our "founding fathers," whether their holdings remained relatively modest or had expanded to abundance, inspired their sons with examples of entrepreneurship, the significance of service, and the value of education.

Augustine Washington

Augustine Washington seems to have been sent by central casting. One can imagine this genial giant embracing a son incapable of telling a lie, or matching him in tossing silver coins across the Rappahannock. By all accounts he was a fitting father for the nation's founding father. The problem is the paucity of such accounts. Our picture of Augustine Washington has been framed by people who never knew him. He died when his most famous son was only eleven. As George Washington sadly reflected, "I was early deprived of a father."

That didn't prevent writers from putting words in George's mouth. According to Washington biographer Douglas Southall Freeman, the youth remembered his father as "tall, fair of complexion, well proportioned and fond of children." James Thomas Flexner, the other most prominent Washington biographer, adds that Augustine, called "Gus" by his friends, "was blond, of fine proportions and great physical strength and stood six feet in his stockings." Most of these family recollections, gathered by Augustine's step-grandson, are so similar that they must represent more than mythology.



Augustine Washington

As historian Miriam Anne Bourne writes, it is inconceivable that such an energetic man as Augustine Washington "would not have had some influence on his best-known son." Yet particularly the last decade of Augustine's forty-nine years on this earth was so frenetic that he could scarcely have spent very much time with George. What he left was the influence of an image.

For generations the Washingtons had lived in the Essex region of England, rising to become landed country gentry, just below the aristocracy, before finding themselves on the losing side of the English civil war of the 1640s. High-spirited John Washington, working his way over as a lowly mate on a sailing ship, arrived in Virginia in 1657. He lost little time finding himself a prosperous bride, the most direct form of upward mobility, and exercising what biographer John Alden calls his "passion for

acreage"—both qualities to be demonstrated by future Washingtons. Much of his rich Westmoreland County land was inherited by his more sedate son, Lawrence, an eminently respectable lawyer. He had ambitious plans for his offspring, but unfortunately he died too soon. His younger son, Augustine, was only three. By the time Augustine came of age in 1715, his robust good looks, generous nature, and possession of at least a remnant of his parents' land made him an attractive catch. At twenty-one he married sixteen- or seventeen-year-old Jane Butler.

Starting their life together on a 1,700-acre plantation at Popes Creek, the young couple were not truly wealthy by patrician Virginia standards, but they were much admired, a bright future seemingly stretching out before them. Eventually Augustine built a handsome home called "Wakefield." By then Jane had given birth to four children, three of whom survived. The two boys had familiar names—Lawrence and another Augustine. The senior Augustine was already a justice of the peace and a member of the county court. He would go on to be named a church warden, high sheriff of Westmoreland County, and eventually a trustee of Fredericksburg—an acknowledged leader in each of the three Virginia localities in which his family would reside.

What changed Augustine's life was the discovery of a rich deposit of iron ore at Popes Creek, turning him from a gentleman farmer to an overburdened entrepreneur. Augustine entered into a partnership with British investors to form the Principio Company. By the mid-eighteenth century the company would manufacture and export over 3,000 tons of pig iron. Managing the complex enterprise not only frequently separated Augustine from his family, it also took a considerable psychological toll. Normally renowned for his equanimity, Augustine, at least in running his business, became nervous, uncertain, and irritable. Records indicate that he was often engaged in litigation of one kind or another. While he was in England in 1729, meeting with his increasingly contentious partners, Jane, his wife of fourteen years, passed away.

Despite feelings of guilt and grief, Augustine was obliged to find a new mother for his children. Amiable widows were hardly in short supply in Virginia, but Augustine, now a mature thirty-seven, settled on an "old maid" of twenty-three named Mary Ball. Flexner describes Mary as "a healthy orphan of moderate height, rounded figure, and pleasant voice." Not everyone was to find her voice so pleasant in future years. She brought to their marriage in 1731 some property of her own and a very strong will, more than a match for her obliging husband.

Eleven months later, on the morning of February 22, 1732, Mary gave birth to a baby described as large enough to be a proper son of Augustine Washington. He was called George, not for a prior Washington but for George Eskridge, who had been Mary's devoted guardian. By the time he learned to walk, George had a sister named Betty; in a year and a half, he had a brother named Samuel. They were followed by John Augustine, Charles, and Mildred. That five of these six children survived to adulthood, an unlikely percentage at that time and place, testifies to the vigor of both parents. While growing up, George hardly wanted for playmates, black as well as white. At Popes Creek, the natural world was just outside his door, supplemented by a menagerie of dogs, chickens, calves, pigs, and horses. Throughout, Augustine was the parent on the move, Mary the parent in place.

That place would change when George was three. Augustine moved his family from Westmoreland County to a much larger plantation farther up the Potomac, at Little Hunting Creek in what is now Fairfax County, Virginia. A few years later, in 1738, the family moved for the final time, to be closer to Augustine's principal iron mine and furnace, at Accokeek Creek, in present-day Stafford County, on the Rappahannock River, near the new town of Fredericksburg. Called "Ferry Farm," it was truly George's childhood home. If, indeed, he cut down that cherry tree, it was likely here. A precocious, lively child, George loved to hunt in the nearby woods and to fish, swim, and sail in the river, narrow enough for a strong youth to hurl a heavy coin across. Some of this activity had to be in the company of his nature-loving father, although by now Augustine was immersed not only in the iron business and farming tobacco and other crops but in buying, selling, and leasing land to others.

For a time George was enrolled in a small school in Fredericksburg operated by an Anglican clergyman, but his education was largely in the hands of tutors. George learned to write in a fine, flourishing hand. His studies tended toward the practical, although they included moral and natural philosophy. He became a proficient draftsman, essential for a future surveyor, and was good at arithmetic. His classical education was intended to come later, at the Appleby School in England, where George's half-brothers were already enrolled.

It was probably they, particularly Lawrence Washington, whom George had in mind when he wrote with such care in his notebook all 110 maxims of the "Rules of Civility in Decent Behavior in Company and

Conversation." Devised by Jesuits for Spanish or French nobility, they were equally applicable to the proprietary gentry of Virginia. When Lawrence returned from England, for a few precious months George saw his two role models together. He greatly admired his father's commanding presence and his half-brother's effortless ease in any company. Together they represented the ideal gentleman. Lawrence's later return, in 1743, as a dashing young captain in a Virginia regiment that had taken part in a British expedition against Spain in the Caribbean completed the picture of gentility. Lawrence was engaged now to lovely Anne Fairfax, whose family stood at the very pinnacle of Tidewater society. Such acceptance marked the apogee of ascension for the Washington family, after only three generations in America. Surely George could do no less.

