

Rock Hall Museum



ROCK HALL MUSEUM - TOWN OF HEMPSTEAD

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Rock Hall

- Built in 1767, Rock Hall is a Georgian landmark on the South Shore of Nassau County.
- Taken over by the the Hewlett family in 1823, it was often used as a guest house.
- The Town of Hempstead was given the property in 1948 and it became a museum in 1953.
- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- A New York State Revolutionary War Trail Site

Josiah Martín

- Josiah was a plantation owner in Antigua.
- He moved to New York in fear of insurrections and tropical diseases.
- He built Rock Hall to be “a good gentleman’s house” near NYC and the ocean.
- The house had large rooms, high ceilings, many fireplaces and a large kitchen.

The Revolutionary War

- Josiah was a loyalist and his house was occupied by the patriots in 1776. His son, Dr. Samuel Martin was arrested and spent a short period of time in prison.
- Josiah dies in 1789, and the house is inherited by his son Samuel.
- Thomas Hewlett acquired the property in 1824 and used it as a guest house for those people visiting the nearby beach as well as for special occasions.

Archaeological Digs





The Gilded Age



The Country Fair



How can history museums make use of
technology?

What do we need and why do we need
technology?

Our museum today.

- The question we ask of our visitors is to imagine it was 1776 and you needed to choose a side. Patriot or Loyalist?

Our exhibits are heavy with reading about events and people.

- Exhibits show many famous paintings of events and people with titles and short explanations.
- We have a projector and large screen that is mostly used for guest speakers.

Technology could

- make the museum experience more interactive as opposed to its mostly passive nature now.
- make our collection available to a wider audience.
- make visiting the museum more personal..
- be more engaging, especially for those who find reading descriptions of people and events less than enthralling.

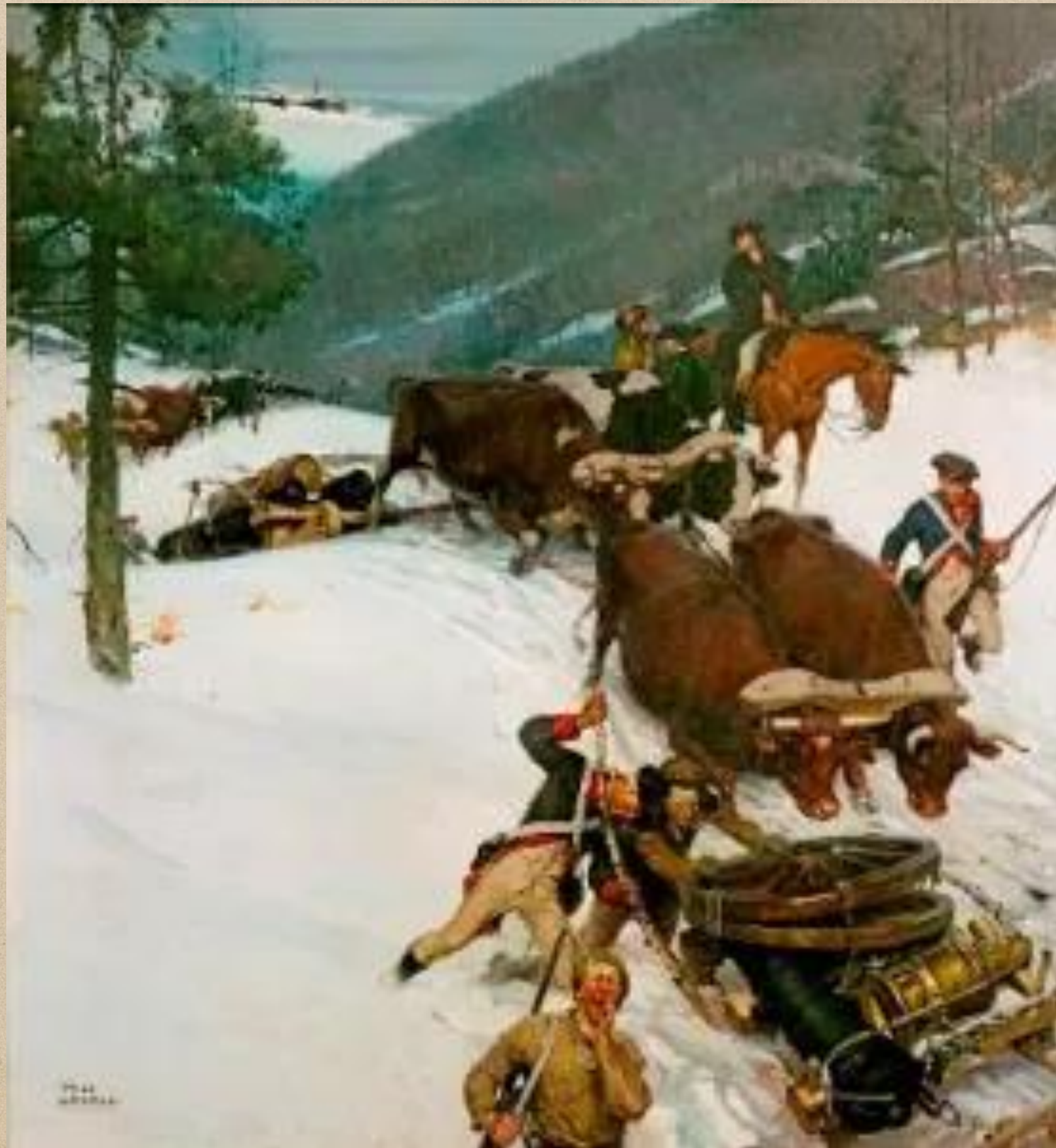
Possible uses of technology.

