

JOHN JOHNS TRIGG, CONGRESSMAN

by

Ronald Paris Beck

Thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in
History

APPROVED:

~~George Green Shackelford, Chairman~~

Weldon A. Brown

William E. Mackie

April, 1972

Blacksburg, Virginia

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many persons contribute in varying degrees to the preparation of any historical work; this one was no exception. I am particularly indebted to Professor George Green Shackelford, who gave generously of his time, encouragement, and counsel, not only in the development of this study but also in the more demanding task of shaping a graduate student into a master of arts in history. I also wish to thank Professors Weldon A. Brown and William E. Mackie, who as members of my graduate committee and as second and third readers of this thesis gave me such good advice.

Profound thanks must go to the archival and library staff of the following institutions, who have been kind and helpful in guiding me to research materials: the Carol M. Newman Library of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, the Virginia Historical Society, the Virginia State Library, the Tennessee State Library and Archives, and the clerk's office of the county of Bedford.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	ii
Chapters	
I. The Background and Early Life of John Johns Trigg	1
II. In the Virginia House of Delegates, 1784-1792	20
III. Trigg Plays "A Game Where Principles are the Stakes," In the House of Representatives, 1797-1800	39
IV. A Regular Republican in the House of Representatives, 1800-1804	68
V. Conclusion	80
Selected Bibliography	83
Appendices	89
Vita	97
Abstract	

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND AND EARLY LIFE

OF JOHN JOHNS TRIGG

The Year 1748 marked the end of King George's War or, as it was known in Europe, The War of the Austrian Succession. The principal events of the war in America affected Virginia very little except as a prelude for bigger wars to come. This was also the year that there was born on the Virginia frontier in what was then Lunenburg County, John Johns Trigg.

Although he never achieved even the second rank of leadership in the early republic when other Virginians were so prominent, he was elected to represent the 5th Congressional District of the House of Representatives for four terms between 1797 and his death in 1804. It would be an exaggeration to say that Trigg was of heroic stature; but he was by no means devoid of interest. He capably represented an area whose political views often have been misunderstood. John Johns Trigg is important to an understanding of Virginia when the Federalist and Republican forces were often nearly equally divided.¹

¹Bicentennial Commission, ed., History and Geography Supplement, Bedford County (Bedford, 1949; hereinafter cited as, Commission, Bedford History), 6. Lyon G. Tyler, (ed.) Cyclopedia of Virginia Biography, New York, 1915, 131. W. W. Hening, Virginia Statues-at-large (13 vols., Richmond, 1823), XIII, 331-332, James L. Harrison et al., "John Johns Trigg," Biographical Dictionary of the American Congresses, 1774-1949 (Washington, 1950; hereinafter cited as Harrison, Biographical Dictionary of Congress), 1729.

The Trigg family name was full of a great deal of history. John Johns Trigg's great-great-grandfather, Samuell Trigg, came from Cornwall, England, to James City County, Virginia, in about 1635. He and twenty-nine others were transported into the colony by Thomas Harwood of James City County. Harwood received the right to 1500 acres of land, representing the 50-acre headright for each of those whose expenses he bore. Apparently Samuell Trigg was not penniless because in 1639 he was able to pay for the passage to Virginia of his wife Ellian and brother William. He thus acquired the right to locate 100 acres of land which the colonial authorities happened to designate along the Chichahomeny River.²

A few years after the Triggs settled in Virginia, a son, Daniel Trigg, was born probably in the early 1640's. He was John J. Trigg's great-grandfather. In time Daniel married a woman named Susan and moved from James City County to Middlesex County. They must have married late in life, inasmuch as it was said that the eldest of their three children was born in Middlesex County. Daniel Trigg lived to a ripe old age dying August 13, 1716, when he was almost

²George C. Creer, Early Virginia Immigrants, Richmond, 1912, 332. Nell M. Nugent, Cavaliers and Pioneers. Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants 1623-1666 (Richmond, 1963), 25, 107. William Crozier, (ed.), Virginia County Records (New Jersey, 1909) 21.

eighty years old. Daniel and Susan's eldest child was Abraham Trigg, who was the grandfather of John J. Trigg. Abraham married twice, first on December 14, 1705, to Elizabeth Guest, who soon died of tuberculosis and secondly to Judith Clarke on January 11, 1710. Abraham had two daughters by the first marriage and four children by his second. Some time around 1715 when he was about thirty-one years of age, Abraham moved from Middlesex County to a place west of the village of New London in the western part of Lunenburg County.³

Abraham's son William, born in 1716, was the most prominent of his children. William married Mary Johns and they became the parents of the subject of this biography.⁴

When Lunenburg County was divided in 1754 the north-western portion received the name of Bedford in honor of the Duke of Bedford, and the village of New London was designated its county seat. It retained this honor until 1782, when a popular demand shifted the seat of local

³Lyon G. Tyler, ed., History of Virginia (6 vols., New York, 1924), VI, 646. Dorothy I. Wulfick, Marriages of Some Virginia Residents 1607-1800 (Naugatuck, Connecticut, 1967), 95; Author refers to Abraham Trigg's marriage to Elizabeth Queen instead of Elizabeth Guest.

⁴"Preston Papers," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Richmond, July and Oct. 1910; hereinafter cited as VMHB), XXVII, 324.

government to a more western site closer to the center of the county. This new village was named Liberty.⁵

William Trigg was appointed a Justice of the Peace on July 26, 1761 and served in that capacity for Bedford regularly until his death. Subsequently, he was appointed captain of the county militia, surveyor of the roads, undersheriff and such occasional positions as collector of the lists of Titles, and Commissioner to investigate the county jail.⁶

It is not known whether John J. Trigg's father was an Indian fighter. If he was, he probably did little more in an active capacity than go out on patrols. The greatest Indian disorder in Virginia during the 1750's took place on the New River at Draper's Meadow about seventy miles further west on July 31, 1757. In the subsequent general panic on the frontier settlers refugeed to Bedford for about a year. With the establishment of peace in 1763 and the ending of Lord Dunmore's war in 1774 hundreds of new settlers from Tidewater areas came to populate such new counties as Bedford whose virgin soil they planted with tobacco. They

⁵Elizabeth Young, The History of Bedford County, Virginia, Bedford, 1948; (hereinafter cited as Young, History of Bedford), 10-12.

⁶Bedford Order Book, Bedford County Records, (Bedford, Virginia; hereinafter cited as Bedford Order Book) II, 53. Bedford Index Book, X (Bedford, Virginia 1763-1771) 24.

then shipped the tobacco by raft and canoe down the James River to Richmond for transatlantic shipment. But the end of the French and Indian war also was a signal for the more adventurous to move beyond the Alleghenies. Of William Trigg's sons three went further west and two remained in Bedford.

The Triggs were a close-knit family, but in the spirit of the frontier the sons of the successful small farmer heeded the call of the West. Beyond the low passes of the Blue Ridge on Bedford's western boundary lay the excitement and challenges of great adventures to be had, wild beasts and savages to fight. The experiences of John J. Trigg's brothers illustrate several variations on what was a common theme: responsible frontier leadership.

Abraham Trigg III, brother of John J. Trigg, when about twenty-seven years of age moved further west to the Middle New River settlements in the short-lived county of Fincastle. On November 8, 1775, he served as clerk of that county's Committee of Safety which framed the celebrated Fincastle resolution of independence. In 1790 he commanded a company of militia which fought at the battle of "The Shallow Ford of Yadkin."⁷

⁷Goodridge Wilson, "Three Who Helped Open the Southwest"; Roanoke Times, (Roanoke, July 14, 1968; hereinafter cited as Wilson "Three Who Helped," Roanoke Times), C; 6; 2.

Stephen Trigg also moved away from Liberty to the next westward county of Botetourt where he became a Justice of the Peace in 1770. When Botetourt's western and southern imperial expanses were cut off in 1772, he was not only one of the first Justices of the Peace of Fincastle County, but he was elected to represent it in the House of Burgesses. Stephen married Mary Christian, the daughter of Israel Christian who was a protege of Colonel William Preston. A commander of a company of militia in Lord Dunmore's War of 1774, Stephen Trigg had a bright future in western Virginia. His future was cut short by his death in the battle of Blue Licks August 19, 1782. Trigg County Kentucky received its name in his honor.⁸

Daniel was the youngest of John Trigg's brothers that left Bedford. He too had moved to the New River country when it was still part of Botetourt County. After Fincastle was divided into Washington and Montgomery Counties in 1776, he was appointed captain and later colonel (April 2, 1777) of the Montgomery County Militia. Daniel also became Sheriff in Montgomery County.⁹

⁸Ibid., See also VMHB, XXVII (1919), 324. Robert D. Stoner, A Seed-Bed of the Republic, Radford, 1962, 27-8.

⁹Wilson, "Three Who Helped," Roanoke Times, C; __; 2.

The next-to-youngest brother, William Trigg, Jr., remained in Bedford to help on his father's estate. He married a woman named Sarah and had seven children. Honorably engaged in local administration he advanced from Justice of the Peace to Lieutenant-Colonel of the Bedford Militia in 1778, and later became Sheriff of Bedford County.¹⁰ The office of sheriff had been more important in the colonial period than it was in the early republic. Still it was a virtual position insofar as building a successful political organization was concerned. Less glamorous than his brothers, William Trigg, Jr., was in a position best to help advance John J. Trigg's career.

John Johns Trigg was born in about 1748. He is said to have had a very "liberal Schooling,"¹¹ something more than the three R's generally available to the sons of small landowners. Prominent citizens in each locality took the lead in providing the means for gaining an elementary education. They either built a school house and hired a tutor, or they paid fees to one of their number who engaged the tutor and provided him with school quarters and meals. Books were prized highly and they were used and reused by several generations of students. Among these books were the Bible,

¹⁰"Preston Papers" VMHB, XXVII, July and October, (1910), 324.

¹¹Harrison, "John J. Trigg," Biographical Dictionary of Congress, 1729.

Arabian Nights, Robinson Crusoe, and Almanacks. A log school house was so cold in the winter that its floor space was disproportionately small compared to its huge fireplace. John was born too early to attend the New London Academy which was not chartered until 1795.¹² Even so, he must have enjoyed the early fruits of the educational mission which the enterprising Presbyterian clergymen brought to the area, which later received formal organization as the New London Academy. Records which survived the Revolutionary War do not list him as a graduate of the College of William and Mary, and he was too old for Hampden-Sydney College founded in 1782. Since there is no record of where or under whom he studied, it must be assumed that young John received little if any formal education. It is probable that during and after the Revolutionary War he studied on his own and read law.

When William Trigg, Sr. died late in 1772, he left a will appointing his widow and his son John as executors, since his older sons, Abram and Stephen, had not only moved out of the county, but were exposed to mortal peril at the hands of the Indians. Of course, John was aided in many practical ways by his younger brother William, Jr.¹³

¹²Commission, Bedford History, 27-8.

¹³Bedford Will Book A-1, Bedford County Records September 1763-March 1787, 175. Wilson, "Three Who Helped," Roanoke Times, C; 6; 2.