He was visiting nearby cousins when a messenger arrived with the urgent summons to return home. His father was dying. It may have been exacerbated by pneumonia, but the official cause of death was "gout of the stomach." At the age of forty-nine, Augustine Washington passed away on April 12, 1743. His will was predictably detailed and included provisions for everyone. To Lawrence, the elder son of his first marriage, went the house at Little Hunting Creek. He would rebuild and rename it Mount Vernon, in honor of English admiral Edward Vernon, under whom he had served. To George, to be kept in trust for him by his mother until he came of age, went Ferry Farm and its surroundings.

The impact on George was immense. Beyond the immediacy of the loss, he had looked forward not only to going to school in England but probably to William and Mary College as well. All his life he would feel keenly his lack of formal education and exposure to the wider world. He was only to travel once outside the original colonies, to Barbados with Lawrence. George Washington might be first in command or even character, but he never viewed himself as the intellectual equal of Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, or Madison—and they concurred.

His widowed mother, who never remarried, intended that George should become titular head of her bustling household, under her relentless supervision, at the tender age of eleven. It is not surprising that he preferred the more congenial company of Lawrence at Mount Vernon and the neighboring Fairfaxes at their palatial Belvoir estate. Alas, Lawrence, too, would die young, of tuberculosis. Before he was twenty, George had lost both of his male role models. Biographer Paul Longmore writes, "Perhaps we can see in the loss of his father the origins of his extraordinary drive for public fame." In the creation of his own austere official

image, George Washington may have been less genial than his father, but no less commanding.

For all its initial promise, the time-consuming iron business did not lead to wealth substantially greater than that accumulated by Augustine's ambitious father or his swashbuckling grandfather. But appraisals of the life of Augustine Washington should not be circumscribed by such ready conclusions as historian Bernard Fay's: "He had been a good husband, a good father, a good worker, and a good Virginian, but he died too young." It was not too young to inspire his famous son. Had they been able to spend more time together, inspiration would have been enhanced by influence.

John Adams Sr.

Augustine Washington was at home on two continents. "Deacon" John Adams rarely strayed from Braintree, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but the scope of his ambition was no less. It was not so much for himself as for his firstborn son, who would also be named John. He must go to college, which at that time and place meant Harvard. He could then attain the noblest of callings and become an eminent Congregational minister. At the very least, he would be prepared to enter one of the other learned professions. It was all preordained. As the son recalled a lifetime later, "My father had destined his firstborn, long before his birth to a public education"—meaning "public" in the English sense.

It seems unfair, a sort of educational primogeniture. Families were large in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, although these Adamses were to have only three children. Who was to say which one might benefit best from advanced learning? Still, arbitrary or not, the firstborn son remained the repository of parental hopes. And there was a more compelling reason. Deacon John could afford to send only one of his sons to college. He would try to make it up in due course to the others, if there were to be others. There was only one problem. Young John didn't want to go.

At ten he had already experienced some five years of preliminary education. Why must he, and only he, go on to college? "What would you do, child?" his exasperated father asked. "Why, be a farmer like you," his son replied. "A farmer! I'll show you what it is to be a farmer," Deacon John responded, and the next morning he took his son out with him to the marshes to cut thatch, a particularly laborious task. They didn't return until dark. "Well," asked the Deacon, not unkindly, "are you satis-

fied with being a farmer?" His son persisted. "I like it very well, sir." The father grew sterner. "Aye, but I don't like it so well. So you shall go back to school."

John Adams Sr. was not called Deacon merely to differentiate him from his oldest son. It was an affirmation of his devotion to both church and community. If not quite so theocratic as they had been at their inception, such Massachusetts towns as Braintree, in the eighteenth century, still merged the temporal with the spiritual. As biographer Page Smith writes, "A good Puritan kept a kind of daily audit of his soul's state of grace and submitted the account to God in private prayer and public meeting." Such intense introspection within so close-knit a community could be either stifling or inspiring. Young John Adams grew up in what would seem a foreign country to young George Washington. Yet despite the rigors of life in New England, and its climate, life expectancy was actually greater than in Virginia.

By the time young John Adams was born, the strictures of Calvinism had so relaxed that taverns dotted the village, more social contacts between young people often led to illegitimate births, and—most shocking of all—a small Anglican church, more liberal in its theology, nestled near the meetinghouse. In reaction, a Great Awakening was spreading throughout New England, calling the faithful back to their roots. The Congregational meetinghouse, called the North Precinct Church, reflecting these sentiments, remained at the center of Braintree in both location and life. During both extensive services every Sunday, its elders sat in front. The deacon's central place faced the pulpit. For fourteen years the senior John Adams was selected for this honor, so often that man and mission seemed to merge.

The Adams family had been among the first to settle in this town, before it had even been incorporated. They came from another Braintree across the sea, in Somersetshire. Had they stayed for the English civil war, they would have been on opposite sides from the Royalist Washingtons. To the Church of England and King Charles I, still in possession of his head, these dissenting Puritans were a royal nuisance. Some 20,000 emigrated in the 1630s and later, most with their families, intent on building their own City of God in the New World.

John Adams, the second son of a Joseph Adams, was born in 1691. The boy was obviously bright, but only his older brother, another Joseph, would be granted the opportunity to go to college. He became a respected Congregational minister in New Hampshire. John could not have

enjoyed many terms at the village school, although he learned to read and write. Through the seasons of planting and harvesting, he would be needed at his family's farm. If he was resentful, no record of it survives.

By the time of his birth, Braintree contained a population of about 2,000. Homes were scattered or clustered near the central church, surrounded by many small farms with soil so stony that only the most strenuous labor could yield much bounty. In so self-sufficient a community, almost every household required an additional occupation to get through the rigorous winters. Henry Adams, John's grandfather, had been both a farmer and a maltster, who processed barley into beer. His brewery continued for two generations. However devout, Braintree was never dry. One of Henry's sons, initiating a tradition, served as the town's first clerk. Deacon John's father, Joseph, expanded on his example, being elected town constable, selectman, and surveyor of highways.

The Deacon's energy would outdo them all. He was both a farmer, growing wheat, corn, oats, and barley on his modest acreage, and a cordswainer, one who makes shoes and other leather goods. From mid-March to early autumn he tended his fields. At the end of the growing season, he would fashion his shoes, working at a low bench in a tiny room off the kitchen of his compact home. Despite his unobtrusiveness, people were drawn to his company for advice. He was as short in stature as his namesake would be, but sturdy and sound. He served as Braintree's tax collector, as a lieutenant in the militia, and was nine times elected a selectman, second only to his tenure as church deacon. He loved the town and lived there all his life, but never viewed himself as gentry or even as Braintree's first citizen. That distinction belonged to Colonel of Militia Josiah Quincy, a glass manufacturer and for forty years speaker of the Massachusetts Assembly. As Braintree's representative on the Governor's Council, Quincy was the acknowledged leader of this modest realm. If it mattered, Adams was surely second.