- Touch screens could offer greater understanding of our exhibits by going beyond the current short descriptions.
- The Battle of Brooklyn could show where the British landed on Long Island through interactive maps. It could allow visitors to follow the movement of Washington and his troops as they cross the East River to Manhattan and escape capture. Could an animated Washington explain why he is leaving Brooklyn?

Technology could

- Bring a person or place alive with the use of Virtual Reality.
- A visitor could watch the arrest of Samuel Martin for his possible British sympathies. The visitor could see how the cannons taken by American forces at Fort Ticonderoga are being transported 300 miles to Boston in the winter.
- Provide different musical pieces in the different rooms throughout the museum.

The transport of cannons to Boston.



The British honored their promise of freedom to enslaved people who fought for them, evacuating them from New York in defiance of the Treaty of Paris to prevent Americans from re-enslaving them.

The Historian's Den

Listening to Benjamin West explain why
the British are not in his famous painting
of the Treaty of Paris.



Having Cornwallis explain his loss at
Yorktown and why he was absent at the
surrender.



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pc

Interactive activities.

- Interactive maps through the use of a touchscreen.
- Interactive quizzes about the Revolutionary War.
- Watch a reel that shows an AI depiction of an event where characters explain what is going on in a battle.
- Show interviews with people who are watching the departure of the British from NYC in 1783.
- This could also be done with the use of headphones or smartphones.

Questions could be listed on a touchscreen and answers provided.

- What percentage of people were loyalists in 1776?
- Did Washington ever meet Cornwallis after the Battle of Yorktown in 1781?
- Why did the French join the Patriots in 1778?
- What happened to Washington's enslaved people after his death?

QR Codes

- QR codes would allow visitors to learn more about a person or an event than space would allow in the museum.
- It would offer them the chance to discover more information on their own.
- Showing what Rock Hall looked like in 1776.
- Audio tours with a smart phone would allow a visitor to walk the grounds and hear about what they could have seen in the 1700s.

Make our collection available online.

- We have digitized our important documents but they should be available to interested parties for further research.
- The ability to cross reference or simply find key people, places or objects among many documents would make it easier to find important elements while doing research. Similar to an e-reader that allows the reader to press on a word and a definition or maybe a picture would appear.
- How to find available space online for extensive files.

Virtual Reality.

- Could we show what it was like to look out the back window of Rock Hall in 1767? Could we show what it might have looked like riding a horse around the grounds or to a nearby house of worship?
- Could we show how an archaeological dig would be conducted on the grounds of Rock Hall while describing the artifacts found?
- Could we take a photo of a visitor and place them in the clothing of the 1700 or 1800s.
- Could we have an enslaved person describe their life at Rock Hall and how they felt when NYS ended slavery?

A Virtual Reality/ AI Kiosk

- Is it possible to have the image of a person who can interact with museum visitors?
- The visitor could ask questions about Rock Hall or the events taking place in the late 1700s and the virtual person could answer the questions.

♦

Prioritizing

- A kiosk with interactive characters that can answer visitor questions.
- Allow internet access to Rock Hall documents.
- Music in rooms upon entrance or playing on a continuous loop.
- QR Codes for our exhibits.
- Touch screen timelines and Question and Answer quizzes.
- Touch screen maps showing places and events.
- AI reels that show people and events.

The cost of technology

- The Friends of Rock Hall fund raising and the use of grants would make it possible to purchase TV screens, touchscreens, audio equipment, and possibly standalone interactive kiosks. The cost of the creation of AI reels or the use of VR is unknown to us at this time.

The Ultimate Dream

The Sphere at Rock Hall



The Education Center



Education Center





Opening Day





The Story of the Union Jack

Evolution of a Flag



England
 St. George's Cross — a red cross on a white background
 Used by England from the Middle Ages
 Saint George was a Christian martyr and patron saint of England, representing justice, courage, and English identity, with origins in the Christian and Celtic legends and literary tales.

