

Oaths of Allegiance – 1777
Pittsylvania Co., Virginia
Transcribed by Marian Dodson Chiarito

The following comments, taken from *The Statutes at Large* (1821) by William W. Hening, provide some historical insight into the oaths of allegiance printed below.

May 1777. Whereas allegiance and protection are reciprocal, and those who will not bear the former are not entitled to the benefits of the latter, Therefore Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that all free born male inhabitants of this state, above the age of sixteen years, except imported servants during the time of their service, shall, on or before the tenth of October next, take and subscribe the following oath or affirmation before some one of the justices of the peace of the county, city or borough where they shall respectively inhabit; and the said justices shall give a certificate thereof to every such person, and the said oath or affirmation shall be as followeth, viz. 'I do swear or affirm that I renounce and refuse all allegiance to George the third, king of Great Britain, his heirs and successors, and that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the commonwealth of Virginia, as a free and independent state, and that I will not, at any time, do or cause to be done, any matter or thing that will be prejudicial or injurious to the freedom and independence thereof, as declared by congress; and also, that I will discover and make known to some one justice of the peace for the said state, all treasons or traitorous conspiracies which I now or hereafter shall know to be formed against this or an of the United States of America.' And be it further be subscribed shall keep fair registers of the names of the persons so sworn. . . and shall on or before the first day of January . . . transmit in writing . . . to the clerk of court of the county a type list of the names (v.9, pp. 281-283.)

The statute in question provided that the lists directed to be returned to the court should also contain the names of those refusing to take the oath and that such recusants were to be reported to the county lieutenant or chief commanding officer of the militia who was authorized to disarm them. Said parties, until further notice, were also refused permission to hold any office, serve on juries, sue for debts, or purchase land. The act was directed to be read by every sheriff at the door of the court house on some court day and by every minister after divine services, under penalty of a fine in the amount of ten pounds.

These lists were taken from a typewritten copy found in the Clerk's Office, Pittsylvania County, at Chatham, Virginia. Originally transcribed from manuscripts, then in the Clerk's Office of Pittsylvania, Virginia and transcribed by Mrs. S.H.F. Jones in 1930 and attested to by E.E. Friend, Clerk of the Circuit Court Pittsylvania Co., Virginia, November 8, 1939.

John Wilson's List
James Gowing