Besides providing amply for his widow, William Trigg, Sr., had left specific bequests of about equal value to each of his children. The total inventory of his estate consisted of £ 984, good competence for a small self-sufficient land owner such as himself. At the time of his death he had fifteen slaves, thirty-three livestock (horses, cows, and pigs) and a supply of farm equipment (ploughs, wagons, grindstone, men's and women's saddles, and a loom). His personal property bespoke a simple household; his walnut chest may have been made on the place; five feather beds and a valuable large mirror and a chaffing dish.¹⁴

Although William Trigg, Sr., bequeathed his mansion house and all the land around it to his eldest son Abram, the latter seems to have waived any claim to that real estate during his mother's lifetime. In colonial times mansion houses in Bedford County, whenever possible, were situated upon high elevations which commanded scenic views of the surrounding country. The number of rooms usually found in these houses was from six to seven rooms. Kitchens and dining rooms were either in the basement or the kitchen would be found in a building outside with the dining room on the first floor. Abram also received by the will one

¹⁴William Trigg, Sr. Last Will and Testament, September 15, 1772, Bedford County Records, Will Book A-1, 167-168. Also see Appendix number 2.

Negro boy, a horse and saddle, two cows and calves, two sows and pigs and a feather bed and furniture. Stephen received a tract of land called Pole Catt Mountain and one Negro woman. William, Jr. only received the Negro fellow he already had in his possession. To the youngest son Daniel was allotted one Negro, one feather bed and furniture, and two cows and calves, and two sows and pigs. Bequested to each of the two daughters, Lockery and Nancy, and not to take effect until they came of age or married: two Negros, ten pounds cash and one feather bed and furniture, one horse and saddle to value of £ 15. Presumably William Trigg, Jr., the youngest, received as little as he did because he expected to live on the home place during his mother's remaining years. Then he would inherit her interest in that property. In 1778 John Trigg was a witness to the deeding of land by Stephen and his mother Mary Trigg to Edward Donohone. This land was from the estate of William Trigg, Sr., and consisted of 377 acres on Mill Creek.¹⁵

When he was twenty-two years old, John J. Trigg married, on December 17, 1770, Dianna Ayers. He and Barnard Gaines put up the bond of £ 50 for the marriage. As was the case in every community of that day a wedding was a great social

¹⁵Young, History of Bedford, 93. William Trigg, Sr. Last Will and Testament, September 15, 1772, Bedford County Records, Will Book A-1, 167-168. Mary and Stephen Trigg to Edward Donohoe, May 22, 1780, Bedford County Records, Deed Book F-6, 139.

event and all Bedford celebrated their nuptials. Customarily a house was decorated with boughs of cedar which had been dampened and dipped in flour. Many tallow candles were needed to light the ceremony which usually commenced at dusk. The wedding dress usually was a simple muslin frock. Because a banquet followed the nuptials, it was usual for the bride and groom and the party of those who waited on them to spend the night at the home of the bride's parents. The next morning the bride donned, what the Victorians called the second day dress to breakfast with the wedding party. After this quick encounter the whole party departed for the home of the groom. At the groom's house the party continued their merry-making for another day and night.¹⁶

The young married man also had great ambition. The first record of John Trigg purchasing land was on November 6, 1771, when he bought for £ 100 from Clement Smith of Dinwiddle County 340 acres on the branches of the Great Otter River in Bedford County. It is probable that John and his bride considered making their residence on this Great Otter tract, but John Trigg's obligations as executor of his father's estate made him settle closer to the Court House instead.¹⁷

¹⁶John J. Trigg and Dianna Ayers, Marriage Bond, Bedford County Records, December 17, 1770.

¹⁷John J. Trigg from Clement Smith, November 6, 1771, Bedford County Records, Deed Book D-4, 220-221.

John's legacy of two Negro men, two cows and calves, two sows and pigs and some household furniture and his previous purchase of 340 acres did not make him a wealthy man. Indeed he could not have been considered a candidate for membership in the Virginia squirearchy if it had not been for his good political contacts with the frontier land magnates. Before the Revolution his contacts were associates in the Loyal Land Company.¹⁸

Until the end of the War of the American Revolution the county seat of Bedford County had been for almost thirty years New London. This town had become the largest in its part of Virginia and it not only attracted lawyers, justices, witnesses and jurors, but it possessed a bustling, optimistic social and economic spirit. This spirit caused Thomas Jefferson to say Court Day at New London was in many ways prophetic of the American Republic. None could know that Jefferson's optimism was so ill founded or that it never would become a great metropolis, but instead become a ghost town. Not even in its hey-day did its gentlemen justices dress in silks or velvets, but they did wear good coats and knee breeches. By 1782 settlers had so filled up the open spaces that there was a popular demand to divide Bedford

¹⁸William Trigg Sr., Last Will and Testament, September 15, 1772, Bedford County Records, Will Book A-1, 167-168. Thomas P. Abernathy, Western Lands and The American Revolution, New York, 1937, 222.

County so that its inhabitants could have quicker access to their judicial and economic centers. In dividing the old county, New London fell into the eastern half, which did not follow the usual practice of retaining the name it had borne. It took the name of the Virginia Revolutionary hero of the battle of King's Mountain Colonel Charles Campbell. This county was then incorporated as Campbell County. As the eastern part of old Bedford County had progressed from self-sufficiency to exporting tobacco and other products, Lynchburg at the rapids of James River had become increasingly important and it became the county seat of Campbell County. In October 1782 the Virginia General Assembly chartered the village of Liberty as a town, and designated it as the seat of Bedford County.¹⁹

From Colonial times until the Civil War the county court was the most important vehicle of local government. To this Court the Governor of the Commonwealth appointed five or more citizens called Justices of the Peace. Besides dispensing justice, the court also had the power to contract for the construction of roads and bridges, to license taverns and to keep public buildings in good condition. The Court

¹⁹Commission, Bedford History, 8. Young, History of Bedford, 5. Also see Census Report for New London: Fifth (1830) Census of the U. S. compiled 1934 by National Archives. Liberty in 1801 changed its name to Bedford.

met regularly on the fourth Monday of each month, called Court Day. John Trigg did not have to have any legal training to be a Justice of the Peace or be approved by the Court to settle estates.²⁰

Even though Trigg prospered in Bedford County, John's brother, Abram Trigg in Montgomery County, was so content there that he was glad to sell for cash his interest in property he had inherited in his father's will. At any rate Abram Trigg in 1780 sold to John 374 acres on both sides of Little Otter River for £ 150. In the same year John Trigg and Augustine Leftwich straightened out their property lines by the former's sale of about fourteen acres to the latter for a net of about £ 73:17. On August 6, 1781, John Trigg sold to Elizabeth Davis of Albermarle County the 340 acres on the branches of Great Otter River, which he had purchased in 1771. Since he had only paid £ 100 for it and sold it for £ 20,000, John made an apparent profit of £ 19,900. However, the depreciation of currency during the War of the American Revolution had been so ruinous that it would be safe to say that Trigg may have lost money

²⁰ Entries for June 28, 1779 and October 23, 1780, Bedford County Records, Order Book VI, 234, 304. There are more than twelve references in the Order Book of Bedford County to show that John Trigg was appointed to administer estates; June 28, 1779, Oct. 23, 1780, May 27, 1782, June 26, 1784, July 27, 1784, Feb. 27, 1786, March 28, 1786 (2), June 28, 1790, Feb. 27, 1792, Aug. 27, 1792, Jan. 28, 1793 and July 28, 1794.

if he did not quickly pay off debts or reinvest the money he received.²¹

On the frontier where man was both close to death at the hands of the Indians and close to the beauties of Nature, religion held an important place. Not long after 1755 the Presbyterians of which denomination the Triggs were members, established in Bedford the Otter Peaks Congregation. Both John and his brother William were contributors to the Presbyterian Peaks of Otter Congregation. In the bad times of the 1780's Bedford Presbyterians could not raise enough cash to pay the annual salary of their minister, so some of the congregation contributed slaves to be used for the support of the Church. Besides raising food to keep the minister and keeping the church buildings repaired these slaves were also rented out for the benefit of the Church.²²

On July 27, 1785 the Bedford County Court recommended John along with six others for the position of Justice of the Peace. This recommendation was addressed to the Governor

²¹Abraham Trigg to John Trigg, April 14, 1780; Augustine Leftwich, May 22, 1780; John Trigg to Augustine Leftwich, May 22, 1780; Bedford County Records, Deed Book F-6, 425, 409, 426. John Trigg to Elizabeth Davis, Bedford County Records, Deed Book G-7, 77. Merrill Jensen, The New Nation, New York, 1965, 187.

²²Entries for February 27, 1786 and March 28, 1786, Bedford County Records, Order Book, VIII, 183, 207, 228, 240. James S. Rawlings, Virginia's Colonial Churches, Richmond, 1963, 15.

of Virginia for his approval, which the County Court received on November 28 when John took his oath. John's constant availability to do minor business for the county did not bespeak a busied man of affairs, but it brought in some revenue and displayed a willing and competent public official to his fellow citizens. He was not above accepting so trivial a chore as collecting and conveying to the Bedford Court House the Clerk's writing desk and the County's system of weights and measures.²³

In the Autumn of 1792 John Trigg and David Saunders accepted appointments as commissioners to settle the boundary disputes with Campbell County. William Trigg had to post a £ 10,000 bond in order to be sworn in as sheriff in 1793; it was a mark of financial success that the forty-five year-old John Johns Trigg was able to join with three other men to secure the money for the bond.²⁴

The Court of Bedford County on February 27, 1794, appointed John Trigg as one of four men to superintend an election of overseers of the poor. In April of the same

²³Commission, Bedford History, 26. Robert Emings, William Emings, William Trigg, John Trigg and David Rice to Presbyterian Congregation of Otter Peaks, July 28, 1783, Bedford County Records, Deed Book, G-7, 251.

²⁴Entry for September 24, 1792, Bedford County Records, Order Book, X, 181. William Trigg, Michael Graham, William Henderson, Christopher Clark and John Trigg to Jaquelin Amblers, December 23, 1793, Bedford County Records, Deed Book, I-9, 259.

year John was ordered along with seven others as commissioners to plan, contract and supervise the building of a jail.²⁵

On October 26, 1789, John sold to Robert Davies personal property worth £ 125. The bill of sale consisted of: two female Negro slaves, one 27 years of age and the other 19, one chest and trunk, one bay mare, two feather beds, one table and chair, four heads of beef cattle, one woman's and one man's saddle, three pot axes, hoes and plow hoe. Cash did not exchange hands, instead, Davies "sold" John his crop of corn and tobacco which was not harvested.²⁶ On one hand it is likely that John Trigg wanted the fodder and grain to feed his cattle. Also it is possible that Davies had sold the land beneath his crops to someone else, and like so many others was ready to move to Kentucky.