Scotland
 St. Andrew's Cross — a white diagonal cross on blue
 Scotland's national flag, representing the Christian martyr and patron saint of Scotland, representing justice, courage, and Scottish identity, with origins in the Christian and Celtic legends and literary tales.

1606: First Union Flag
 When James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603, the crown united the two kingdoms and the two flags were combined to create the first Union Flag.

Ireland added (1801)
 St. Patrick's Cross — a red diagonal cross on white
 After the Act of Union in 1801, the red cross was added to the design. The combination created the modern flag we know today.

A few key details:

- When isn't included because it was already part of England when the flag was created.
- The design is intentionally asymmetrical, so it has a right way up.
- "Union Jack" moved as a word from the bottom of the crown to the top of the crown. In the British flag isn't just a symbol, it's a word used to describe the crown.

The American Colonies

The American colonies were 13 British settlements established along the East Coast during the 17th and 18th centuries, starting with Jamestown (1607) and ending with Georgia (1733). Primarily driven by economic opportunity, religious freedom, and land expansion, they grew from precarious outposts to a population of 2.4 million, eventually rebelling against British rule to form the United States in 1776.

Early Settlement (1607-1630s) Jamestown, Virginia, was founded in 1607 by the Virginia Company, introducing tobacco as a cash crop. The Pilgrims (1620) and Puritans (1630) established colonies in New England.

The Three Regions

- New England:** Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island (focused on religion, fishing, and small farming).
- Middle Colonies:** New York (formerly Dutch), New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware (known for diversity and trade).
- Southern Colonies:** Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia (focused on plantation agriculture/slavery).

Growth and Conflict: Colonies grew numerically and geographically, leading to increased tensions with indigenous populations and, eventually, the British government over taxation and representation.

Road to Revolution: The 13 colonies united in 1775 to fight the American Revolutionary War, achieving independence in July 1776 and gaining official recognition in 1783.

Throughout this period, European powers, including the Spanish, Dutch, and French, also established footholds in North America.



Enslaved People during the Revolutionary War



Enslaved people in the South, painting by Historical Artist, 1780-1800.



Enslaved people in the South, painting by Historical Artist, 1780-1800.

With the British

- The British actively recruited enslaved people, promising freedom in exchange for service.
- Lord Dunmore's 1775 proclamation in Virginia offered freedom to enslaved men who fled rebel masters and joined the British forces.
- Tens of thousands fled to British lines, the largest mass emancipation in North America before the Civil War.
- Many served as laborers, guides, spies, and soldiers in units like the Black Pioneers.

With the Americans

- Early in the war, the Continental Army was reluctant to enlist Black soldiers, but manpower shortages forced change.
- Some colonies allowed enslaved men to serve in exchange for their freedom, sometimes with compensation to the slaveholder.
- Black soldiers fought in key battles (e.g., Bunker Hill, Yorktown) and were part of integrated units.

Resistance, Escape, and Self-Emancipation

For many enslaved people, the Revolution was primarily a moment of opportunity to pursue freedom:

- An estimated 50,000-100,000 enslaved people fled their enslavers during the war.
- Some formed maroon communities or fled to cities, Native nations, or Spanish Florida.
- Others negotiated freedom individually or collectively.

After the War

- Many who fought for the British were evacuated to places like Nova Scotia, England, or Sierra Leone, becoming part of the African diaspora.
- Some who fought for the Americans did gain freedom, but many did not, as slaveholders or states broke promises.

IMAGINE THIS!

While thousands of enslaved people served on both sides of the American Revolution with the hope of gaining freedom, New York maintained slavery for decades after the Revolutionary War, with final full emancipation not occurring until July 4, 1827. An estimated 1,000 African American soldiers participated in the Revolutionary War.



The American Flag



The Birth of the Flag, by Henry Maudslayi, 1890-1911. The painting depicts Betsy Ross and several women making the first American flag. A popular portrait later used in the Revolutionary War legend of the flag's creation in 1776-1777.

Flag Day

Flag Day traces back to June 14, 1777, when the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution stating:

"Resolved, That the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

This moment marked the official adoption of the first U.S. flag, reflecting the original thirteen colonies.

Symbolism of the Colors

The meanings of the colors were formally described in 1792, when Congress explained the symbolism of the Great Seal of the United States. While not written into the Flag Resolution itself, these meanings became the standard interpretation:

- **Red** - Valor and hardiness. Represents courage, sacrifice, and the willingness to defend freedom.
- **White** - Purity and innocence. Reflects ideals of honesty, virtue, and moral integrity.
- **Blue** - Vigilance, perseverance, and justice. Symbolizes watchfulness, endurance, and fairness especially important in self-government.

Symbolism of the Stars

The stars represent the states of the Union. In 1777, the 13 stars symbolized the original thirteen colonies.

The stars were arranged in various patterns early on (clashes, rows, and other designs), but their number, not the pattern, was what mattered.

The stars symbolize a "new constellation," suggesting the emergence of a new nation among the world's powers.

