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Stratford Hall's Virginia Resolved Signature Event Ignites the Start of America's 250th Summer

Stratford, Virginia (June 17, 2026) – Stratford Hall was pleased to host a successful two-day commemoration for the 250th anniversary of the Lee Resolution on June 6 & 7. Richard Henry Lee introduced his resolution to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia on June 7, 1776, which read, “Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown...” Stratford Hall’s events included a free-to-attend evening program on Saturday, June 6 and a living history program on Sunday, June 7. The Semiquincentennial event was supported by the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission, the Westmoreland County Government, the Northern Neck 250 Committee, and the Virginia Humanities. Events around the 250th began at Stratford Hall in 2025 will continue throughout 2026 as the Historic Preserve will host a [\\$5 admission day on Saturday, July 4](#) as well as the return of the annual Teachers Seminar in July and the Northern Neck Discovery Symposium in November.

Saturday evening saw both Northern Neck residents and visitors from across the United States join together on the Oval in front of the c. 1738 Lee family Great House for performances by the United States Navy Concert Band and a fireworks show. In her welcoming remarks, Stratford Hall President Karen L. Daly reminded visitors that “Richard Henry Lee set in motion our nation’s independence 250 years ago in Philadelphia and this weekend we commemorate the incredible place here in Westmoreland County where those foundational ideas of liberty and independence were born—where our revolutionary ancestors sought to create the more perfect union that we inherited and are all still working toward today.” Between popular

compositions and patriotic tunes by the band, Daly introduced Richard Henry Lee to the stage for a recollection on the importance of his resolution, portrayed by professional historic interpreter Frank Megargee. The program's keynote speaker was Carly Fiorina, the National Honorary Chair of the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission. "We must reconnect Americans to who and where we come from. We must re-engage Americans who do not think our founding ideals or systems of government have anything to do with them. We must re-inspire our fellow citizens and remind them what it means to be an American. This is why this event is so important," said Fiorina. In her conclusion, she stated that "There is simply no America without Virginia. Here in Virginia or wherever you travel from today you are not making a journey to Stratford Hall...You're coming home. As the birthplace of the nation, Virginia belongs to every American."

Sunday, June 7—the 250th anniversary of the Lee Resolution—began with the grand opening of the Mary Belin duPont Laird Gallery in the Stratford Hall Visitor Center. Dr. Gordon Blaine Steffey, Stratford Hall's Vice President of Research & Collections, remarked, "This gallery is designed to orient every visitor who walks through our doors, to give context, to invite curiosity, and encourage them to think about their future, and what a good use of their freedom looks like. And finally, to make clear that what happened here matters not only as history, but as a living conversation about who we are and what we owe the past. All of the past. We are all of us inheritors of something extraordinary here at Stratford Hall." Karen Daly then cut the ribbon alongside Phillip Reese and Martina Hayward, who were major supporters in the development of the Gallery.

Next, a citizenship ceremony saw 52 candidates from 23 countries take their Oath of Allegiance and become United States citizens. The Fifes & Drums of York Town began the ceremony, the Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution served as color guard, and the Community Festival Choir sang "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" and "America the Beautiful." Welcoming notes were given by Karen Daly, Richard Henry Lee, and the historic figure's 4th great-granddaughter, Lucy Duke Tonacci. The ceremony was pursuant to Form N-600, and conducted by the USCIS Norfolk Field Office.

The day's living history program included music, dance, cavalry drills, musket volleys and demonstrations in Stratford Hall's Historic Kitchen and Gristmill. Community partner booths, interpreters and performers could be found around the historic site across both days, including:

- 1st Continental Light Dragoons
- 4th Continental Light Dragoons
- A Pixie from Kilmarnock
- African American Descendant Advisory Panel, Stratford Hall
- Ampersand
- A.T. Johnson Museum
- Steve Bashore, Traditional Miller
- David Borghesani, AMERICAN HERITAGE Chocolate Historian
- Harold Caldwell, Interpreter
- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
- Justin Cherry, Half Crown Bakehouse
- Community Festival Choir
- Downtown Colonial Beach
- Fifes and Drums of York Town
- George Washington Birthplace National Monument
- Dr. Brad Hatch, Patowomeck Indian Tribe
- Sharon Hollands, Interpreter
- Holley Graded School
- HotMixVA Radio
- James Monroe Birthplace and Boyhood Home
- Frank Megargee, Interpreter
- Menokin
- Montross Middle School Students
- National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution: Cobbs Hall Chapter, Leedstown Resolutions Chapter, and Thomas Lee Chapter
- NNK250/Northern Neck National Heritage Area
- Quilts of Valor
- Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society
- Society of the Lees of Virginia
- Town of Colonial Beach Tourism

- VA250 Mobile Museum Experience
- Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution: James Monroe Chapter, Richard Henry Lee Chapter, and Sgt. Major John Champe Chapter
- Westmoreland County
- Westmoreland County Museum
- Westmoreland State Park

Stratford Hall thanks each of these partners for helping to support a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Northern Neck history.

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About Stratford Hall Historic Preserve

Stratford Hall Historic Preserve, a National Historic Landmark in Westmoreland County, Virginia, brings together people from around the world to experience 1,800 acres of natural and human history, preserved and presented so that they can all learn from the courageous struggles of their ancestors, taking inspiration both from what they endured and what they accomplished. With the approach of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, now is a significant time to elevate the stories of the people who lived and labored here, including two signers of the Declaration of Independence, revolutionaries, and the Africans and African Americans who shaped the history of Stratford Hall. Learn more at StratfordHall.org.

Image credits to Stratford Hall Historic Preserve. [Download them here.](#)



The fireworks show illuminates the summer sky over Stratford Hall on Saturday.



Richard Henry Lee, interpreted by Frank Megargee, gives his remarks on the 250th anniversary of the Lee Resolution.



The United States Navy Concert Band plays a host of popular tunes and patriotic marches.



Left to right: Karen L. Daly, Stratford Hall President, welcoming the citizenship ceremony candidates and their families on Sunday. Carly Fiorina, National Honorary Chair of the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission giving her keynote speech on Saturday night. Dr. Gordon Blaine Steffey, Stratford Hall Vice President of Research & Collections (right), discusses the Mary Belin DuPont Laird Gallery following his grand opening remarks on Sunday morning.



Donors to the Mary Belin duPont Laird Gallery, Martina Hayward and Phillip Reese, cut the ribbon with Stratford Hall President Karen L. Daly.



New U.S. Citizens pose with the Fifes & Drums of York Town on the steps of the c. 1738 Lee family Great House.



Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution members prepare for a musket volley on the Oval.



A continental light dragoon gallups into a charge as part of a cavalry drill.