Yet John remained unfulfilled. In his forties, an age many of his neighbors would be happy simply to reach, he decided he must get married. The object of his affection was equally surprising, and some eighteen years younger—sophisticated and socially superior Susanna Boylston of Brookline, near Boston. Called Sarah by her friends, Susanna came from a family renowned for its medical practitioners. Although on the cusp of spinsterhood at twenty-five, she didn't want for suitors. What could she possibly see in stolid, sober, short, rural-rooted John Adams? Perhaps it was just such qualities that won her over. And, in truth, he was

intelligent as well as industrious. As his first son later observed, "My parents were both fond of reading." In any case, in 1734 they were wed, and she was introduced to all the amenities Braintree could offer.

Only a year later, in the fall of 1735, as biographer John Ferling writes, Deacon John awoke "nervous and excited. At the age of forty-four he was to become a father for the first time." While he sat uneasily tinkering at his bench, Susanna, assisted by a midwife, gave birth to a healthy son. He, too, would be named John. The date was October 19, 1735. Reportedly, John and Susanna Adams bickered throughout their lives together, each strong-willed and stubborn, but of the future of this son they were of one mind. He would one day go to Harvard. Deacon John's means of upward ascent had not been so different from that of the first fathers of Virginia. As Smith puts it, "In later years his son surmised that it had been this union which had lifted the Adams family of Braintree out of the obscurity of small-town life."

That family would soon grow, although by very modest dimensions compared with their neighbors—or with prior Adamses. John had two younger brothers, Peter Boylston and Elihu. They all lived in a typical village house, a compact frame "saltbox," at a picturesque spot near Penn's Hill, adjacent to Adams's fields, the town, and the salt marshes of Boston Bay. Their home was often crowded with overnight visitors, relatives and men who came to consult with Deacon John. As Ferling writes, "Both parents worked diligently," the father toiling inside and out, the mother tending their garden, managing the home, and teaching each child to read by the age of five.

At six John was sent to a "dame school" in the home of a neighbor, where the regimen was largely reading and recitation. Along with the town's other more promising scholars, John was advanced to Braintree's Latin School, presided over by Joseph Cleverly, late of Harvard. When Cleverly died in 1802 at the age of ninety, Adams recalled him as "the most indolent man I ever knew, although a tolerable scholar and a gentleman." Cleverly's teaching was so indifferent and uninspired that it turned even so bright a child as young John Adams away from the pursuit of knowledge as a source of stimulation.

Not that he needed much incentive. The boy loved the outdoors and delighted in simply roaming and spending his hours as "idly" as possible. He recalled his pleasure "in making and sailing boats . . . in making and flying kites . . . in driving hoops" and in games and sports—playing marbles and quoits, wrestling, swimming, skating, and above all, shooting

game of all kinds. His fowling piece was rarely absent from his side. Such bounty might be welcome at his family's dinner table, but this was hardly Deacon John's priority when he sent his son to school. Another source of concern was young John's active social life, "running about to quiltings and frolics and dances among the boys and girls." A hint of potential trouble is indicated by John's recitation of his preferences: "Girls, girls, cards, flutes, violins . . . laziness, languor, inattention are my bane."

Competitive yet sensitive, young John was also, as Smith writes, "imaginative, lively, quick, and handsome." His parents repeatedly warned John that sloth and licentiousness were equally sinful and could imperil his bright future. It is likely that as a youth John, well aware of his own "amorous disposition" and "ardent nature," sought more than wild game in the forests. In his old age, however, Adams insisted that he had never given way to temptation, finally finding sexual fulfillment in the safe haven of a strong marriage. Whether this was true or not, his parents' admonitions were never far from his mind, nor was his grounding in their morality.

Most of all, John recalled, "My Enthusiasm for Sports and Inattention to Books alarmed my Father." Despite everything, it was clear how instinctively bright and quick-witted young John was, but the Deacon also discerned a stubbornness equal to his own. "Why do you resist?" he asked repeatedly. Finally, his fourteen-year-old son blurted out the truth. "Sir, I don't like my schoolmaster." That was enough. The next day, John Adams had a new one.

Joseph Marsh, although the son of Braintree's former minister, had little use for organized religion and was a nonconformist generally. But Marsh genuinely enjoyed the cadence of a Latin sentence, the elegance of mathematics, and the glories of English history—and he could impart that enthusiasm to others. Under his tutelage John Adams had his personal Great Awakening. The intensive year and a half he spent with Marsh changed his life. He laid aimless avocations aside. But, as Ferling points out, "Success came only because of the wisdom of his father, who ultimately insisted that he complete his education."

Still, at sixteen, would John be ready for the challenges of Harvard? Marsh exuded confidence and prepared to ride with his charge, side by side, to the entrance examinations at Cambridge. Unfortunately, at the last moment, the schoolmaster fell ill. John would have to face the formidable Harvard elders alone. It turned out, however, that they were also benign, allowing the apprehensive young scholar to use a dictionary in

translating a difficult Latin passage into English. Assigning a theme for John to write over the summer, they accepted him on the spot, an admissions process that certainly compares favorably with today's. He was even granted a partial scholarship, although his father would be obliged to sell the only ten acres of ground that ever passed from his possession in order to help pay his tuition. John all but floated home, a hero to his friends and the pride of his parents.

Although, as biographer Jack Shepherd writes, Adams's admission was a tribute to Harvard's insistence on opening "its doors to men of promise," the college in the 1750s was not yet a bastion of pure merit. John's ranking of fourteenth in a graduating class of twenty-five was based on an evaluation of the social status of his family. His mother's Boylston lineage could not have hurt. Academically he was at the top of his class. In the opinion of historian Daniel Boorstin, his associations at Harvard helped enable Adams to all but leap into eminence, becoming a "self-made aristocrat." It is not quite so. He was launched by his father, and he knew it. Of his "honored and beloved mother" he would say relatively little. Of his father, as biographer David McCullough points out in *John Adams,* "He could hardly say enough. . . . It was his father's honesty . . . independent spirit and love of country, Adams said, that were his lifelong inspiration."