While he was rending himself conspicuous to his fellow citizens by his industry in performance of the necessaries, civic or trivia, in backwoods Bedford, he was also active in military matters. In March 1778, John Trigg took his oath as a Captain of the Bedford County Militia. Since every white man over the age of eighteen was liable for

²⁵ Entries for February 24, 1794, April 28, 1794, July 1794; Bedford County Records, Order Book, X, 288, 300, 323, 334.

²⁶ Robert Davies to John Trigg, Oct. 26, 1789, Bedford County Records. Deed Book, H-2, 245.

service in the county militia, Trigg was in a position important for its political potential. John Trigg's military career in the Revolutionary War is one of mystery and uncertainty. From investigations in many sources it can be concluded that he was a Captain of an Artillery Company which served in Colonel Merriwether's Virginia Regiment at the seige of Yorktown.²⁷

At the conclusion of the Yorktown campaign Trigg must have returned to Bedford to engage in military service in the state militia, because on June 27, 1791, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, after waiting two years for the Governor of the Commonwealth to approve the County's nomination. When the new federal government was organized, it assumed the responsibility of national defense which was implanted in its hands. The federal government also took over sources of revenue such as custom duties. With this action Virginia and other states sharply reduced their

²⁷ Entries for February 24, 1778 and March 23, 1778, Bedford County Records, Order Book, VI, 141, 146. VMHB, XXXIII, (1925), 214, Samuel Hancock enlisted Dec. 1780 and served three months as orderly sergent in Capt. John Trigg's Company. VMHB, XXVII, (1919) 324. John Gwathmey, Historical Register of Virginians in Revolution 1775-1783, Richmond, 1934, 781. J. Mcallister, Virginia Militia in the Revolution, (Hot Springs, Va., 1913) 189. History of Virginia, (6 vols. ed. by Lyon Tyler, New York, 1924) 646. Lewis P. Summers, Annals of Southwest Virginia 1769-1800 (Abingdon, Virginia, 1929) 867. The conflicting information this author has found is that in the following list of books there is no mention of Captain John J. Trigg: Gaius Marcus Brumbaugh, Revolutionary War Records, Virginia (10 vols., Washington, D.C., 1936) I. H. J. Eckenrode, List of Revolutionary Soldiers of Virginia; Special Report of the Department of Archieve and History for 1911, (Richmond, 1912) 4.

militia. As a consequence, such officers as John Trigg were reduced in rank to conform to the new table of organization. On September 23, 1793, he qualified as Major of the 2nd Battalion of Virginia Militia and on the following June 23, as Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the 91st Regiment of Virginia Militia.²⁸

On July 3, 1794, John Trigg complained to Governor Henry Lee, "that the reorganization of the state militia into the 10th and 91st regiments had aroused much resentment among the officers." Trigg concurred with their concern that the power to enlist men into either regiment irrespective of where they lived would cause confusion and controversy. Trigg appealed to Governor Lee to help settle the matter.²⁹

²⁸Entry for July 27, 1791, Bedford County Records, Order Book, IX, 101, 284, 295. Entries for March 27, 1793, September 23, 1793, and June 23, 1794, Bedford County Records, Order Book, X, 219, 262, 315.

²⁹John Trigg to Governor Henry Lee, Virginia Calendar of State Papers, VII, 205.

CHAPTER II

IN THE VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES,

1784-1792

In the fall of 1784 the town of Richmond was made up of two or three hundred frame houses which were scattered from the James River to the crest of several low hills. Among them was a small wooden building, although it sometimes was used for balls, public banquets and other large social functions, as its principal function it housed the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Thither came legislators annually usually after slow and tiresome journies on horseback over all-but-impassable roads. Every October, when a new session of the Legislature was convened, Richmond was caught up in a flurry of activity as the little city stretched to accommodate legislators and spectators.³⁰

Into this lively atmosphere came the newly elected delegate from Bedford County. It may not have been John J. Trigg's first view of Richmond, but in any case he surely must have been excited to arrive as an important man in the capital of the Commonwealth, which for all its raw newness,

³⁰ Albert H. Beveridge, The Life of John Marshall (4 vols., New York, 1916; hereinafter cited as Beveridge, Life of Marshall), I, 208. Irving Brant, James Madison (5 vols., New York, 1941-1961; hereinafter cited as Brant, Madison), II, 114.

as compared to Williamsburg, was still infinitely more cosmopolitan in its refinements than his Bedford. During the eight years that John Trigg represented the County of Bedford in the Virginia General Assembly, he became acquainted with men famous not only in Virginia history, but in that of the nation which they were building. Of these, the greatest was James Madison, who served four years with Trigg. Others were Patrick Henry who served five, John Marshall who served four, James Monroe who served two, and Daniel Boone who served two one-year terms with Trigg.³¹

The 1784 House of Delegates was not one unified body working for the same goals. The session of 1783 had been divided into two major factions: the more conservative and national, led by James Madison, and the more radical and provincial, led by Patrick Henry. But in 1784 many new members had come onto the scene, including many Revolutionary War veterans who claimed to despise the old factions as being hopelessly addicted to log-rolling policies. These

³¹Harrison, "John J. Trigg," Biographical Dictionary, 1729. James W. Patton, "James Madison," Dictionary of American Biography (21 vols., ed. by Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, New York, 1928-1944; hereinafter cited as DAB), II, 442. William E. Dodd, "Patrick Henry," DAB, VIII, 558. Edward S. Corwin, "John Marshall," DAB, XII, 318. David Philipson, "James Monroe," DAB, XIII, 87. W. J. Ghent, "Daniel Boone," DAB, II, 442. Brant, Madison, II, 313. Beveridge, Life of Marshall, I, 200. Robert D. Meade, Patrick Henry (2 vols., New York, 1957; hereinafter cited as Meade, Henry), II, 342. John Bakeless, Master of the Wilderness: Daniel Boone (New York, 1939; hereinafter cited as Bakeless, Daniel Boone) 23.

newcomers declined to vote on any measure except those pertaining only to their own part of the state. John J. Trigg as a freshman delegate was open to the charge that he followed this parochial point of view, but he soon evolved into a more broad-minded legislator.³²

On October 18, 1784, the General Assembly convened. The newly elected delegate from the County of Bedford, John Trigg, arrived three days later. Also arriving late was Patrick Henry, the Orator of the Revolution and the leader of the "popular" party, as the more parochial faction in the lower house was called.³³

On November 1, 1784, John Trigg was appointed to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances, and to the Committee of Claims. Every year he was reappointed to the latter, a twenty-man committee which settled any claims to land or money by citizens of Virginia against the government of Virginia.³⁴ Although there is little or no information about the deliberations of these committees, it is likely that, while he was a junior member, John J. Trigg contented

³²Brant, Madison, II, 313.

³³Meade, Henry, II, 255-260.

³⁴Brant, Madison, II, 316. Entry for October 18 and 21, 1784; Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia (Richmond, 1828, Thomas W. White printer, microfilm, VPI&SU, Blacksburg, Virginia; hereinafter cited as JVHD), 1, 3. For Trigg's votes in House of Delegates see Appendix III.

himself to observe his elders and betters in order to learn the tricks of the politicians' trade.

Since 1781, the General Assembly had met in its old wooden structure. A bill was introduced in the 1786 session to pay £ 6,000 for the construction of a Capitol building which was to be modeled after the Roman Temple in Nimes, France, according to plans executed by the architect Charles Clerisseau and approved by Thomas Jefferson. This bill passed the House of Delegates by a majority of forty-one votes, among which was that of John Trigg.³⁵

When the House of Delegates assembled in 1787 it could boast of a distinguished membership. After two terms as Governor, Patrick Henry, resumed his seat as one of Prince Edward County's representatives. The voters of Henrico County sent John Marshall to the House after several years of absence. Daniel Boone took his seat also in the House, but for his first time. Again in the House of Delegates was James Madison of Orange County, who had been its dominant figure for the preceeding three years. In many respects,

³⁵Entry for Jan. 8, 1787, JVHD, 147, Ayes 65-Noes 24. Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Jefferson to James Buchanan and W. Hay, Paris, Aug. 13, 1785 (17 vols., to 1972, ed. by Julian P. Boyd, Princeton, 1953---; hereinafter cited as Papers of Jefferson) VII, 220.

this session became a rehearsal both for the Federal Constitution of 1787 and for the ratifying Convention of 1788.³⁶

Virginia never faced more momentous questions than she did in 1787-1788. First in the Philadelphia Convention and then at the state level, her sons debated whether to substitute as America's frame of government the new Federal Constitution for the old Articles of the Confederation. The General Assembly provided a partial answer late in October, 1787, by calling a convention to decide whether or not to ratify the proposed Federal Constitution.³⁷

When the Virginia Convention met on June 1, 1788, the Federal Constitution already had been ratified by eight states: Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. One more state was needed to achieve technical adoption of the new frame of government. In New Hampshire, the constitution first had been rejected, but federalists gained reconsideration and won approval in a second session. Obviously, technical ratification was not enough. Hamilton in New York declared that the Empire State could not ratify the Constitution unless Virginia did also. Thus Virginia held the key to

³⁶William E. Dodd, "Patrick Henry," DAB, VII, 558. Edward S. Corwin, "John Marshall," DAB, XII, 318. W. J. Ghent, "Daniel Boone," DAB, II, 442. James W. Patton, "James Madison," DAB, XII, 185. Bakeless, Daniel Boone, 23. Brant, Madison, II, 159.

³⁷Beveridge, Life of Marshall, I, 244.

giving practical effect to the new regime. If Virginia voted against the Constitution, she surely would have taken New York and North Carolina with her.³⁸

The Virginia Ratifying Convention of 170 members was made up of two delegates from each county. Its first session was in the Assembly's old inadequate hall, but it voted to adjourn to the new Academy on Shockoe Hill on the next day. The Convention, like all the sessions of the legislature of the 1780's, divided into the conservative, or moderate nationalists and the radical parochialists--led respectively by Madison and Henry. This time the former were called federalists and the latter anti-federalists.³⁹

The plan of the anti-federalists was to defeat the Constitution both by showing its weaknesses and by loading it with amendments. Since some conservatives, the most prominent of whom was George Mason, honestly desired addition of a Bill of Rights as prior amendments, the convention was mainly a struggle by the moderate nationalists to win the conservatives' support away from an unaccustomed alliance with Patrick Henry. The nationalists' initial

³⁸David J. Mays, Edmund Pendleton, (2 vols., Mass. Cambridge Press, 1952; hereinafter cited as Mays, Pendleton) II, 226.