Today's 50 stars represent the current 50 states, unified on a single blue field to show equality among them.

Women in the Revolutionary War

Sybil Ludington

Ludington was only sixteen years old when she made her ride on April 26, 1777, during a daring mission, crossing forty miles through enemy NY and CT. She learned that the British were planning to attack nearby Danbury, Connecticut, the location of a stockpile of provisions for the Continental Army. Her father, Henry, was a Colonel in the militia in command of 400 men. Not unlike Betsy, who two years earlier saved the community outside of Boston, Sybil warned that British troops were on the march to seize stores. As a result of her actions, the troops were able to push back the British and defend their colonial lands.



Sybil Ludington, by John Hart Huntington, 1961. Lake Umbagog, Concord, NH.

★ **FUN FACT!** Her Horse's name was Star.

Everyday Support and Survival

Most women were responsible for keeping households, farms, and businesses running while men were away fighting. This meant managing finances, raising children alone, producing food, and making goods that had once been imported from Britain. Without this labor, many communities and armies could not have survived.

Camp Followers and Military Aid

Thousands of women followed the Continental Army as camp followers. They cooked, washed clothes, mended uniforms, and cared for the sick and wounded. Some were paid small wages, while others worked to keep their families together. Women like Martha Washington and Abigail Adams spent time in army camps, boosting morale and helping with medical care.

Spies and Messengers

Women were effective spies because they were often underestimated by British soldiers. Agent Betsy Ross, a member of the Culper Spy Ring, helped gather crucial intelligence that protected George Washington's army. Other women carried secret messages, hid supplies, or overheard enemy plans and passed them along.

Women played essential and often overlooked roles in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783).

Their contributions went far beyond the home and helped shape the success of the revolution in political, military, economic, and social ways.

IMAGINE THIS!

Some women, known as "Couriers," would hide secret maps and letters inside their big, puffy bonnets or sew into the hems of their long skirts to sneak past guards.

One clever way was using the "Mask Letter" Trick:

Step 1: Take a piece of paper and cut a funny shape like an hourglass or a circle out of the middle. This is your Mask.

Step 2: Place your mask over a second, clean sheet of paper. Write your real secret message (e.g., "The British are coming!") only inside that open shape.

Women Who Fought

A few women disguised themselves as men to fight in battle. Deborah Sampson enlisted under the name "Robert Sharrilt" and served for over a year, even being wounded in combat. Margaret Corbin and Mary Ludwig Hays ("Molly Pitcher") directly manned cannons during battles when their husbands were killed or injured.

