

TOGETHER WE STAND

Building a Proud, Unified Richmond Regional Community

THE GREAT INDIGNATION OF 2009

Restoring our Heritage and Preserving the View That Named Us Richmond

The curve of the James River and the steep slope leading to Libby Hill in Church Hill in the City of Richmond are remarkably similar to the curve of the River Thames and the steep slope leading to Richmond Hill in a royal village in western London called Richmond upon Thames. In the 1730's, William Byrd II, an important planter, merchant, politician and writer was asked by the Virginia House of Burgesses to plan a town at the Falls of the James. Byrd spent a good portion of his life in London and was very familiar with the View from Richmond Hill and its stunning similarity to the View from Libby Hill, which led him to name this new town *Richmond*. Officially, there is no definitive historical reference to the reason behind Byrd's naming of Richmond, but it has been celebrated, and quite obvious, for hundreds of years that the reason is the similarity of the two "Views". For a more detailed understanding of the history, please read "The View from Richmond Hill and the Naming of Richmond", by T. Tyler Potterfield of the City of Richmond's Department of Community Development, Historic Preservation Division (6-1-07). Or forget the history and see both views and you will instantly know that the similarity of "The Views" is why Byrd named our community **Richmond**.

The panoramic view of the River Thames from Richmond Hill, often referred to as "The View", has been celebrated in art and literature for hundreds of years. In the 1890's, this view was increasingly threatened by the march of suburbia creeping relentlessly up the Thames from London. For the first time the loss of open space linked with the destruction of a cherished view inspired public protest, or **indignation**, as it was known then, to resist development. **Indignation** was galvanized into one of the earliest and most successful environmental campaigns in history, and in 1902 "The Richmond Petersham and Ham Open Spaces Act" was enacted and "The View", the landscape on and below Richmond Hill stretching to the Thames, became the first and only view or vista to ever be protected in perpetuity by an Act of Parliament.

This “democratisation” of the Thames Landscape was celebrated in 2002, when an official delegation from Richmond Virginia traveled to our “twin” community Richmond upon Thames to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Preservation of the View, and the enormous benefits it has provided the citizens of Richmond upon Thames, the City of London, and the entire United Kingdom. The last words on the plaque dedicated in 2002 in Richmond upon Thames read:

“Their example should inspire us to fight for what is worth saving for future generations.”

Curiously, in 2002, when Richmond upon Thames was celebrating the 100th Anniversary of their preservation of “The View”, Richmond Virginia was starting to face issues of development on the James River that were quite similar to those encountered by Richmond upon Thames at the turn of the 20th Century. Height restrictions for buildings, preservation of views and access to the river became important points of discussion for the citizens of the City of Richmond and the citizens of the entire Richmond Regional Community, as the James River is our most important shared regional resource. For the last several years the James River, and particularly the future of the James and its riverfront, has been front and center in the minds of most Richmonders – possibly the most talked about subject in the Richmond Region. Starting with the attention the river received in 2007 with the 400th Anniversary of the landing at Jamestown and at the Falls of the James, and most recently as a major aspect of Richmond’s Downtown Master Plan, more and more Richmonders from all over the Region are becoming increasingly passionate about their ideas for the future of the James River and its riverfront.

TOGETHER WE STAND is an organization created to enhance the quality of life in the Richmond Region with its *Plan to Create a Proud, Unified Richmond Regional Community*. **TOGETHER WE STAND** believes the future of the Region is directly linked to its historic and powerful past and harnessing that power will be a critical element in creating a proud and unified community, leading to a higher quality of life for all Richmonders. Harnessing the power of the past requires important landmarks and historic areas be conserved and preserved for all of the public’s enjoyment, forever. Currently, certain historic lands along the most historic portion of the James River have either left the public domain, or are being considered as potential lands for private development. These lands, running from the former Intermediate Terminal site to Mayo Island on the north side of the James in the City of Richmond are historic not only for the Richmond Region, but for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States of America. This is **The Birthplace of Our Nation!**

The Birthplace of Our Nation is the area of the James River, America's Founding River, from the turn in the river upstream to the falls – from Rocketts Landing to Belle Isle. This stretch of the James and the lands on either side are historic for Richmond, for Virginia and for America. This is where Christopher Newport was forced to stop, essentially establishing the Richmond Region and ultimately America. This is where ships docked that transported hundreds of thousands of African slaves. This is where the canal system developed by George Washington started, significantly accelerating the commerce of Virginia and America. This is where Abraham Lincoln entered the City of Richmond in 1865. **And**, this is the part of the River, so remarkably similar to the turn in the River Thames in Richmond England, which is the centerpiece for the view from Libby Hill that inspired William Byrd to name this community **Richmond.**