³⁹Hugh Blair Grigsby, The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788, With Some Account of the Eminent Virginians of that Era Who Were Members of the Body (2 vols., Richmond, 1890; hereinafter cited as Grigsby, Virginia Convention of 1788) I, 1. Mays, Pendleton, II, 230.

success was the conversion of the popular governor, Edmund Randolph, who had declined to sign the Federal Constitution at Philadelphia but who announced at the beginning of the Ratifying Convention that he had changed his mind. Randolph's defection greatly disconcerted the anti-federalists and it deprived them of an able leader. The federalists quickly agreed with the conservatives to call for debate, article by article, believing that each separately could be defended successfully. Leaders of the federalists included James Madison of Orange County, Edmund Pendleton, who was elected president of the Convention, from Caroline County, John Marshall of Henrico County and Henry Lee, nominally representing Bourbon County. The leaders of the anti-federalist group were Patrick Henry of Prince Edward County and Benjamin Harrison of Charles City County. Two other well-known men, the elderly George Mason of Stafford County and the young James Monroe of Spotsylvania County, at the beginning of the Convention were not bitter die-hard anti-federalists, but were rather classified as neutrals whose doubts about Henry enabled them even while voting against Ratification to accept that result. Among Henry's anti-federalists supporters was John J. Trigg.⁴⁰ That he was a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 228-241. William E. Dodd, "Patrick Henry," DAB, VII, 558. Edward S. Corwin, "John Marshall," DAB, XII, 318. James W. Patton, "James Madison," DAB, XII, 185. David Philipson, "James Monroe," DAB, XIII, 88. Grigsby, Virginia Convention of 1788, I, 363, 344, 366. Meade, Henry, II, 346. Robert A. Rutland (ed.) The Papers of George Mason (2 vols., Chapel Hill, 1970), II, xxi.

strict sectionalist could be seen in his previous voting in the General Assembly, and he easily was led to believe that the proposed Federal government would take all the power away from the states.

At the outset of the convention, debate was allowed upon the whole of the proposed constitution. In such a contest in public speaking, the advantage lay with Patrick Henry's party. After ten days of such free-wheeling debate, the convention, on June 14 resolved to consider the constitution article by article. To turn the tide against Henry's leadership, Madison made twenty-two closely reasoned speeches in three days. On June 25, 1788, a vote was called and the constitution was ratified, 89 to 79. Besides habitual conservatives such as Edmund Pendleton, John Marshall and James Madison, most neutrals such as Edmund Randolph voted in favor of the constitution. Besides Patrick Henry, the most outstanding man who voted against ratification was George Mason. The sixty-three-year-old Mason refused to abandon his insistence on the inclusion of a Bill of Rights. James Monroe according to Harry Ammon was a moderate anti-federalist, "who saw more good than evil in the document." John J. Trigg and his fellow delegate from Bedford, Charles Clay, one of three clergymen in the convention and an old friend of Thomas Jefferson, were anti-federalists. Abraham Trigg of Montgomery County was also in the convention and,

he, too, voted in the negative.⁴¹ But, before the Virginia Convention had ended, the lime-light had switched to the New Hampshire Convention which cast the deciding vote in accepting the new Federal government.

The major unresolved issue of importance of the Virginia Ratifying Convention of 1788 was the question of how best to obtain enactment of a Bill of Rights conformable to the proposals of the Convention. By a resolution, the latter called on the Virginia General Assembly to petition the United States Congress to submit to the several states one or more amendments comprising a Bill of Rights. When the Assembly next met, the House of Delegates declined to heed this resolution by a vote of 85 to 39.⁴² Voting with the noes was John Trigg who, along with other conscientious anti-federalists in the Ratifying Convention, now gave support to the Federal Constitution. Undoubtedly he desired a Bill of Rights, but he trusted in the assurance of Madison that they would be secured by other and better means than by a state's effort to bully or blackmail.

In the 1789 session of the Virginia General Assembly, Virginia displayed great concern for affairs on what was still her southwest frontier on the Mississippi in what

⁴¹Brant, Madison, II, 350. Grigsby, Virginia Convention of 1788, II, 225. Harry Ammon, James Monroe The Quest for National Identity (New York, 1971), 69.

⁴²Entry for Oct. 30, 1788, JVHD, 13.

was soon to be the County of Kentucky. The Legislators decided to give arms to the Chickasaws in their fight with their powerful enemies, the neighboring Creeks. Taking pains to avoid criticism that Virginia was meddling in an area reserved to the central government, the legislature created a special committee to advise the President of the United States about Indian affairs on the Southwest frontier. Because John Trigg desired to maintain the Chickasaws as a buffer state between the Creeks and white settlements, he voted in the affirmative, as did Patrick Henry, who was then deeply involved in Yazoo speculations in the area of the Chickasaws.⁴³

One of the biggest problems before Virginia during John J. Trigg's nine years in the House of Delegates was how to manage postwar deflation and to settle prewar debts to British merchants. The General Assembly nibbled at these problems without making upon them a frontal assault. For example, in stipulating the means whereby the counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains might pay their taxes for the years 1782-1783, conservative leaders such as Richard Bland Lee, James Pendleton, John Marshall and James Madison backed a bill to permit the western counties to pay in hemp at a rate of thirty shillings per hundred weight, instead of

⁴³Entry for Oct. 23, 1789, JVHD, 8; C. Peter Magrath, Yazoo: Law and Politics in the New Republic (New York, 1966; hereinafter cited as Magrath, Yazoo), 4.

requiring payment in specie. This bill passed by twenty-four votes, but, strange to say, it was without the approval of the delegate from Bedford. The issue was not solely between payment in kind versus payment in specie, as it might appear. Instead, Henry's popular party really desired to force the state and creditors generally to accept at face value greatly depreciated paper currency.⁴⁴

Similarly, on the question of taxation in 1785, a bill proposed that, because of the temporary lack of specie, taxpayers should not be required to pay more than one-half of the levy for that year and that they could postpone the remainder until 1786. John Trigg and his brother Daniel Trigg of Montgomery County voted with the majority to pass the stay of tax payment by ten votes over the arguments of such conservatives as Madison, Richard Bland Lee and John Tyler. In 1786 the House passed a bill that provided for the payment of taxes with tobacco as had been the practice for more than a century.⁴⁵

The first time in the session of 1785 that John Trigg voted with James Madison was on the question of placing an embargo on the British West Indies to serve as a lever to gain more favorable trading concessions. The ayes won by

⁴⁴Entry for Dec. 30, 1784, JVHD, session 11, 90.

⁴⁵Entry for Nov. 19, 1785, JVHD, session 12, 44. Entry for Nov. 24, 1786, JVHD, session 13, 58, Ayes 72--Noes 33.

twenty-seven votes with Trigg strongly on the side of the winners. In these deliberations Virginia's views forecasted that of the nation. Declaring that by voting for this bill they aided other states of the Union which now might supply the goods previously brought from the British West Indies, the Virginia legislators concluded that they thus helped strengthen ties between the states.⁴⁶

On December 11, 1786, a bill was introduced in the House of Delegates to repeal an act that restricted foreign vessels from entering certain ports of the Commonwealth. John Trigg favored this bill, probably because he was persuaded that to increase the number of legal ports would increase direct foreign trade and would attract additional buyers from New York and from Europe, whose competition would increase the price of tobacco. The bill was defeated by thirty-four votes out of 104. John Trigg's friend, William Leftwich, who had just been elected as his fellow delegate from Bedford, was also in the minority.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, economics was beyond the power of the legislature. The Norfolk hinterland had suffered ever since 1774 for lack of trade with the British West Indies, which, of course, had not been placed on a renewed legal basis by the peace settlement of Paris. Tobacco prices, which had

⁴⁶Entry for Dec. 1, 1785, JVHD, 66.

⁴⁷Entry for Dec. 11, 1786, JVHD, 98, Ayes 35--Noes 69.

been high between 1783 and 1785, suddenly slipped to a new low causing great distress. The heavy taxation and high level of debt retirement was not moderated by the General Assembly's conservative leadership, which hoped for better times.⁴⁸

The first important act that came before the 1787 session of the House was a bill suspending payment on pre-revolutionary debts due from Virginia borrowers to British subjects, until Great Britain had delivered to the United States the frontier forts stipulated in the Treaty of 1781. This bill passed over the objections by John Marshall, Benjamin Harrison and James Monroe; and John Trigg voted with the majority on this bill as did his brother Daniel, and Daniel Boone, with James Madison absent from this roll call.⁴⁹

To substitute tobacco for specie in payment of taxes for the ensuing year was again introduced and passed. Again, John Trigg was one of this measure's supporters, but his brother Daniel was not. Because the latter's constituents lived on the frontier itself, instead of being one step

⁴⁸ Emory G. Evans, "Private Indebtedness and The Revolution in Virginia, 1776 to 1796," William & Mary Quarterly (hereinafter cited as Evans, "Private Indebtedness," WMQ), 3rd ser., XXVII (July, 1971), 361.

⁴⁹ James W. Patton, "James Madison," DAB, XII, 185. Entry for Dec. 3, 1787, JVHD, 80; Ayes 80--Noes 31. Evans, "Private Indebtedness," WMQ, 3rd Ser., XXVII (July, 1971), 373-374.

removed from such conditions as Bedford was, they probably desired hemp to be accepted in lieu of money, too, since for them it was easier to market and hence more important.⁵⁰

Ultimate statehood for the three counties of Virginia's District of Kentucky had been implicitly accepted by many Virginians long before it became a fact in 1792. As a member of the House of Delegates in 1788 and in 1791, Daniel Boone twice had gone on record as desirous of separation from Virginia. On December 18, 1786, the General Assembly of Virginia responded to the petitions which Kentucky was sending to them, and passed the first of three enabling acts to make provisions for the district of Kentucky to achieve separate identity. John Trigg, along with James Madison and others, backed this bill which won approval by twenty-seven votes. Virginians cautiously stipulated that Kentucky's separation would not become complete until she was assured of admission into the Union. Men like Jefferson and Madison wanted to make sure that Kentucky would not be lost to the American Republic.⁵¹

A series of acts specified how Kentucky could be separated from Virginia and that the boundaries of the

⁵⁰Entry for November 24, 1788, JVHD, 66; Ayes 88--Noes 27.

⁵¹Thomas P. Abernethy, Three Virginia Frontiers, Louisiana, 1940, 64, 69. Bakeless, Daniel Boone, 23. Entry for Dec. 18, 1786, JVHD, 106; Ayes 67--Noes 40. Thomas D. Clark, A History of Kentucky, New York, 1937, 118.

Commonwealth of Kentucky would be the same as those of the Territory of Kentucky. A vital provision stated that the new Commonwealth must also guarantee land ownership under existing Virginia laws and must assume a proportionate share of Virginia's Revolutionary War debt. The new Commonwealth of Kentucky promised to reserve for her parent until 1788, land which Virginia set aside to pay her Revolutionary soldiers. In another provision Virginia bound Kentucky to keep the Ohio river free for the use of all citizens of the "Union of States." To provide for future differences, the legislative package provided that all disputes were to be settled by arbitration. The legislators solemnly promised that Kentucky would become independent on September 1, 1787; but, when that date came, the only thing the Kentuckians got was fresh legislation which advanced the date to January 1, 1789. The enabling act of 1788 imposed upon Kentucky as a new restriction the requirement that the western district was to remain dependent until Virginia could complete the surveys of land. In actuality Kentucky was doomed to wait until June 1, 1792, when the new Federal government also admitted her to the Union.⁵²

John Trigg voted in the negative five out of six times in his first year in the House of Delegates. He was not,

⁵²Ibid., 120, 129.

however, simply an obstructionist, nor were these unimportant measures. The first bill he voted on was an episode in Virginia's long-drawn-out disestablishment of the Anglican Church. In the past Henry, Madison, and the factions they led had done many a battle on questions of religion, and they would do many more in the future. On November 17, 1784, a bill was reported which delegated to all Christian groups authority to perform marriages. Patrick Henry backed this bill so strongly that his influence helped it pass. Along with the Madison forces, John Trigg voted in the negative.⁵³ The probable reason that he did so was because he agreed that separation of church and state required not only disestablishment of the Anglican, but of all churches.