He would, however, have to disappoint the Deacon in his choice of a career. He would not be a minister. It took some time to decide. John had witnessed too much of the worldly side of religion from his father's visitors. Physicians, in his view, were as likely to take life as save it. He longed to emulate his militiaman father, but not as a career. Teaching could only be a short-term profession, born of necessity. The law was dry, "a rubbish of writs," and quarrelsome, but it could be lucrative and lead to many other opportunities. In 1756, just short of his twenty-first birthday, still wracked by doubts, he contracted to begin an apprenticeship with his friend James Putnam, only twenty-eight himself, but already the leading attorney in Worcester, some sixty miles west of Braintree. After all, John reasoned, perhaps as much for his father as for himself, "The Practice of the Law . . . does not Dissolve the Obligations of Morality or of Religion."

He lived with the Putnams, a most hospitable couple. To pay his way he taught in a Worcester school, finding it as little to his liking as he had surmised. His public mien turned more serious, in part to impress his students with a maturity he hardly felt. Poring over precedents and

accompanying Putnam on his rounds, John was reassured to discover a decided affinity for the law. It was not easily mastered, but it would definitely be his future. The diary he had started to keep affirmed a confidence that his reflections were worth recording.

In the fall of 1758, his apprenticeship ended, John returned home. The Putnams wanted him to settle in the vicinity, but John declined. He had already begun to have severe headaches. Ailments, real and imagined, would dog him the rest of his life. He longed for the healthful sea breezes, "the pure zephyrs from the rocky mountains of my native town," and the sight of his parents. He had left a boy of sixteen; he returned a man of twenty-three. A room in his parents' home became his office. John Adams would never reach a height of more than five foot six or seven, but he could hardly stand taller than he did now to his parents.

For a time he lived as his father always had, amidst the familiar people and places of his own town. His old friends still called him "Johnny" or "Jack." But he also set out to find influential patrons in Boston, where most of Braintree's legal business was conducted. It took time, but under the sponsorship of such leaders of the bar as Jeremiah Gridley, the fledgling attorney was admitted to practice before the Superior Court, equivalent to passing the bar today. Already in 1760, Adams was considering cases concerning the legality of writs of assistance, the sort of question that would ultimately imperil relations between Great Britain and its American colonies.

He was also pursuing other matters, in line with his still "ardent nature." He courted the lovely and flirtatious Hannah Quincy, daughter of Colonel Josiah Quincy, who had come to take quite a shine to young Adams. Hannah, however, chose another of her many suitors. In the company of a friend, Richard Cranch, he journeyed to the nearby town of Weymouth. Cranch was smitten with Mary Smith, the oldest daughter of the Reverend William Smith, the well-educated and well-heeled pastor of Weymouth's Congregational church. The Smiths had two other sprightly daughters, Abigail and Eliza. Abigail was more intrigued than impressed by this outspoken young lawyer, and Adams viewed all the Smith girls as "not fond, not frank, not candid." First impressions are subject to revision.

Everything changed in the spring of 1761. No American colony was immune from periodic epidemics of influenza, smallpox, typhoid, or diphtheria, and medical science could do little to limit their toll. Who survived and who succumbed was largely a matter of luck. An attack of influenza throughout the Massachusetts coastline put half the citizens of Braintree

to bed. Seventeen people expired, among them seventy-year-old Deacon John Adams. He died only a few days after falling ill, on May 25, 1761, his three sons by his bedside. His wife, Susanna, who had also been stricken but survived, was too weak to attend his funeral. She would live into her eighty-ninth year. The ministers at the meetinghouse so familiar to all the Adamses celebrated the Deacon's life, stressing that those taken in the fullness of years should be more appreciated than mourned.

It was scant solace for young John, who for some time sank into a deep depression. Deacon John left a relatively substantial estate. As in life, he had sought to distribute it equitably. A nearby farm he owned in Randolph went to Elihu, and the Adams homestead to Peter Boylston. John Adams, his executor, inherited the smallest share in that he alone had received "a liberal education," but it included a house adjacent to the main home in Braintree and some thirty acres of land.

What this did, however, was to enable John, once he had recovered emotionally, to take part in town meetings and attain his responsible place in the community. Now he was a man of property, however modest, and a taxpayer. He was elected a freeholder and even for a time named surveyor of highways. One can see the influence of his childhood in his subsequent attacks on the evil influence of the town's taverns, and his own ambition in his opposition to "pettifoggers," who today would be called shyster lawyers. In this final gift, Deacon John had enabled his favored son to launch his legal practice in the most direct way possible.

The aristocratic Charles Francis Adams characterized his great-grandfather, Deacon John Adams, as merely "a typical New England yeoman." John Adams knew better. He could hardly find adequate words to sufficiently praise his father, this stalwart citizen who for twenty years had managed "almost all the business of the town." He venerated Deacon John as "the honestest man I ever knew. . . . In wisdom, piety, benevolence and charity in proportion to his education and sphere of life I have never seen his equal." In geographical terms, that "sphere of life" was minute. In terms of influence on his first son, it was immense.

Peter Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson owed everything to his father, although he might have spared a few more words to acknowledge the debt. In his autobiography, written some sixty-three years after the death of Peter Jefferson, Thomas noted, "My father's education had been quite neglected; but being of a strong mind, sound judgment, and eager after information, he read much

and improved himself." That is all most biographers quote, but Thomas went on to observe that the elder Jefferson was chosen, along with a mathematics professor from William and Mary College, to determine the boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina. Imagine, Peter Jefferson was so "eager after information" that he taught himself, to a remarkable level of proficiency, mapmaking and surveying. He was truly the personification of his son's vision for the new nation, a self-made aristocracy not of birth but of achievement.

Well, perhaps not entirely self-made. Although, as noted Jefferson biographer Dumas Malone writes of Peter, "The enhancement of his fortunes, like the improvement of his mind, must be chiefly attributed to his own exertions," even the sturdy, independent father of Thomas Jefferson didn't make it entirely on his own. In his brief account of his lineage, Thomas seems more interested in natural than in familial history: "The tradition of my father's family was that their ancestors came to this country from Wales, and from near the mountain of Snowden, the highest in Great Britain." In fact, as biographer Merrill Peterson points out, there had been Jeffersons in Virginia since its earliest settlement. The youngest son of a moderately successful planter, Peter Jefferson was born to neither excessive wealth nor privilege, but he had inherited a good name, his forebears' energy, and property ripe for development. He would improve it as he "improved himself."

In his mid-twenties Peter seems a combination of Augustine Washington, Daniel Boone, and Paul Bunyan. He stood well over six feet tall, and his strength was legendary. He was reputed, for example, to have lifted at the same time two hogsheads of tobacco, each weighing a thousand pounds, upright from their sides. Such superhuman strength would be put to the test as Peter set out to explore and expand his wild domain. Biographer Thomas Fleming writes, "He had fought his way through the winter wilderness . . . often living on the raw flesh of game and even on his own pack-train mules, sleeping in hollow trees while wolves and wildcats howled around him." Yet when his mapping was completed, he would somehow find his way back to his humble home to read Addison, Swift, Pope, and Shakespeare, "eager after information," a man for all seasons.