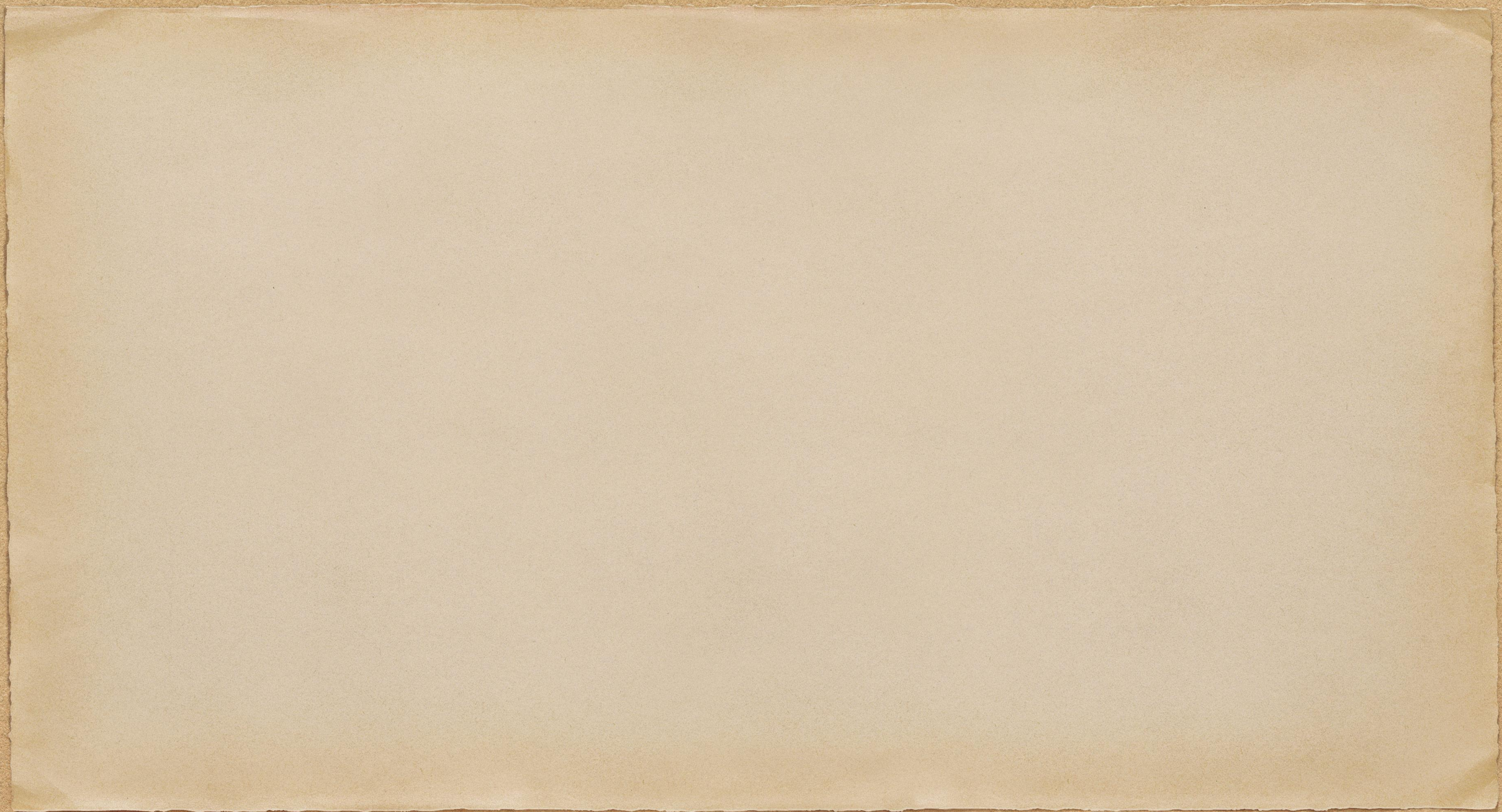
Political Influence and Protest

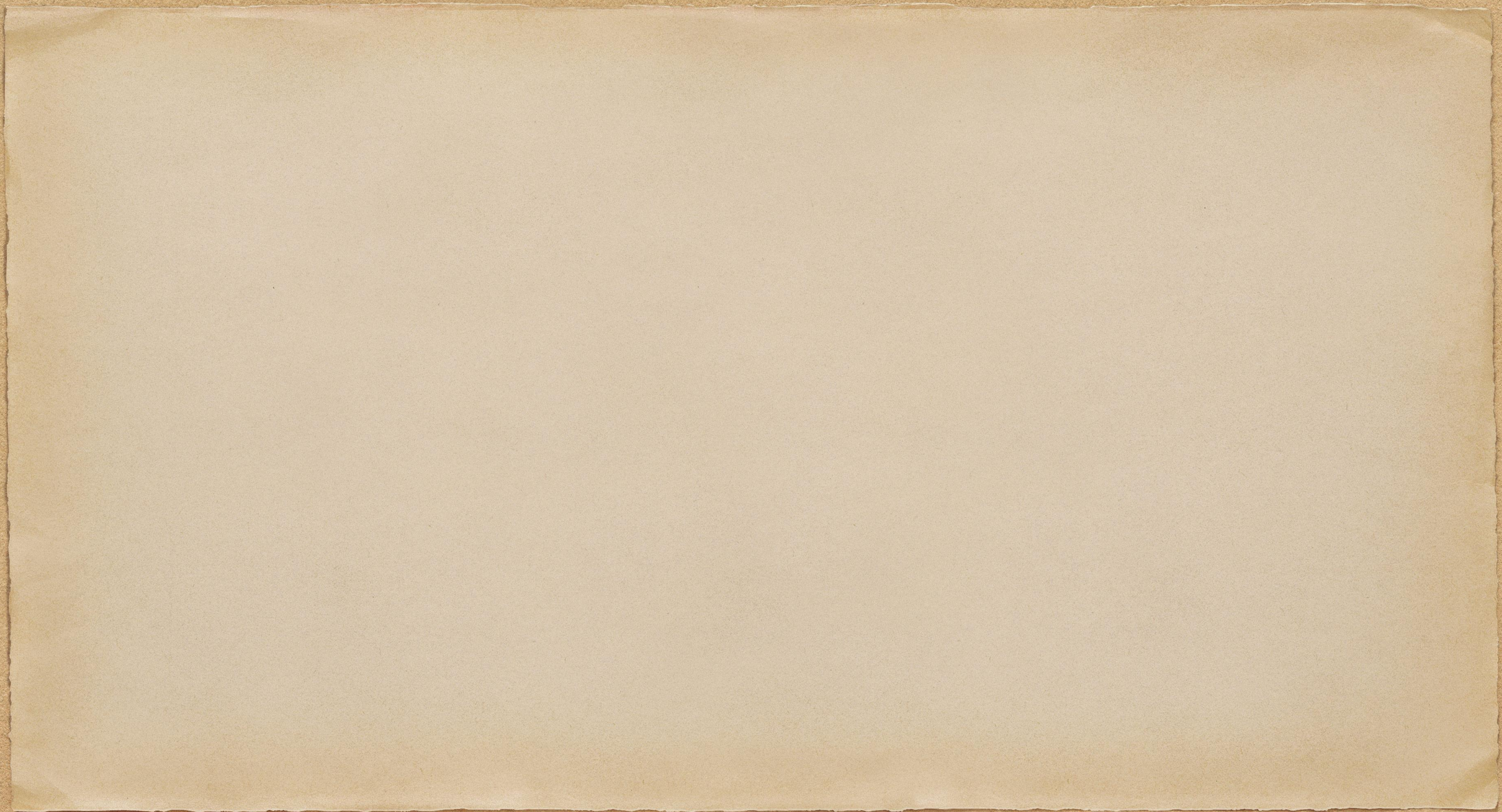
Women also played key roles in political resistance. They organized boycotts of British goods, spun homemade cloth, and formed groups like the Daughters of Liberty. Through letters, pamphlets, and conversations, women spread revolutionary ideas and influenced public opinion. Abigail Adams famously urged her husband John Adams to "remember the ladies" when forming the new government.