On December 17, 1785, Thomas Jefferson's bill to establish religious freedom was considered and adopted overwhelmingly in the affirmative by some fifty-four votes. Since the author of the bill was in Paris, his friend James Madison championed this measure which he had been trying to pass ever since he had entered the House. John Trigg is recorded as having voted with Madison, and his brother Daniel Trigg did likewise.⁵⁴

⁵³Entry for Nov. 17, 1784, JVHD, 25.

⁵⁴Entry for Dec. 17, 1785, JVHD, 94. Brant, Madison, II, 343.

In John Trigg's years in the House of Delegates he was involved with many unexciting matters, which were in the short-run rather unimportant, but which cannot be underestimated, if they be considered as parts of the greater problems of constructing and defining the Commonwealth's place in the Union. Among these was the question of extradition, which Trigg, unlike Madison, was loath to accept. Restrictions favored by Trigg and the minority lost by only four votes to Madison's nationalists.⁵⁵

In the following year John Trigg's younger brother Daniel from Montgomery County joined his elder and more experienced brother. The two voted alike on all issues. Until the middle of the 1785 session, John Trigg had voted on the side opposed to James Madison, but after the first of December, 1785, he voted with him on all but two matters.⁵⁶ It appears that Trigg's conversion was based upon principles and enlarged horizons more than on mere personality.

On December 18, 1787, a bill to establish district courts to supplement the county courts passed with the support of Patrick Henry and James Monroe over attack led by Benjamin Harrison, Daniel Boone, John Trigg and Daniel Trigg.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Entry for Nov. 26, 1784, JVHD, 35.

⁵⁶Entry for Dec. 30, 1784, JVHD, 90.

⁵⁷Entry for Dec. 18, 1787, JVHD, 105; Ayes 80--Noes 34.

In the fall of 1790 John Trigg voted for the unsuccessful bill to increase the salaries of sheriffs and collectors of the public debt. He probably voted thus not because his brother William was Sheriff of Bedford County, but because he saw the general need for higher paid officials. Paradoxically, he voted against a bill to fund the payment of interest on the military debt of the state, a bill which passed the House by only five votes.⁵⁸ The feeling of sectionalism probably rose up again in his heart and made him think of the privations of his own county and of the frontier, and that money-lenders could wait until humble folk could better bear taxation.

The 1791 session of the House of Delegates saw Daniel Boone return, this time as a delegate from Kanawha County. Trigg and Boone usually voted in harmony; they declared that the Commonwealth should honor its Acts of Assembly, concerning purchasing lands from the Indians instead of arbitrarily revising them in favor of the white man. Both voted against such bills as those to establish a state-wide divorce court and against raising the salaries of the clerks of the county courts. Their reason for voting against the latter was that the salaries were increased too little.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Entry for Nov. 24, 1790, JVHD, 85. Entry for Dec. 14, 1790, JVHD, 135.

⁵⁹Entry for Nov. 10, 1791, JVHD, 46. W. J. Ghent, "Daniel Boone," DAB, 442. Entry for Nov. 21, 1791, JVHD, 91. Entry for Dec. 16, 1791, JVHD, 132-133.

The powerful faction that once ruled the House of Delegates was non-existent in 1791. For a while, at least, the issues which had arisen in the state house moved to the Federal Congress. It was very fitting that during 1791, John Trigg was introduced to national politics, by serving on a committee to examine Treasury accounts. In practical politics, he gained knowledge by serving on a committee to redistrict the Commonwealth and to examine ballot boxes.⁶⁰

1792 was the last of John Trigg's nine years of service in the Virginia House of Delegates. Correspondence between him and his older and more celebrated contemporaries of this period has not survived to provide the details of their arguments and disagreements. Like his frontier neighbors, the Bedford politician kept a watchful eye on his more famous eastern colleagues in the legislature and he learned their ways. In the process, he shed more and more of his narrow parochialism and became a spokesman of union and strength for his county and of self-determination and local rights for the people of each of its states.

⁶⁰ Entries for Nov. 15, Oct. 15, 25, and 16, 1792; JVHD, 121, 4, 72-74, 51.

CHAPTER III
TRIGG PLAYS "A GAME WHERE PRINCIPLES
ARE THE STAKES"⁶¹ IN THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1797-1800

It was amid perplexing times of change that John Johns Trigg was elected to the federal House of Representatives in 1797. Trigg had seen in Virginia's Ratifying Convention of 1788 a galaxy of great leaders contesting important principles. Yet, in 1797 Virginia was a place whose people either so exaggerated the commonplace that it eclipsed broader considerations and sowed seeds of such indifference and complacency as to tempt demagogues to make a harvest of emotions. Where were the leaders of yesteryear?

George Mason was dead. Patrick Henry, although for a moment emergized to Federalism, was actually moribund. Of the five notable Lees, only Light-Horse Harry was left. Edmund Pendleton and George Wythe now served in cloistered judicial posts. John Page and John Taylor were preoccupied with their farming and professional work. For the time being Edmund Randolph sought to repair his fortune and James Monroe his reputation, after their separate disgrace by the

⁶¹Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, Phil., June 1, 1798; The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (10 vols., ed. by Paul L. Ford, New York, 1904; hereinafter cited as Jefferson, Writings), VII, 265-266.

ultra-Federalists of the Washington administration. John Marshall's record as a state legislator during the previous decade had been no more than satisfactory, and he was not to emerge as a strong Federalist leader until 1799, when he had completed his French mission. The great Republican leaders, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, had become so associated with national problems that their strength in Virginia was weakened momentarily.

The years 1797-1801 have been called "The Ordeal of Liberty" by Dumas Malone. Jefferson himself said, "If the fame runs sometimes against us at home, we must have patience till luck turns, and then we shall have an opportunity of winning back the principles we have lost. For this is a game where principles are the stake."⁶²

When John J. Trigg took his seat in Congress, he saw the Adams administration commence with happy auguries of peace at home and abroad. These circumstances were such that Jefferson and Madison might have been excused if for the moment they showed a degree of political complacency. As Vice-President, Jefferson may have taken the veil, but there was nothing to stop him from an occasional lewd political wink: and, besides, there were abundant reasons

⁶²Dumas Malone, Thomas Jefferson and His Time (4 vols. to 1971, Boston, 1948----; hereinafter cited as Malone, Jefferson and His Time), II. Jefferson to John Taylor, Phil., June 1, 1798; Writings, VII, 265-266.

for supposing that his and Adams' warm personal friendship would rekindle. The President, and Hamilton, too, thought it would be well to enlist Madison in a treaty commission to France. News of Napoleon Bonaparte's victories on the continent of Europe raised possibilities of peace between Great Britain and the French Republic, and of the consequent elimination of America's problems respecting neutral trade. But it was not to free himself for a foreign mission that James Madison declined renomination for the Fifth Congress. He was weary of the role of leader of the opposition; he wished to be free to engage in family life and to assume responsibility for his farming and subsidiary enterprises at Montpelier.⁶³

When in the middle of May, 1797, Representative John Johns Trigg went to Philadelphia to take his seat in the fifth congress since the beginning of the federal government, that body convened in the old red brick court house at the corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets. Where John Trigg resided in Philadelphia, one can only guess. He must often have visited Francis' Hotel where Thomas Jefferson and a "Knot of Jacobins" lived and dined between 1797 and 1801; or, Marache's boarding house where Nathaniel Macon, John

⁶³ Stephen Kurtz, The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism (Philadelphia, 1957; hereinafter cited as Kurtz, Presidency of Adams), 231. Brant, Madison, II, 444-445.

Nicholas of Virginia, Joseph Eggleston and John Randolph all lived. Trigg succeeded Republican George Hancock, who had sat in the third and fourth Congresses, representing Virginia's 5th Congressional District, which was comprised of Bedford, Botetourt, Franklin, Henry and Patrick counties. According to Manning J. Dauer, fifty-seven of the one-hundred and six Representatives were Federalists. They reelected as Speaker of the House of Representatives Jonathan Dayton, a moderate Federalist from New Jersey. He had been the youngest man in the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 to sign the Constitution of the United States, and he conducted the affairs of his office with such ability, diligence and enthusiasm that his election was not obnoxious to the Republicans.⁶⁴

At the beginning of the 5th Congress, the Republicans were dealt a stiff blow. John Beckley, the clerk of the House since its creation and according to Noble E. Cunningham "a significant contributor to the advancement of the Republican Party," was not reelected to his old position. Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Madison expressed the partison concern over the clerkship:

⁶⁴Manning J. Dauer, The Adams Federalists (Baltimore, 1953; hereinafter cited as Dauer, Adams Federalists) 133, 122, 273, 303. Harrison, "George Hancock," Biographical Dictionary of Congress, 791. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 231. Noble E. Cunningham, The Jefferson Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization 1789-1801 (Chapel Hill, 1957; hereinafter cited as Cunningham, Jefferson Republicans) 123.

Division on the choice of clerk was 41 for Condry and 40 for Beckley. Besides the loss of the ablest clerk in the United States and the outrage committed on the absent members, prevented by the suddenness of the call and their distance from being here on the first day of the session it excites a fear that the Republican interest has lost by the new change. It is said that three from Virginia separated from their brethren.⁶⁵

At this time Jefferson was worried about mustering enough Republicans for roll call votes to contain the Federalists, and he was particularly worried about holding in check mavericks in the Virginia delegation.

Albert Gallatin perhaps the ablest man on the floor of the House had now become leader of the Republicans. The equal of Madison as a speaker and a logical thinker, he best among the Republicans could understand and condemn the intricate Hamilton and his financial schemes.⁶⁶

Without Madison, leadership of the nineteen Virginia Representatives devolved upon William Branch Giles, who represented the 9th District, which included the southside counties of Amelia, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, and Nottoway; and it was to him that John Trigg must have looked for advice. Big, bluff and hearty, Giles probably was as much

⁶⁵Noble E. Cunningham, "John Beckley; A American Party Manager," William & Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., XIII (Nov., 1956), 40-52. Jefferson to Madison, Phil., May 18, 1797; Writings, VII, 125.