The greatest icon of the Richmond Region is the James River. The greatest untapped resource of the Richmond Region is the power of its past. The greatest opportunity for the future of the Richmond Region is to harness the power of our past to positively shape our future. The greatest example of how to achieve this opportunity is our namesake community, Richmond upon Thames. On May 24th, 1981, “in order to afford official recognition to their resemblance to one another, sharing of name, and to promoting and continuing the spirit of goodwill and cooperation existing between the people of the City of Richmond in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the people of Great Britain” the communities of Richmond and Richmond upon Thames entered into a “Twinning” relationship, in an effort to further mutual cultural, educational and social links. The relationship has continued to expand over the years, spurred on by the Internet, advanced communications and travel, and the emergence of the Global Community. Most importantly, it has been spurred on because of the similar importance of our respective rivers to the health and well being of our respective communities. The River Thames and the *Preservation of The View* from Richmond Hill in Richmond upon Thames is a source of great pride and unity for its citizens, as well as a prime source of 100 years of economic vitality. **TOGETHER WE STAND** wants to replicate that sense of pride and help create that continued economic vitality in the Richmond Region.

THEREFORE,

In honor of the efforts of our twin city Richmond upon Thames in 1902 to democratize the Thames Landscape, and to learn from our fellow Richmonders how to use the power of our past to shape our future, **TOGETHER WE STAND** declares **THE GREAT INDIGNATION OF 2009**, intending to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Express indignation that any lands along the north bank of the James River, from the former Intermediate Terminal site to Mayo Island were ever allowed to leave the public domain as these lands were critical in the development of our Nation.
- 2) Generate overwhelming public interest throughout the Richmond Region and the Commonwealth of Virginia in restoring public ownership of the aforementioned land, as this historic portion of the James River is the public's collective heritage and should always be held by the public, in perpetuity.
- 3) Raise the monies necessary to assist the City of Richmond and/or the Commonwealth of Virginia to purchase all of the aforementioned land.
- 4) Establish on this land a riverfront park that in part honors the many important events that have happened in these waters and on this land and their impact on the history of the Richmond Region, the Commonwealth, and the Nation.
- 5) Strengthen the principle that the public has legitimate rights in the development of private land. **THE GREAT INDIGNATION OF 2009** is in no way a condemnation of private development along the James River – it is simply an affirmation that these specific lands must be in the public domain, in perpetuity.

It is expected **THE GREAT INDIGNATION OF 2009** will manifest itself in many forms of activism. For its part, **TOGETHER WE STAND** is collaborating with Scenic Virginia, Partnership for Smarter Growth and A.C.O.R.N in a Riverfront Petition created to demonstrate to our elected officials the significant numbers of people – in the Richmond Region, and throughout the Commonwealth – who enthusiastically support the acquisition of the aforementioned riverfront lands for the Citizens of Richmond, the Commonwealth, and America, in perpetuity. The petition reads:

Riverfront Petition

We, the undersigned Citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia and other locales, request that our elected officials in the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia take the necessary steps to achieve full ownership and control of all riverfront land along the north bank of the James River in the East End of the City of Richmond, from the former Intermediate Terminal site to Mayo Island, in order to:

- *Create a riverfront park that will ensure and enhance public access to this historic section of America's Founding River;*
- *Preserve the historic panoramic viewshed of the James River from Libby Hill Park that was the inspiration for the City's name; and*
- *Provide a natural connection to the numerous and unique historic sites in Shockoe Bottom, particularly those acknowledging the largely untold African-American experience in Richmond,*

for the good of the public and the sustainability of Virginia's Capital City, in perpetuity.

TOGETHER WE STAND expects the success of **THE GREAT INDIGNATION OF 2009** to create many benefits for the City of Richmond, the Richmond Regional Community, and the Commonwealth of Virginia, including but not limited to:

- 1) Setting the stage for a multi-faceted river park all along the north and south banks of the James River connecting to the Canal System and Canal Walk, and to Shockoe Bottom, Shockoe Slip and Manchester.
- 2) Generating additional economic development and tourism income by significantly increasing the use of the river downstream from the Falls and overall tourism to the river, to the View from Libby Hill, and to Downtown Richmond.
- 3) Offering a perfect venue for the Richmond portion of the Virginia Capital Trail.
- 4) Creating a powerful Regional Collaboration opportunity for the Richmond Region with an initiative allowing most everyone to be on the same side about an extremely important issue – generating positive local, national and international attention to the Richmond Region and the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- 5) Starting a never-ending wave of regional pride for the James River which will continue to positively impact all aspects of life in the Richmond Region.
- 6) Seizing the opportunity to use this land to help educate our youth about Richmond's past and present, in order to help secure Richmond's future.
- 7) Strengthening ties between Richmond and Richmond upon Thames.
- 8) Saving and securing an important part of Our Founding River, the James, for all of the generations to come.

The value to the Richmond Regional Community and the Commonwealth of Virginia of preserving and maintaining the riverfront land and the view from Libby Hill for the citizens of Virginia can be calculated economically, socially, and historically. The most important value, and the hardest to quantify, is the pride created in the hearts of the citizens who affect this change. Increased pride for the Region directly enhances the quality of life in the Region, and when this pride is maintained, amazing and wonderful things will continue to happen. If you support the objectives of **THE GREAT INDIGNATION OF 2009**, or are interested in learning more, please contact:



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