Legacy

Despite their contributions, women gained few legal rights after the war. However, their involvement challenged traditional gender roles and laid early groundwork for future movements for women's rights. The Revolutionary War marked a turning point in how women saw themselves. They too were active participants in shaping the nation.

The End







Car Show



Slavery at Rock Hall

1790 Federal Census recorded 17 Slaves at Rock Hall

1803

Will of Dr. Samuel Martin

.....At my decease the children of my late mulatto woman, Molly, to be free, namely, Polly to receive an annuity of 250 Spanish Milled Dollars during her life, the first payment to be made after my demises, as soon as possible.

To Henry and George, sons of Mulatto woman Molly, to them their heirs and assigns forever, a lot of land in the Town of St. Johns in the Island of Antigua, purchased for me by John Yeates Esq. of Mr. Wilson, also 200 English Pounds of said Island of Antigua lent upon bond to Henry.

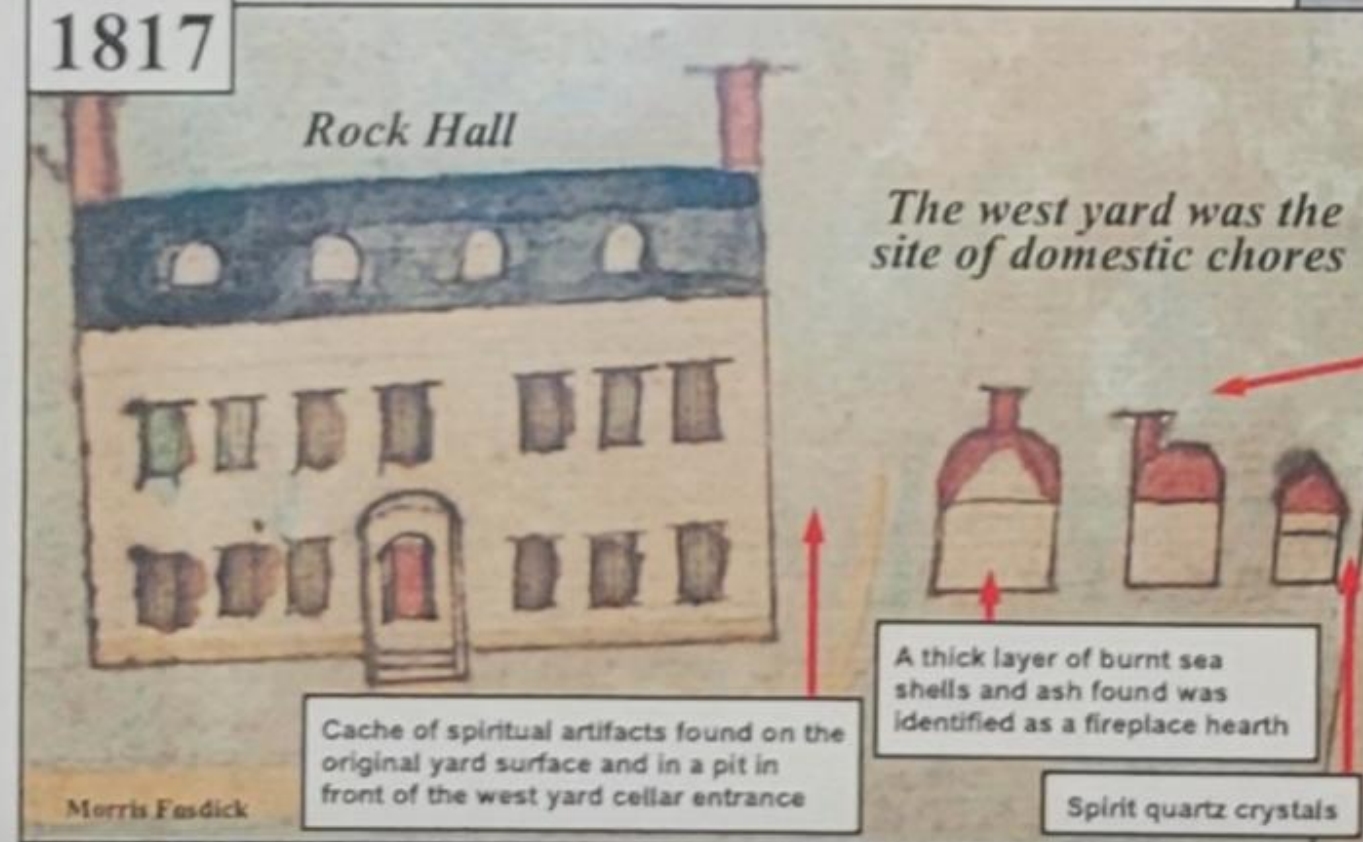
My will is that the other two sons of the mulatto woman Molly, deceased, Peter and Edward, be kept at school until well versed in reading, writing and arithmetic and then bound to some trade until they have learned it, then each of them must have a complete set of tools for their trades and 250 Spanish Milled Dollars, they are to be supported until they have learned their trades.....