Although described by historian Fawn Brodie as "grave and taciturn," Peter also had "a faculty for friendship." He took people as they came, making friends readily, to his great advantage, whether with the resident Indians, not yet alarmed by an excess of interlopers, or with his

few neighboring plantation owners, intrepid pioneers like himself. The most prominent, in terms of both social status and his future friendship, was wealthy young William Randolph, whose 2,400 acres adjoined Peter's smaller property. The Randolphs would be to the Jeffersons what the Fairfaxes were to the Washingtons—a connection vaulting them from gentry to aristocracy. At thirty-two, Peter paused long enough to marry Randolph's beguiling nineteen-year-old cousin Jane.

Forging ahead, acquiring more land, by two years after his marriage Peter had rounded out a much larger tract on which to build a proper home for his wife. It would be called "Shadwell," after the Anglican parish in England where she had been baptized. Working hand in hand with his few slaves, Peter erected a remarkably spacious edifice, rising a story and a half, scenically sited at the edge of the hazy Blue Ridge Mountains by the Rivanna River. Shadwell's grounds included a terraced garden for Jane, who also loved the outdoors. However isolated from polite society, it was a relatively healthy environment, less prone to the mosquitoes and fevers that afflicted the lowlands. Eight of the ten children born to the Jeffersons survived infancy. Peter and Jane moved into Shadwell in 1741, with the two daughters they already had, and it was here, on April 13, 1743, that their first son was born and given the recurring family name of Thomas.

Thomas Jefferson's earliest memory was of being carried as a child of three by a mounted slave on a pillow from this home to another, illustrating both sides of his comfortably ambulatory childhood—secure yet insecure. If George Washington was born only a day's journey from the American frontier, Thomas Jefferson was set directly on it.

By the terms of an extraordinary agreement between Peter Jefferson and William Randolph, young Tom would be uncertain precisely where his home was located. A widower with two children, Randolph died at only thirty-three. His will, which Peter had approved, stipulated that upon his death both the Randolph plantation at Tuckahoe, some fifty miles east of Shadwell, and the Randolph children would be under the care of Peter Jefferson, "his dear and loving friend." For the next seven years, while Shadwell was overseen by trusted associates, the Jeffersons resided at Tuckahoe, raising two sets of children. At least Tom wouldn't want for playmates. From the age of five, he was taught by a tutor in a little schoolhouse on the grounds.

Peter taught Tom surveying, which many years later he would teach to Meriwether Lewis, and mathematics. Indeed, Peter taught his son

everything he could. As biographer Henry Sterne Randall writes, Peter made certain his son knew how "to sit on his horse, fire his gun, boldly stem the Rivanna" when the river turned treacherous. Tom never enjoyed shooting, even wild turkeys, but he thoroughly absorbed his father's love of the natural world and emulated his keen knowledge of it. Peter gave him his own canoe, for which a local Indian chief provided a cherished hand-carved paddle.

The merged families sang and celebrated together. Tom even learned to play the fiddle. Peter encouraged his son to delve into his well-worn library of over forty books. He would not have a second boy until Tom was twelve. Peter and Tom even thought a bit alike, sharing a rather measured, serious approach to things, as well as a calm demeanor. Tom's facial features, delicate and small, favored his father's, although his pale face was more freckled and his hair was a bright red. He was growing up as tall as his father, and almost as strong, but gangling and lanky, far more slender. He relished Peter's favorite homely admonitions, such as "Never ask another to do for you what you can do for yourself" and "It is the strong in body who are both the strong and *free* in mind." Between them there developed a bond of immense affection, even if it was rarely voiced.

Then, in 1752, the Jeffersons, with things well established at Tuckahoe, returned to Shadwell, and Tom was abandoned. Or so he felt. At nine he was sent to study and board at the Latin school of the Reverend William Douglas. Could he not have continued his studies through a learned tutor at Shadwell? Sensitive young Tom was terribly homesick and was bound to blame Peter for so sudden a separation. As biographer Page Smith writes, "Even though his later references to his father are respectful and admiring, there is about them an unmistakable reserve." As for Douglas, Jefferson preferred the subjects he studied to his schoolmaster's scholarship. "To read the Latin and Greek authors in their original is a sublime luxury," Jefferson reflected, concluding that he should "thank on [his] knees him who directed my early education." That direction, of course, had been set by his father.

Peter Jefferson emerged as unquestionably the first citizen of Albemarle County. He was named to chancery court and was a justice of the peace, church warden, county surveyor, and, as a lieutenant, the chief officer of the local militia. For a time he served as a member in the House of Burgesses, although his responsibilities at home precluded a political career. He had accumulated 7,500 fertile acres. His care in maintaining it,

and his passion for detail, would be transmitted to his eldest son. Tom was also deeply influenced by Peter Jefferson's example of egalitarianism. On the frontier he had run into all manner of men and had learned to judge them only by their deeds. He was himself a man of few words, little given to artifice, a composite of frontier and plantation. Even what Tom had seen of slavery was relatively benign, his parents teaching their slaves useful skills, from carpentry to housekeeping, as part of an interdependent extended family. Yet Tom also experienced a puzzling separation when his black playmates did not accompany him to school, sensing the fundamental dilemma he would be unable to reconcile in the years ahead.

On August 17, 1757, Peter Jefferson abruptly terminated his son's reluctant tenure with the Reverend Douglas, but in a most tragic fashion. He died. Although he had been feeling rather poorly throughout the summer and had been frequently visited by his friend Dr. Thomas Walker, his death came to his family as a sudden shock. He was only forty-nine years old. It may well be that the accumulation of all those forays into the forests had overtaxed even his robust constitution and legendary strength.

Tom's reaction to his father's death, beyond sadness, was peculiarly self-centered. It seemed almost another betrayal. Even a lifetime later he recalled, "At fourteen years of age the whole care and direction of myself was thrown on myself entirely, without a relation or friend to advise or guide me." What of the five devoted guardians selected by his father? What of his mother, and the others of his household? Malone concludes that the loss of Peter Jefferson "created a chasm [in his son's life] which remained unfilled until his years in Williamsburg." Jefferson's education, of course, did not end. He was enrolled at a school administered by the Reverend James Maury, another Anglican minister, but one he admired far more than Douglas, and then to William and Mary College. The other three students at Maury's became Jefferson's closest friends. Such mentors in Williamsburg as William Small and George Wythe were his mature role models. None of this would have been possible had it not been for self-taught Peter Jefferson's love of learning. Unlike Augustine Washington, he specifically insisted in writing that his son's "thorough classical education" be continued and completed.