⁶⁶Raymond Walters, Albert Gallatin: Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat (New York, 1957; hereinafter cited as Walters, Albert Gallatin), 112.

a conundrum to his contemporaries as to posterity--was he only a sounding board for others, such as Madison: or was he possessed of a keen mind as well as of a flailing oratorical style of attack? Giles was a veteran of the four preceding congresses. Sharing the idealism and enthusiasm of small farmers and artisans, he fought against the favorite project of the Northern maritime and merchant interests: The "monopoly" enjoyed by the Bank of the United States, duties in general, building an American Navy of more than defensive strength. Giles struggled against what he condemned as usurpations of powers by the general government. His interpretation of the constitution was so limited and narrow that he opposed virtually all Federalist measures.⁶⁷

After Giles in seniority among the Virginians there was Abraham B. Venable of the 7th District, a taciturn four-time Representative. Of the nineteen-man delegation, twelve were seasoned. The two next most notable persons were John Dawson of Fredericksburg, who served from the fifth continuously until the end of the thirteenth Congress; and Carter B. Harrison who was a son of the former Governor, Benjamin Harrison of Virginia, and a brother of William Henry Harrison now living in the Ohio Territory. Of the six other freshman

⁶⁷ Dice R. Anderson, William Branch Giles: A Study in the Politics of Virginia and the Nation from 1790-1830 (Menasha, Wis., 1914; hereinafter cited as Anderson, William B. Giles) 76-101. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 132, 274.

congressman from Virginia, only David Holmes of Augusta County and the Revolutionaly General Daniel Morgan of Fredrick County were to make much of a name for themselves. Especially after Giles resigned on October 2, 1798, none of the Virginian delegation could be called brilliant. Irrespective of party none were more than a compliant, inarticulate and unpretentious spokesman of small freeholders. Although his original party designation is ambigious, James Machir of Hampshire County proved to be the most consistent Federalist among them, which may explain why this was his only term in Congress.⁶⁸

It is too simplistic to say, as did Dice R. Anderson in 1914, "that those who had opposed ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1788 had won control of Virginia by 1797."⁶⁹ Yet it is undeniable that most of those in high places were country squires whose education had not been good; most had performed military service in the war; and most had been advanced by their constituents through offices of public trust to their present eminence. They did not pretend to know much about statecraft or international affairs. Although they could have obtained entree to the formal levies of the President and Mrs. Adams most would have been uncomfortable

⁶⁸Early Lee Fox, "John Dawson," DAB, V, 152-153. Daniel C. Haskel, "Daniel Morgan," DAB, XIII, 166-167. Harrison, "Carter B. Harrison," "David Holmes" and "Abraham B. Venable," Biographical Dictionary of Congress, 1010, 1015, 1075.

⁶⁹Anderson, William B. Giles, 54.

in the company of such ornaments of the Federalist "Court" as Mrs. William Bingham, the wife of the founder and director of the Bank of North America and Senator from Pennsylvania, or Mrs. Thomas Willing of Philadelphia, the wife of the President of the Bank of North America, and between 1791 and 1811 also President of the Bank of the United States.⁷⁰

As a member of the loyal opposition in the House of Representatives, John J. Trigg witnessed the initial discomfort of the Federalists as Adams' propensity to moderate conciliation of the Republicans gave way to satisfied control by the Ultra-Federalists. The extra session of the congress had been called by President Adams in May, 1797, primarily to consider relations with France. This summer was the knell of the rapprochement between Adams and Jefferson, thus pleasing the Ultras, even though the former did not at that time succeed in using the rude and uncompromising refusal of France to negotiate as a means to enact an American program for war. Most of the Ultras' proposals were tabled: to organize an artillery corps, to strengthen and man fortifications, to build nine ships of war, and to provide for a provisional army subject to the President's call. The Federalists

⁷⁰ Anne H. Wharton, Social Life in the Early Republic (Williamsburg, Mass., 1970), 34-41. Jensen, The New Nation, 231, 281. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 109, 222-224, 376. Charles H. Lincoln, "William Bingham," DAB, II, 278. James O. Wittereau, "Thomas Willing," DAB, XX, 302-304.

proposed to pay for their program by a general system of taxation which included increased duties on imported wines, liquors, salt, paper and parchment. Since the country had experienced a rather severe depression since 1794, the tax proposals were not popular.⁷¹

However, the Federalists' proposal to protect the commerce of the United States by building twelve frigates passed the Senate, 16 to 13. The Republicans in the House sought to stop this bill, but Trigg, a green congressman, joined many others in breaking ranks to vote approval, 78 to 25. The Republican leaders Albert Gallatin of Pennsylvania, Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, and Giles of Virginia, objected to the Naval Bill on many grounds. They complained that, since the ships were to be frigates instead of men o'war their forty-four guns would be incapable of attacking the seventy-four gun men o'war of the great powers of Europe. They also could have argued that small, cheap gunboats would suffice to defend a peaceful America. According to Thomas Jefferson, the cost and maintainance of frigates amounted to more than \$10,000 per gun. When the Federalists overcame the impasse over the naval bills in early July, 1797, they speedily introduced into the House their bills for national taxation. The first bill was to lay a tax on stamps on

⁷¹Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 219-238. William E. Dodd, The Life of Nathaniel Macon (Raleigh, N. C., 1903; hereinafter cited as Dodd, Nathaniel Macon) 99. Walters, Albert Gallatin, 103.

parchments, vellum and paper. While the second called for an increase in the tax on salt. These passed the House by votes of 47 to 41, and 47 to 43. Besides such leaders as Albert Gallatin, and Nathaniel Macon, the Republican minority this time included John Trigg and his brother Abram. The Republicans argued that the stamp act imposed an inconvenience upon trade and that the salt tax would be burdensome to the poor everywhere, but especially oppressive to those in the back country. They even declared that, if New England wanted it so much, that section should pay the share for those who did not.⁷² Considerable sectional feelings were manifested in the debates on these bills.

The Federalists were more unified when the regular session of Congress met in November, 1797. The Ultras were no less determined to have things their own way, but events of the summer had strengthened their hand: relations between Adams and Jefferson had cooled; French vessels had seized American ships on the high seas; and the French Directory

⁷²House of Representatives, Fifth Congress, The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States (Washington, 1849; hereinafter cited as Annals of Congress), June 24, July 3 and 5, 1797; VII, 385-386, 433, 447. For complete voting record of John Trigg see appendix IV. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 134, 298. Jefferson to Nicholas Lewis, Phil., Jan. 30, 1799; The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (20 vols., ed., by Andrew A. Lipscomb & Albert E. Bergh, New York, 1904; hereinafter cited as Jefferson's Writings (L&B), X, 89-90.

had refused to receive Charles C. Pinckney as the new American Minister because he was "an Aristocrate."⁷³

Before the two major parties confronted each other on the urgent questions of foreign and domestic affairs, the House of Representatives witnessed the celebrated fracas between the Federalist Roger Griswold of Connecticut and the Republican Matthew Lyon of Vermont. Their argument arose because of party rancor and the encounter began when in the presence of the whole House Lyon spat in Griswold's face. This encounter was kept up by cuffs and blows, with canes and fire tongs, off and on for two days. After weeks of debate and vain attempts at expulsion, the House finally bound the two principals under oath to keep the peace during the remainder of the session.⁷⁴

Initially John Trigg agreed with Nathaniel Macon concerning the Lyon case. Apparently, they took the position that Lyon's enemies demanded his expulsion from the House only to get rid of a disagreeable Republican and that expulsion was too great a punishment for the offense. After Griswold brought on a second encounter with Lyon, Macon and

⁷³Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 230, 233, 286. John C. Miller, The Federalist Era, 1789-1801 (New York, 1963; hereinafter cited as Miller, Federalist Era), 210.

⁷⁴Miller, Federalist Era, 208-209. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 139.

Trigg favored the expulsion of both troublemakers, even though this was unlikely because a two-thirds vote was needed.⁷⁵

While House Republicans and Federalists were still embroiled in the consequences of the Lyon-Griswold affair, Franco-American relations took a turn for the worse. Outraged at the treatment his envoy, Pinckney, received at the hands of the French, President Adams on March 19, 1798, sent his first message to Congress to inform its members. Adams requested defense preparations on two grounds; war was possibly the only way that the United States might secure redress of French depredations; and the United States could negotiate best from a position of strength, especially against the possibility of "sudden and predatory incursions" by the French.⁷⁶

The President's message, along with correspondence from his enjoys, caused intense excitement throughout the land which reunited the Adams moderates with the Hamilton Ultras. They quickly advanced legislation for creating a stronger navy and army. The Republicans unsuccessfully recommended

⁷⁵Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., Jan. 30 and Feb. 12, 1798; VII, 955, 1008.

⁷⁶Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., March 19, 1798; VII, 1271-1272. Norman K. Risjord, The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson (New York, 1965; hereinafter cited as Risjord, Old Republicans), 12. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 141. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 230-231. Walters, Albert Gallatin, 106.

an adjournment in order to learn the will of the people. Confident that the Federalists were exaggerating the French threat in order to terrorize the populace, the Republican leaders determined to force a showdown. They thus inadvertently played into the hands of the Federalists when William B. Giles challenged President Adams to publish secret correspondence bearing on the treatment of American ministers in Paris. The President's response was to submit the XYZ papers which were given immediate and wide publication. These papers showed that petty subordinates of the French Foreign Office tried to exact a bribe of \$250,000 from the United States commissioners in order to smooth the way for them to see the Directory. As these insults became known, the Adams Administration became correspondingly popular and received assurance of patriotic support of all parts of the country.⁷⁷

The Republicans seemed unable to stem the tide that was setting in against them. The war spirit was abroad in the land and spreading everywhere, fomented by news of French seizures and depredations upon United States shipping in the Caribbean. By the middle of May, all the main measures of the administration had been enacted: establishment of a

⁷⁷Anderson, William B. Giles, 59. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 298. Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., April 3, 1798; VII, 1374-1380. Walters, Albert Gallatin, 106.