1807

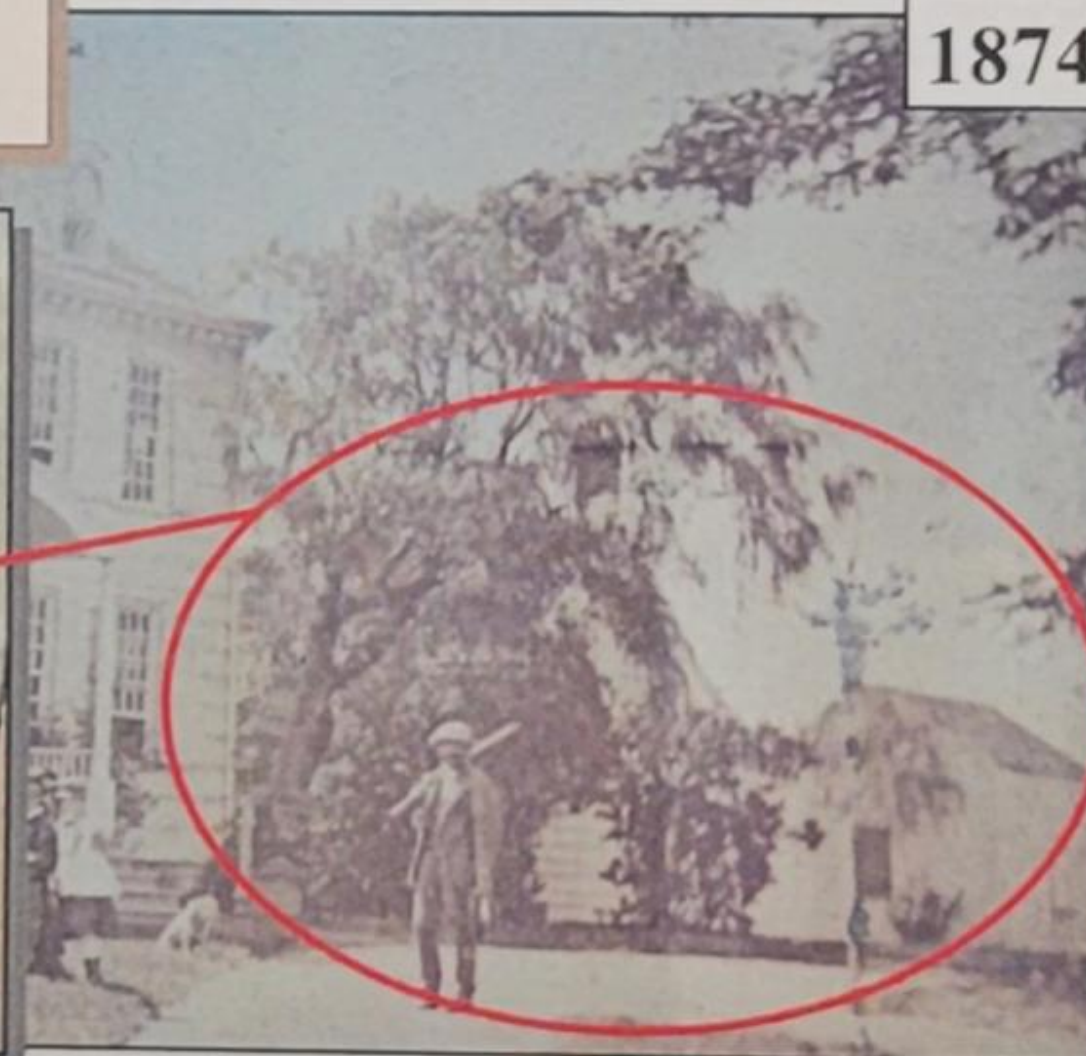
Listed on the Estate inventory of Dr. Samuel Martin