What did Peter endow to Thomas in immediate, tangible terms? "My mulatto fellow Shawney, my Books, mathematical instruments, & my Cherry tree Desk and Bookcase." Shawney was his father's favorite servant; the rest constituted the inheritance of an intellectual. At college,

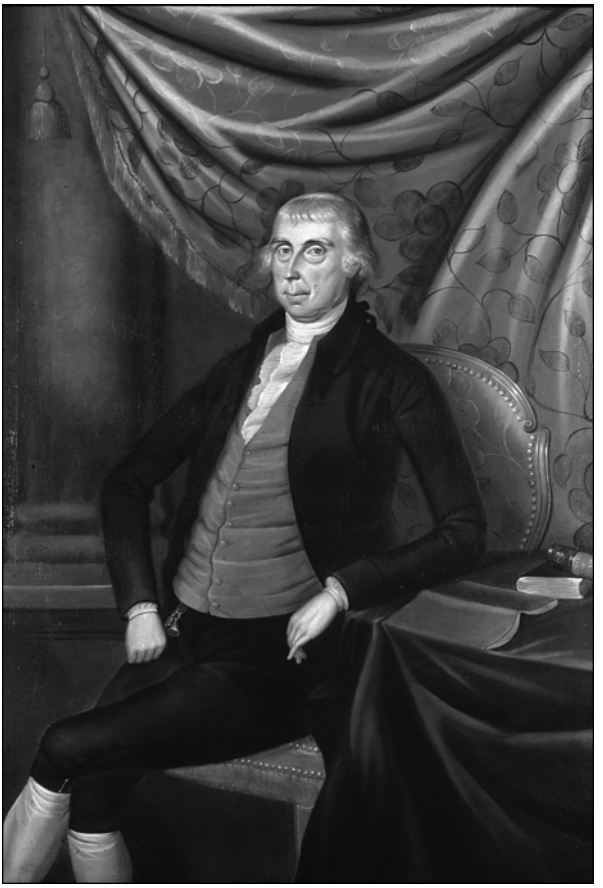
while his classmates caroused, Jefferson was known to study for as long as fifteen hours at a stretch—the mental equivalent of his father's physical energy. When he came of age, Thomas was given his choice of either Peter's "lands on the Rivanna River and its branches" or his other major property on the Fluvanna River, locales that even sound classical. Tom was technically the man of his house, at only fourteen, just as George Washington was intended to be at eleven. Washington escaped to Mount Vernon and Belvoir, Jefferson to college. He insisted that his father's books meant more to him than any estate. When Shadwell burned in 1770, it was the books he most mourned.

Thomas Jefferson sustained sudden losses again in his lifetime, and suffered them largely in silence. His adored wife died after only ten years of marriage. When he built Monticello on his mountaintop, it was only four miles from the site of Shadwell, the land still beautiful and wild. His father left him too often, and then too soon, but had endowed him with both a position and the means to maintain it, both an estate and an education. As Peterson concludes, had Peter Jefferson lived longer he could have done so much more, but already "the pathway to power had been blazed for his son."

James Madison Sr.

In a prior book I titled an early chapter "The Missing Mothers of Virginia." The corresponding first fathers aren't so much missing as marginalized. Why would James Madison say, not of his father but of his first schoolmaster, "All I have in life I owe largely to that man"? Who saw fit to send Madison to his school? And who did Madison have the grace to thank later for advancing him a generous "bill of exchange" at Princeton? In fact, whose credit was he still using during sessions of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia? It was always his father who not only paid his bills but also paved his way.

If Madison's gratitude to James Madison Sr. is difficult to discern, it is probably because he didn't view his private life as anyone else's business. When finally induced to dictate an autobiography of sorts, he provided only the "merest skeleton," some two hundred words, to describe his first eighteen years. As for his parents, "In both the paternal and maternal line . . . they were planters and among the respectable, though not the most opulent class." As with his predecessors, Madison's paternal line had also been socially elevated by the maternal. Unlike the fathers of



James Madison Sr.

Washington and Jefferson, however, James Madison Sr. lived to proudly witness his son's rise to prominence in the new republic they had struggled together to create. His "Jemmy" was on his way to Washington to become secretary of state when, finally, the old man's "flame of life" went out in 1801.

The first "Maddison," John, a ship's carpenter who was even more proficient as a promoter, used the money he made from the "headright" system—talking others into coming to the New World—to "patent" immense Virginia acreage for himself. By the time he died in the late 1600s he was esteemed as a landed gentleman, losing only the extra "d" in his name.

John's grandson James was born in 1723. An only son, he would later have two sisters. As biographer Virginia Moore writes, this original James

Madison "was a man before he was a boy." His father, Ambrose, died when James was only nine. His mother relied on him to help run the premises. The plantation was a self-contained community, its modest main house surrounded by outbuildings—slave family cabins, barns and sheds for cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses. Pasture land had to be maintained, apple and peach trees planted. Wheat, corn, and especially tobacco had to be marketed. It fell to James to keep it all going.

Despite the relative isolation of his plantation, Madison's father had established warm relationships with surrounding planters. One of them, Francis Conway, he had made an executor of his will. The Conways had a daughter named Nelly, whom James had met when she was only nine. As James grew into manhood, one of his tasks was to transport great hogsheads of tobacco (the sort Peter Jefferson had "headed up") for storage and inspection to a warehouse owned by the Conways. The main attraction was Nelly Conway, now a lovely and lively teenager. Acquaintance ripened into affection. They were married in September 1749, when she was seventeen and he a mature twenty-six.

Their first child, named James for his father, was born on March 16, 1751. James, called "Jemmy," was the first of his parents' twelve children. In the sad demographics of the time, only seven were to survive to maturity. Unlike George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, sturdy sons of sturdy fathers, "little Jemmy" would reach only five foot three or five foot six, depending on which account is accurate. Moreover, he was always sickly. That he survived to eighty-five—almost, as he remarked, "to have outlived myself"—would have astonished his anxious parents. The Conways were reputed to be descended from Scottish nobility, but family pride born of lineage was no more a preoccupation of the Madisons than it had been of the Jeffersons. Pride of place was another matter. When Jemmy was brought from his birthplace, the home of his mother's family at Port Conway, beyond the Rappahannock, to the modest wooden house that had been erected by Ambrose Madison, his father was already planning a magnificent replacement.