Department of the Navy, a Provisional Army, and more protection of commerce and coastlines. What was in Jefferson's eyes worst was the fact that three Virginia Representatives broke ranks to vote with the Federalists. On this occasion Thomas Jefferson had no fault to find with Trigg, although he was caustic about "Three renegadoes" who broke party policies when, on a vote to keep France "on equal footing with other nations," James Machir, Daniel Morgan and Thomas Evans "turned tail." Jefferson was particularly indignant that Thomas Evans from the Eastern Shore of Virginia neglected his party obligations.⁷⁸

While the Federalist majority was carrying all before them in Congress, outside those halls public meetings expressed widespread indignation against the Republicans whose preoccupation with peace seemed unpatriotic. So serious and genuine was this bellicose mood that Josiah Parker of Virginia introduced resolutions on behalf of his fellow southern Republicans that were designed to forestall criticism at home. The resolutions which the veteran Parker brought forward were called the Portsmouth Resolves, because they had originated as the expression of a company of grenadiers from Parker's home town, Portsmouth. Since these

⁷⁸Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., April 25, May 18, and May 26, 1798; VIII, 1553, 1772, 1834. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 289. Jefferson to Madison, June 1, 1797; Writings, VII, 133-134. Jefferson to Madison, March 21, 1798; Jefferson's Writings (L & B), X, 9.

resolutions arrived at a wonderfully convenient moment it is possible that they were inspired, but there is no proof that their provenance was other than what Parker said it was. In addition to denouncing the Federalist party in power and its leaders, Parker attempted to refute the charges so commonly made on the floor of Congress that the Republicans were better friends of France than their own country. When the Portsmouth Resolves were read in the House, indignant Federalists at first desired to burn them publicly; but they were content to consign them to oblivion by referral to a committee. Having helped to spread them on the record, John J. Trigg joined the Republican leaders Albert Gallatin and Nathaniel Macon in voting for referral.⁷⁹

Near the end of May, 1798, as the war spirit continued to rise, the Ultra-Federalists became more and more aggressive. They were anxious to lay hands on those liberal and perhaps extreme advocates of democratic governments who were of foreign descent, notably, Albert Gallatin. They began by directing legislation towards a series of naturalization laws, which would require a foreigner to live in this country under strict laws. When the bill finally became law by a vote of 46 to 40 on June 21, it gave the President absolute powers over the large class of people in the country

⁷⁹Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., May 15, 1798; VIII, 1707-1708.

designated by Congress either as Alien friends, or as Alien enemies. Alien friends could be banished without assigning cause, while Alien enemies were to be apprehended whenever and wherever the President chose. Voting in the negative John Trigg and his fellow Republicans saw the bill passed by only six votes.⁸⁰

A few days before the signing of the Alien Act, a new bill was introduced for the "more effectual protection of commerce," which gave the Navy permission to capture French privateering vessels. Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina claimed that this resolution was equivalent to a declaration of war against France, and he moved that an amendment be added declaring war on all nations whose treatment of our trading vessels was the same as that complained of from France. Macon's motion was defeated by fifty votes, 20-70. Most of the twenty who did vote for it were extreme anti-English Republicans. Albert Gallatin and John Trigg voted against Macon's amendment, while his brother Abram Trigg voted with the other anti-English Republicans. When the final vote came on the passage of the bill John Trigg and

⁸⁰ Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., May 21, and June 21, 1798; VIII, 1776, 2028. Jefferson to Madison, April 26, 1798; Jefferson's Writings (L & B), X, 31. John C. Miller, Crisis in Freedom: The Alien and Sedition Acts (Boston, 1951), 38-53. Miller, Federalist Era, 229-230. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 305. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 305.

most Republicans opposed it in vain, as the bill easily passed the Federalist controlled House, 50 to 40.⁸¹

On July 5, 1798, the Senate bill for the "punishment of crime" more generally known as the Sedition Bill was brought before the House. It called for strict federal constraints against writing, printing and speaking libellously or in strongly critical terms against the government. Under its terms, violators could be punished by imprisonment or fine. In spite of objections to the contrary it appears that the Ultra-Federalist's object was to muzzle public opinion. Since the state governments were not to be counted on to cooperate, the Federalists in Congress sought to preempt by federal statute the uncertain domain of the common law provisions concerning libel which obtained in most states. A few Ultras such as Alexander Hamilton believed that civil war might break out, but, most were not so anxious as he for an opportunity to teach the people the wholesome lesson to respect authority. What gave the Ultras the assurance to go to such extremes as the Sedition Act, was the constantly rising tide of excitement against France. What earned for them the necessary votes was their ability to exploit the sincere patriotism of the moderates and even of the normally resolute Republicans. The bill passed 44

⁸¹Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., May 26, 1798; VIII, 1829-1834.

to 41 on July 10, 1798. The Federalist majority adjourned, jubilantly anticipating sweeping electoral victories. The Republican minority of which John Trigg was a member was downcast at having lost two such important battles within two months by a handful of votes. Jefferson was indignant that some Republicans drifted away from Philadelphia as the session dragged on, while Federalists kept their men at their desks to vote.⁸² In this "Ordeal of Liberty," Jefferson's colleagues could take little comfort in his advice:

A little patience, and we shall see the reign of witches pass over, their spells dissolved, and the people recovering their true sight, restoring their government to its true principles.⁸³

Exploiting the crisis to the maximum, the Federalists won elections all over the country. So great was the political upheaval in Virginia and North Carolina that more Federalists were elected than at any time since the birth of parties. The rank and file of the Federalists were still jubilant over their victories. Though there were more Federalists being returned to Congress from Virginia than before, it does not appear that Republican John J. Trigg

⁸²Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 2 sess., July 10, 1798; VIII, 2171. Miller, Federalist Era, 231-232, 242. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 313-315. Miller, Crisis in Freedom, 175. Dauer, Adams Federalist, 163. Malone, Jefferson and His Time, III, 380-394.

⁸³Jefferson to John Taylor, Phil., June 1, 1798; Jefferson's Writings (L & B), X, 46.

was opposed for reelection. In their moment of victory the Ultra-Federalists appear to have overlooked the fact that their ablest new Representative, John Marshall, had taken pains to disassociate from the Alien and Sedition acts.⁸⁴

From the beginning of the third session of the Fifth Congress of the United States, the Federalists controlled the House 56 to 49. Petitions expressing universal dissatisfaction against the Alien and Sedition laws poured into all branches of the government. In the House of Representatives, the Republican minority was able to sustain many of these petitions by tabling them, and the Federalists could not shut off the recurrent debate on these topics. John Trigg was quick to go on record as opposing the Alien and Sedition laws. With the support of his fellow Republicans, Trigg sought without success legislation to distribute throughout the nation pamphlets containing the Constitution, amendments, and these two acts which by implication, were inconsistent with the fundamental law. Reduced strength and the possibility that the Ultras might capture some honest patriots required skillful Republican tactics. Believing it safest to avoid a premature showdown, Trigg voted with the majority to refer to committee petitions praying repeal of the acts. On February 25, 1799, however, he must have been horrified

⁸⁴Beveridge, Life of Marshall, I, 330. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 380-381.

when the committee's report which was inexpedient to repeal the act passed the House over his and forty-eight other votes against it.⁸⁵

About this time Thomas Jefferson proposed that the most effective way of countering the baleful domestic repercussions of the war crisis was to induce state legislatures to pass resolutions against the Alien and Sedition Acts only to ameliorate their enforcement. He wrote a series of resolves which were sent to Kentucky in November and which were soon carried through its Assembly. These resolutions contained the gist of the Republican platform on state rights from that time until 1860. They stated that the constitution of the United States was a compact between sovereign states which are individually the judges of the infraction of the same, that this compact was a moral rather than a legal obligation, "and that the preservation of the Union was left to the discretion of the parties concerned." With this, the Resolutions denounced the Alien and Sedition Acts as unconstitutional infringements on human rights. Regardless of whether the Sedition Act was unconstitutional or more severe

⁸⁵Annals of Congress, 5 Cong., 3 sess., Dec. 14, 1798, Jan. 30 and Feb. 25, 1799; VIII, 2445, 2802, 3016. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 227-229, 315.

than common law provisions, Republicans feared it would be used against them in the election of 1800 to perpetuate Federalist power.⁸⁶

In Virginia, a single Federalist vote in 1796 had helped elect Adams. Thomas Jefferson had reason for concern over Federalist strength in his state where in the Congress of 1799 the Federalists had increased their number in the House from three to seven. Jefferson said that the three "valley" districts had given him "more serious uneasiness than any other.... in the state," and that John Trigg, Abram Trigg and David Holmes would not have won re-election there, if the elections had been held a year earlier at the height of the war crisis. Jefferson's indignation against Congressman Evans may have caused Jefferson to take a trip to the Eastern shore, "a country he had never seen," one of the three renegades against whose reelection Jefferson probably hoped to influence voters.⁸⁷

When the Republicans met in Congress on December 2, 1799, their outlook turned from one of discouragement to one of anticipation even though the Federalists were in a majority of 63 to 43. Their opponents were divided into

⁸⁶Malone, Jefferson and His Time, III, 393-409. Miller, Federalist Era, 239, 261.

⁸⁷Jefferson to Trench Coxe, Monticello, May 21, 1799; Jefferson to Mann Page, Phil., Jan. 2, 1798; Writings, VII, 380, 188.

Eastern and Southern wings. When test votes were taken in matters that affected seriously the interest of the South, the Federalists found it a great difficulty to keep their members in line.⁸⁸

In the first session of the Sixth Congress of the United States, John Trigg voted with the Republican minority for Nathaniel Macon to be the speaker of the House, over Theodore Sedgwick, an Ultra-Federalist, but the Republicans lost out 42 to 27. It was during this Congress that the Bedford farmer met the extraordinary twenty-six year-old John Randolph. The latter had attained notoriety a year earlier by making a three-hour speech at Charlotte Court House in Virginia against the aged Patrick Henry. Randolph had been defeated for the Assembly by his distinguished opponent, but had won such distinction in the campaign of 1799 that Randolph was sent to the Sixth Congress. Randolph's second speech in the House was in support of the petition of Absalom Jones and other free Negroes of Philadelphia who sought "the adoption of such measures as shall in due course emancipate the whole of their brethren." A shocked John Trigg and eighty-five other Representatives voted 85 to 1

⁸⁸Dauer, Adams Federalists, 321.

that Congress had no constitutional powers whatever to deal with the subject of slave emancipation.⁸⁹

At the opening of the second session of the Sixth Congress on November 17, 1800, the Federalists had a nominal majority of 63 to 43. They promptly presented a resolution to renew the sedition laws, even though this was a lame-duck Congress. The resolution failed only by the opposing votes of some new members who had come in to take places accidentally made vacant. Every vote counted on this issue, for the Republican victory came by only one vote. John Trigg surely did not cast the winning vote, but his vote was as important as Nathaniel Macon's, John Randolph's and Albert Gallatin's, who all voted to reject the bill.⁹⁰

The struggle of the two great parties for the presidency in the autumn of 1800 aroused the country as never before. Each did its utmost to win in the coming contest. Whether from Monticello or from his seat at the head of the Senate, Jefferson directed the campaign of the Republicans, and in every state such lieutenants as John J. Trigg of the Bedford Congressional District carried out his directions. Many

⁸⁹ Kurts, Presidency of Adams, 378-379. William C. Bruce, John Randolph of Roanoke, 1773-1833, (2 vols., N.Y., 1922; hereinafter cited as Bruce, Randolph), I, 146-156. Annals of Congress, 6 Cong., 1 sess., Dec. 30, 1799 and Jan. 2, 1800; IX, 229, 245.

⁹⁰ Annals of Congress, 6 Cong., 2 sess., Feb. 19, 1801; 1038. Dodd, Nathaniel Macon, 155. Kurtz, Presidency of Adams, 396.

journalists emulated the example of Joseph Gales, editor of the Raleigh, North Carolina, Register, who helped Jefferson's party by attacking the Federalists within the framework of the Sedition law.⁹¹ Robert Treat Paine illustrates the emotions of the period in his first first verse of his poem titled, Jefferson and Liberty:

The gloomy night before us flies:
The reign of terror now is o'er,
Its gags, inquisitors and spies,
Its hordes of harpies are no more.⁹²

Because the final outcome of the Presidential election of 1800 was not certain until late December, when the returns were computed, politicians of both parties were busy until the very last.

