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Freedom in Film: *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* (1957)

By Kathryn Hickok

[*Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot*](#) is the longest running motion picture ever, watched by more than 30 million visitors to Colonial Williamsburg since 1957. One of the most technologically advanced films of its day, it was recently remastered and restored to its original vibrancy. For those who can’t [retrace the birth of freedom in Virginia’s colonial capital](#) this Independence Day, *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* is available [online](#).

A 2004 [feature in *Colonial Williamsburg* magazine](#) explains this film’s significance: “...[F]or forty-seven years *The Patriot* has introduced guests to Williamsburg and America on the eve of the Revolution. It shows the people of eighteenth-century Williamsburg as they might have been, introduces characters that made the nation, [and] helps audiences understand the issues that divided colonists from one another and from the mother country.”

In one memorable scene, Virginia colonist John Frye (Jack Lord) discusses the impending war with another landowner. His friend is disturbed by talk of independence and says he has decided to go “home,” meaning back to England. John’s reply reflects the shift in loyalty felt by Virginia’s patriots: “I am home.”

Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot is only about 40 minutes long, making it appropriate for young viewers and for classroom use. If you want to make America’s founding come alive for your family or students, Colonial Williamsburg’s website features extensive [interactive history sections](#) and [multimedia presentations](#) designed to make the people and issues of the 1770s accessible to children and teenagers.

Not everyone can experience the “Revolutionary City” in person, but through technology you can bring the characters of the American Revolution home.

Kathryn Hickok is Publications Director and Director of the Children’s Scholarship Fund-Portland program at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market public policy research organization.

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