Jehnine	Quagh
Abraham	Betsy
Lewis	Nanny
Alexander	Peg
Jane	Antony

1817

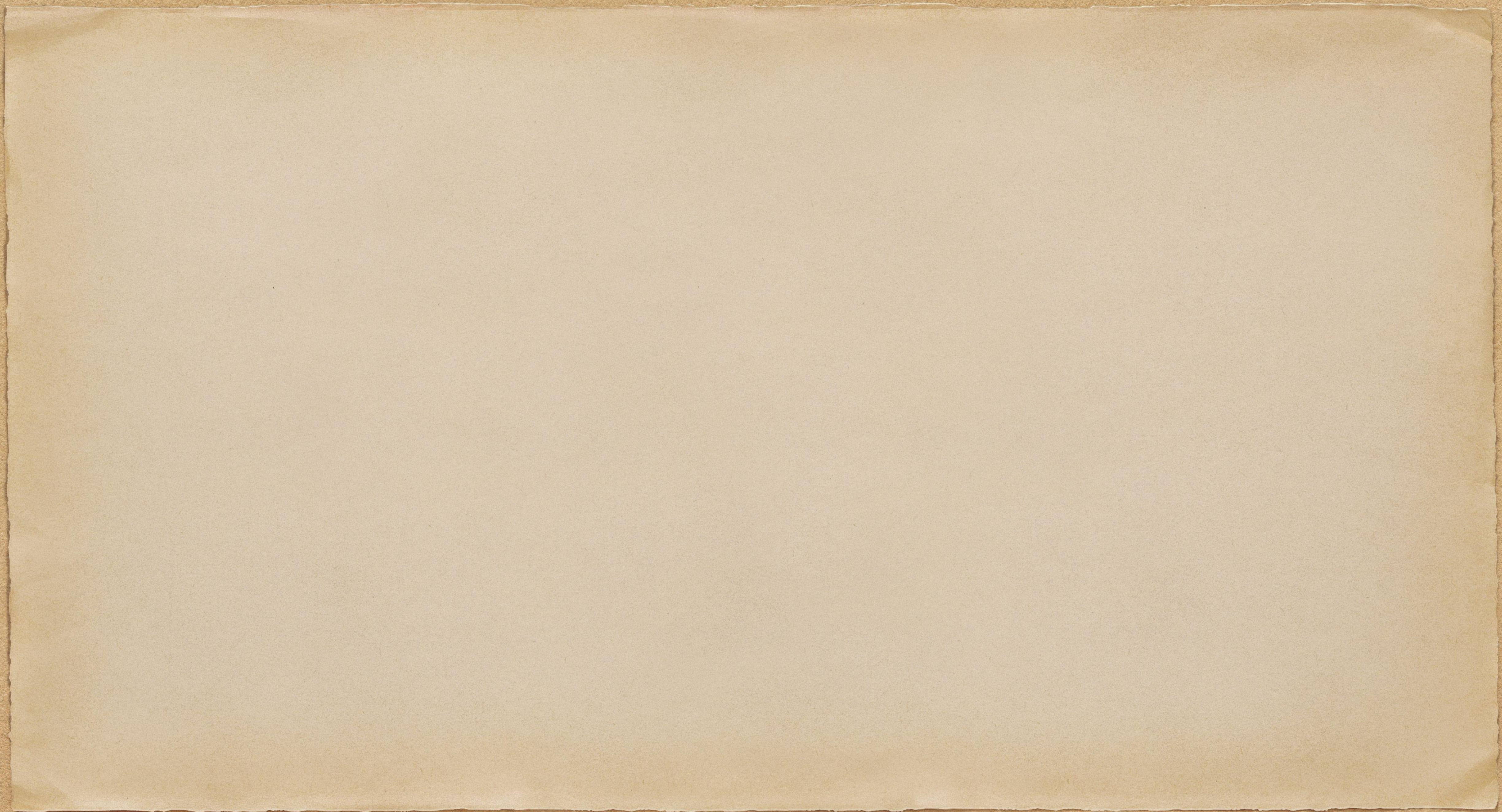


1874



Rock Hall Museum





ARRIVAL.	DEPARTURE.	REMARKS.
July 3 rd 1901 "	July 8 th	 BASE BALL AT ROCK HALL. SATURDAY JULY 6th 1901 (apologies to those left out.)
July 11 th 1901 "	July 14 th	
July 8 th 1901 "	July 15 th	
July 11 th	" 12	Dance July 11 th All dancers starve
" "	" "	
" "	" "	
" 13	" 15	

The Hewlett Family in 1904



Rock Hall



Rock Hall Museum



The Grounds



Lectures and Classes



The Museum Today





The Hewlett Family