The harmonious, graceful mansion his father named Montpelier was completed when Jemmy was eight. He recalled being allowed to carry in some of its lighter furniture. He would expand the house as an adult, and he particularly enjoyed its setting of fields, lawns, and forest, opening out to the vista of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Madison's was a more settled, emotionally secure childhood than that of Washington or Jefferson, his mother solicitous, his father busy but not so often away. Montpelier would always be the true home of both James Madisons.

James Madison Sr. was hardly an intellectual. When he died, his library of eighty-five books, unlike Peter Jefferson's literary classics, were largely religious and medical works. But Jemmy marveled at his father's mastery of agricultural management and admired his even temper and his respected position in the community.

The major event each Sunday, both social and liturgical, was attending services at Brick Church, erected in the 1750s. Since the Anglican Church was officially sanctioned in Virginia, as a vestryman James Madison Sr. played a role in the colony's government as well. Church and courthouse were only six miles apart. Madison was reluctant to take on more tasks, with so many family responsibilities weighing on him, but ultimately he was convinced to become a justice of the peace (that perennial position of first fathers), a presiding magistrate of Orange County, and a colonel of the militia. Like Augustine Washington and Peter Jefferson, he became, in effect, the first citizen of his community.

Jemmy enjoyed nothing more than following his father around their domain, exploring its wonders on foot or horseback. The boy enjoyed riding, although it came no more naturally to him than other outdoor activities. His lifelong hatred of slavery derived from this rural childhood. His earliest playmates were largely the children of his father's slaves. As with Jefferson, he saw little of slavery's overt brutality—his father was a most humane master—but Jemmy came to understand the inherent inequity of such a system. He, too, would struggle throughout his public career to establish a solution, only to pass any implementation on to later generations.

The elder Madison, now often called "Squire," was a more scientific farmer than many of his neighbors, expanding his acres of wheat and other crops in addition to tobacco and becoming less dependent on the vagaries of nature. Over the vagaries of man he had less control. In his thirties, during the French and Indian War, Madison headed what amounted to a home guard, but the entire area was terrified by the possible results of English general Edward Braddock's crushing defeat. It may be that Jemmy actually saw Virginia rangers commanded by the young George Washington protecting straggling survivors of Braddock's original force. In any case, as biographer Irving Brant points out, while Madison always viewed Negroes, on whom he had relied as a child, as kindhearted and faithful, he considered Indians bloodthirsty, treacherous savages.

Taught reading, writing, and computation at home, Jemmy had demonstrated immense promise. Concerned about their son's fragility, the Madisons were loath to send him too far away to continue his education.

From the ages of eleven through fifteen, Jemmy boarded at the nearby classical school of Donald Robertson. Unlike Thomas Jefferson's relationship with William Douglas, Madison loved both his school and his schoolmaster. Like Jefferson, Madison discovered that learning to read the classics in their original languages was both a joy and a revelation. Madison came to almost revere Robertson, ascribing to him the credit for "all I have in life." Although Jemmy deeply loved his parents, he was none too happy to return home in 1761. As it happened, the youthful rector of Brick Church, the Reverend Thomas Martin, had been engaged to tutor the Madison children and came to live at Montpelier. His particular concern was to prepare Jemmy for college, a destination the elder Madison had settled on with the certainty of John Adams for his namesake.

In this instance, however, the location of the college was less certain. Madison was not at all happy with what he had heard about the licentiousness then prevailing at William and Mary, still the college of choice for the sons of Virginia planters. Martin had graduated from the College of New Jersey at Princeton and thought highly of its celebrated new president, the Reverend John Witherspoon. That both school and president were Presbyterian mattered not at all to Madison. Moreover, the northern climate was considered more healthful than even backcountry Virginia, and the Madisons had come to trust Martin's judgment.

In 1769, James Madison Jr. became one of the first Southerners to matriculate at Princeton. The college and Witherspoon would have as profound an impact on Madison's future course as Robertson had on his intellectual foundations. As distinguished historians Oscar and Lilian Handlin point out, Witherspoon linked civil morality with clerical mission: "All people possessed the capacity for reason, just as all possessed souls to save." Squire Madison had done his son a service, biographer Merrill Peterson writes, in taking such "a venturesome step. . . . It paid off not simply in the standard currency of education but in the education of a man whose personal identifications were neither Virginian nor Anglican, but American." As Jemmy wrote his father, at commencement he and his friends wore only "American cloth." Madison would insist on the same some forty years later at his presidential inauguration.

James Sr. was slowly moving in the same political direction as his son. He had early expressed concern at the implications of the Stamp Act and later was alarmed by news of the bloodshed at Lexington and Concord. However sober and conservative Madison's instincts remained, as an established planter and representative of the king's justice, when the

American Revolution finally came to Orange County, Virginia, its headquarters was at Montpelier. Father and son worked together. Back from college, itself a hotbed of emerging American nationalism, Jemmy and his father organized a local committee of public safety, with the elder Madison at its head. Both took the oath of allegiance to Virginia—and ultimately to the United States of America. Firearms were assembled, and the militia mobilized. By now both father and son held the position of colonel. When, at fifty-five, Madison Sr. sought to resign his leadership of Orange County's resistance, he could only be dissuaded by his son. Neither was to see action in the conflict, but both shared in its patriotic resolve.

According to writer Jeff Young, they even looked a bit alike, despite the difference in height. Both the "old Colonel" and the "young Colonel" shared a distinctively long upper lip. Their reserved manner was also quite similar. Virginia Moore writes that the father's reticence had been fostered by "heavy early farm responsibilities . . . the son's by an example of a father he greatly esteemed and by his own experience in office holding."

They probably didn't sound very much alike, however. According to contemporary reports, Jemmy's voice was so "soft" that it could scarcely be heard. He didn't make an actual address until he was thirty, four years after launching his public career. Yet somehow he bested the eloquent Patrick Henry in their dramatic debate over Virginia's adopting the Constitution of the United States. As biographer Robert Rutland attests, Madison often turned to his aged father for counsel during the critical days of constructing the American Constitution. "The business goes very slowly," he wrote. "We are in a wilderness without a single footstep to guide us."

Inevitably, our prevailing view of each founding father can seem one-dimensional—the austere, commanding Washington; the stubborn, methodical Adams; the enigmatic, brilliant Jefferson. Madison, if considered at all, seems particularly colorless, however impressive his intellect. There was nothing impressive about his physical presence. As Washington Irving put it, "Jemmy Madison—ah, poor Jemmy! He is but a withered little apple John." Yet, as the father of our Constitution, the "lonely last sentinel" of the founders, Madison is the equal of any American statesman. In old age he modestly declined the title of "sage of his time," insisting that the Constitution was "the work of many heads and hands." If, in such understatement, he could never quite credit his father's inspiration, Madison

reached a poignant eloquence when he wrote on February 28, 1801, to an anxious Thomas Jefferson in Washington, awaiting the arrival of his new secretary of state, of the death of seventy-seven-year-old James Madison Sr., "Yesterday morning rather suddenly, tho very gently, the flame of life went out." Torn between his family and his friend, Madison stayed with his father to the end.

Spence Monroe

If James Madison was "the last of the founders," James Monroe came close behind, completing the cycle of four favored Virginians who, in concert with a remarkable Massachusetts family, transformed a collection of colonies into unique nationhood. Of his father, Spence Monroe, we know just enough to validate at least some similarities with the more successful first fathers who preceded him. He, too, was a patriot, a gentleman but not an aristocrat, whose fortunes were at least moderately enhanced by an advantageous marriage and whose fondest wish was for the education of his favored son. His forebears, the "Munroes" of Scotland, like the Washingtons, had emigrated to Virginia after siding with the losing Royalists in the English civil war. Oliver Cromwell certainly had an influence in developing the American colonies.

Over time, Munroes became Monroes—major landowners around Monroe's Creek in Westmoreland County. There were so many Monroes that young Spence, in their third American generation, inherited only about 500 acres. Like John Maddison, both a modest landowner and a carpenter, he was considered at least marginally a gentleman. Spence's carpentry was not nautical but domestic. He was technically a "joiner." It is likely that Spence's modest two-story frame house was largely crafted by his own efforts. Such a humble residence, on sandy soil near a virgin forest, represented little cachet in a neighborhood of 60,000-acre estates, presided over by their indolent, English-emulating proprietors. In this "Northern Neck" of Virginia, the gentry consumed their abundant fare on fine china in the elaborate luxury of elegant dining rooms. The Monroes ate in the same area in which they lived, using wooden bowls, their food cooked in pots and pans hanging over a slow-burning flame in their central fireplace.

Born on April 28, 1758, James was the oldest of five children of Spence and Elizabeth Monroe. When, a lifetime later, he was induced to write a spare autobiographical sketch, all he volunteered about his par-

ents was predictably positive—his father was "a worthy and respectable citizen possessed of good land and other property." His mother, Elizabeth Jones, often called Eliza, was "amiable and respectable." It was her family's status that enhanced Spence Monroe's expectations for his first son. She was the daughter of an "undertaker in architecture," and her father was married to the daughter of a prominent lawyer. Her brother, Judge Joseph Jones of Fredericksburg, presided over the Virginia General Court, later served in Congress, and became a confidant of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison.

The sons of the planter elite learned their Latin, Greek, and other components of a classical education on their plantations from tutors often imported from abroad. They would then go on to college in England, at Oxford or Cambridge, or, after its chartering in 1693, to William and Mary in Williamsburg. The best Spence Monroe could manage was to send his son trudging through deep woods to the schoolhouse of stern Parson Archibald Campbell, several miles away.

The travel, if not the course of study, wasn't all that challenging for vigorous young Monroe. Even at the age of eleven, he seems as solemn a youth as James Madison, but there the comparison ends. Monroe was tall and strong, skilled at every outdoor pursuit. He loved riding, hunting, and any form of exercise. A crack shot, he carried a rifle over one arm and his books over the other. On his way home from school, he would often bag game for his family's dinner table. His congenial daily companion was future Chief Justice John Marshall, whose personality was as lighthearted as Monroe's was somber. At Campbell's school, as the leading Monroe biographer William Penn Cresson writes, Monroe gained "a solid foundation in the classics, a respect for the factual exactness of mathematics, and an understanding of such words as loyalty, honesty, honor, and devotion."

His father had already provided an example of courage. At the behest of Richard Henry Lee, Spence Monroe in 1766 was one of those bold Virginians who drafted and signed resolutions opposing the Stamp Act and encouraged a boycott of English goods to back up their demands. In this way, as famous nineteenth-century historian George Bancroft wrote, "Virginia rang the alarm bell for the continent." Whatever Monroe had to risk, he risked it all.

Although his son's schooling deprived Spence of help he could surely have used on his farm, it was not to be interrupted. Biographer Harry Ammon notes that Spence allowed his children great freedom at home,

unusual for the time. Madison's home and school environments both stressed constancy and character. Somehow, Spence managed to at least get James started at William and Mary. On the eve of the American Revolution, apparently divested of the excesses Madison's father had decried, under an inspiring new president, William and Mary, along with the entire town of Williamsburg, seethed with excitement. Great issues were at hand.

Spence Monroe didn't live to witness it. He died in 1774. His modest estate was inherited by James, which only made him responsible for the rest of his family. His final bills at college were paid by his influential uncle, Joseph Jones. At his own death, Jones directed that his sizable estate be divided among the children of his late sisters, "allowing [his] nephew Colonel James Monroe the first choice." Not only Spence could appreciate the young man's qualities.

James Monroe left college after only two years to serve in the Continental Army. His notable bravery in a number of Revolutionary engagements won Washington's personal commendation. At scarcely twenty years of age he was a lieutenant colonel, soon launched on his legal and political careers. By the measure of prior first fathers, Spence Monroe was not notably successful. But had he been less intent on education, what would have been the future of James Monroe? As Cresson writes, the boy was already "solid at sixteen." What better tribute to the man who raised him?

IF ONE HAD ASKED any of the fathers of our first five presidents to name his occupation, the probable response would have been "farmer." To be sure, the four Virginians were more gentleman farmers (even Spence Monroe), plantation owners on horseback, employing—whatever their deep reservations about the peculiar institution—slave labor. Only Deacon John Adams likely got down to dig in the dirt very often.

Yet by the time of his death, Augustine Washington was already more of a business entrepreneur than a farmer, a precursor of many future first fathers. All of these first five were engaged, to some extent, in the official life of their communities, but government was viewed as a necessary part-time commitment for gentlemen—those with the means, judgment, knowledge, and most of all the leisure to pursue it. George Washington's role model from antiquity was Cincinnatus, who left his plow to save Rome, and then promptly returned. The citizen-soldier readily became

the citizen-statesman. The backbone of Jefferson's America was to be its sturdy, independent, informed yeomanry—a more egalitarian premise, to be sure, but still leadership by the enlightened.

The first five of our first fathers would have affirmed all this. They were upwardly mobile, all right, most fortuitously through their marriages. But what they sought for their favored sons was not so much sustained power as personal fulfillment. The means of ascent was education. Deacon John Adams may have preferred that his son be a minister, others that their sons follow the law, but it was not the profession that mattered. The Deacon's son would make that plain. It was the direction.