Although there are no surviving writings by Congressman Trigg concerning what Jefferson called the Revolution of 1800, that Republican stalwart knew from his own experience at Philadelphia and Washington and from the information disseminated by the perfected party apparatus the circumstances governing that pivotal election. The Republicans were delighted to exploit the breach between Adams and Hamilton arising from the former's efforts peacefully to

⁹¹Cunningham, Jefferson Republicans, 173. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 216-259.

⁹²Robert Treat Paine, "Jefferson and Liberty," in Jefferson Reader: A Treasury of Writings About Thomas Jefferson, ed. by Francis Coleman Rosenberger (New York, 1903; hereinafter cited as Jefferson Reader), 99.

end and in the latter's desire to protract the French war crisis. When only Federalist unity could have prevented a Republican triumph, Hamilton campaigned openly against Adams in New England and Adams in turn denounced Hamilton as pro-British. Despite the quarrels of their leaders, the rank and file among the Federalists conceded nothing to the Republicans as the citizens of the fifteen states of the Union voted in the presidential election at different times between October and December. When the two hundred and three electoral votes were tabulated in the electoral college, it was found that Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr were tied at seventy-three votes each, John Adams was in third place with sixty-five, Thomas Pinckney was fourth with sixty-four, and John Jay was last with one vote. Constitutionally, the presidential election promptly was transferred to the House of Representatives for resolution, voting by state and requiring only a simple majority to elect.⁹³

In the lame-duck session of the Sixth Congress the Federalists controlled six states by safe margins and two others in part. Although unable to coin the election for themselves, technically, the Federalists possessed sufficient power either to decide between Jefferson and Burr, or even to prevent the election of any of the nominees by perpetuating

⁹³Malone, Jefferson and His Time, IV, 264, 268.

a stalemate. Some Federalists so disliked Jefferson that they were ready to bargain with Aaron Burr for promises of patronage. Hamilton advised his friends to accept Jefferson rather than to conspire with the untrustworthy Burr.⁹⁴ The titular leader of the Federalists, John Adams, stood above both conceding or conspiring. It was not at all clear what moves the Republicans would make: to conciliate foes, to bargain with the patronager-hungry, or to stand pat.

On February 10, 1800, John Trigg and one-hundred and seven members of the House of Representatives assembled in the unfinished Capitol at Washington, whither the government had been transferred during the preceding summer. On the first of thirty-five ballots eight states voted for Jefferson, six for Burr and two divided. Jefferson needed only one more state to command a majority of nine. Not surprisingly, the Virginia delegation voted for Jefferson. Of the nineteen Virginia Representatives twelve were Republicans and seven were Federalists, with the final state vote being fourteen for Jefferson and five against. Although the unit rule gave Jefferson the state's one vote, this was John J. Trigg's greatest hour. It is appropriate that his role was anonymous.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Ibid., IV, 269.

⁹⁵ Annals of Congress, 6 Cong., 2 sess., Feb. 17, 1801; XI, 1032. Jefferson to Mary Jefferson Eppes, Washington, D.C., Jan. 4, 1801; Writings, VII, 478. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 325.

As the sole Representative from the state of Delaware, James A. Bayard was the least anonymous congressman of American history. On February 16, 1801 he declared himself for Thomas Jefferson for reasons which were probably an uncomplicated recognition of the popular will, but which do not concern John Trigg. Robert T. Paine best expresses the spirit of the occasion:

Hail! long expected glorious day!
 Illustrious, memorable morn;
 That freedom's fabric from decay⁹⁶
 Secures-for millions yet unborn.

Thomas Jefferson accordingly became the third President of the United States, and Aaron Burr Vice-President. Although the few remaining days of the old congress had brought forward nothing important, John Trigg attended its brief and monotonous session to the last, not because there was any fear lingering from the apprehensive December days that the Federalists might try to set aside the will of the people but simply because he desired to be present at Jefferson's inauguration--the goal for which John J. Trigg and his colleagues had worked so long and hard to accomplish. And after witnessing that simple ceremony and perhaps hearing

⁹⁶Bruce, John Randolph, I, 168. Robert Treat Paine, "Jefferson and Liberty," Jefferson Reader, ed. by Francis Rosenberger, 99.

the inaugural address, Congressman Trigg returned to his beloved Bedford.⁹⁷

The political character of John Johns Trigg was now formed, and possibly formed for life: he was "a regular Republican." In the Fifth and Sixth Congresses he was counted present and voting on one-hundred and fifty measures out of one hundred and fifty-two roll-call votes. He was never, unlike others whom Jefferson complained about, absent when the House voted on important matters. Trigg was a states-rights Republican opposing central power. He believed that the powers of the Federal Government were a limited delegation from the states, each of whom retained paramount sovereignty. But most important John Trigg was present in attendance both when the Republicans were battling for the party's very existence and when they triumphed in the Revolution of 1800.

Rembrandt Peale best expressed the merriment of John Trigg and other Republicans in his poem, The People's Friend:

Devoted to his country's cause,
The Rights of Man and equal Laws,
His hallow'd pen was given:
And now those Rights and Laws to save
From sinking to an early grave
He comes, employ'd by Heav'n.

⁹⁷Cunningham, Jeffersonian Republicans, 241. Bruce, John Randolph, I, 168-169.

What joyful prospects rise before!
Peace, Arts and Science hail our shore,
 And through the country spread:
Long may these blessings be preserv'd
And by a virtuous land deserv'd,
 With JEFFERSON our head.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Rembrandt Peale, "The People's Friend," Jefferson Reader, ed. by Francis Rosenberger, 97.

CHAPTER IV

A REGULAR REPUBLICAN IN THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1801-1804

After the 1801 inauguration, the Federalists were possessed by a melancholy arising from a sober appraisal of the depths to which their party had plunged from the heights of a decade of almost-uninterrupted success. For at least the near future, they were doomed to the role of a minority party. The results of the congressional elections of 1800 had given the Republicans a major victory and the prospect of holding a popular majority for many years to come. Because the Federalists lost forty seats, the new House of Representatives was composed of sixty-five Republicans and forty-one Federalists. The New Jersey, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee delegations were composed entirely of Republicans; eighteen out of nineteen delegates from Virginia were Republicans; Republicans controlled the New York and Pennsylvania contingents; and the Massachusetts delegation was evenly divided between the two parties.⁹⁹

In such times, two political maxims have great force: a majority party should exercise a degree of restraint and a minority party should seek out its opponent's errors within

⁹⁹Malone, Jefferson and His Time, LV, 274. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 331.

a framework of loyal opposition. As it turned out, the first Jefferson administration quickly showed that its progressive program would offer the Federalists few partisan "handles." Consequently, the Federalists did not push their opposition too hard.

The 7th Congress of the United States assembled on December 7, 1801. In the House, the new Republican majority needed only one ballot on the first day of their session to elect as speaker Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina. On the following day, the new speaker appointed young John Randolph of Virginia Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Genuine Republican measures seemed sure to triumph. Thanks to an efficient political organization at the grass roots and in the new capital, the Republican rank and file were ready to fight more battles than it turned out that Jefferson and his lieutenants desired. Instead, the Republican Era commenced with a serenity that comported well with its idealization of an arcadian republic of reason. Meanwhile, Jefferson, the philosopher-president, dominated the bureaucrats of the executive and the congressman of the legislative branches of the government.¹⁰⁰

The Federalists made a determined stand when the 7th Congress debated repeal of the Judiciary Bill enacted in

¹⁰⁰Marshall Smelser, The Democratic Republic, 1801-1815 (New York, 1968; hereinafter cited as Smelser, Democratic Republic), 51. Dauer, Adams Federalists, 331.

February of 1801. On March 4, 1801, there was no Republican in the entire federal judiciary, even though in February, 1801, the defeated Federalists nearly had doubled its size. Naturally, the Jeffersonians were anxious to undo what they considered contemptibly bad patronage-mongering. Because of Federalist monopolization, Jefferson condemned the existing Judiciary as a "parasitical plant." The appointment of the so-called midnight judges had caused and continued to cause much concern among all Republican leaders. When William Branch Giles of Virginia returned to his seat in the House, he declared that the Revolution of 1800 was incomplete so long as the enemy was permitted to possess the judicial branch of the government and make of it a fortress of reaction from which to harry the populace.¹

For almost two months the major issue before Congress was the repeal of the Judiciary Act of 1801: first in the Senate, where it passed on February 3, 1802, by 16 to 15; and then in the House where the Senate Bill was passed without amendment on March 3, 1802. The main debate in the House took place between February 15 and March 1, pitting as antagonists William Branch Giles for the Republicans and James A. Bayard of Delaware for the Federalists. As a

¹Malone, Jefferson and His Time, IV, 114. Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Washington, D.C., December 20, 1801; Writings, VIII, 128. Anderson, William B. Giles, 76-78.

strong Republican, John Trigg helped support Giles' views by voting with the majority 50 to 32 in favor of the bill.²

Having repealed the Act of 1801, the Republicans then proceeded to amend the Judiciary Act of 1789. Admitting the merit of the argument that the increased volume of work in the federal circuit courts during the preceeding thirteen years required some change, they emphatically declined to adopt the Federalist solution of increasing the number of judges. Instead, they doubled the number of federal circuit courts from three to six. They did not double the number of circuit court judges. To help man the larger number of courts, their legislation required that each Justice of the Supreme Court reside within a different circuit and join with the resident district judges in serving on the circuit court twice a year. To make sure that the backlog of cases was reduced, the bill required the United States Supreme Court to forego sitting as such until the circuit court docket was cleared. John Trigg and his fellow Republicans passed this on April 23, 1802, handily, even if by the smaller margin, 46 to 30.³

²Annals of Congress, 7 Cong., 1 sess., Feb. 3 and March 3, 1802; XI, 183, 982. Edward Channing, A History of the United States (6 vols., New York, 1905-1925), IV, 253. Richard E. Ellis, Jeffersonian Crisis: Courts & Politics in the Young Republic (New York, 1971; hereinafter cited as Ellis, Jeffersonian Crisis), 50.

³Annals of Congress, 7 Cong., 1 sess., April 23, 1802; XI, 1236. Ellis, Jeffersonian Crisis, 63.

Almost all of the work of undoing the Federalist legislation was begun and completed in this one session. Besides approving the amendment of the judicial system, President Jefferson and his cohorts in the cabinet and in the Congress pushed bills to begin actual redemption of the public debt and to liberalize the process for the naturalization of citizens. By May 3, having passed these measures of the retrenchment and reform, both Republican and Federalist members of the House returned to their constituents eager to test popular reaction to the first fruits of the Jefferson Administration.⁴

Early in February, 1803, President Jefferson submitted to the House of Representatives a compilation of comments by Federal District Judge John Pickering of New Hampshire from which it might determine whether he ought to be impeached. At the end of the second session of the previous Congress, the House had begun consideration of whether to commence impeachment proceedings against Pickering because he was thought to have lost his reason and because there was no other way to compel his retirement. From the execution of this unpleasant duty, many Representatives had absented

⁴Annals of Congress, 7 Cong., 1 sess., March 10 and April 15, 1802; XI, 993, 1192.

themselves, but not John J. Trigg, who voted in a majority of 45 to 8 to defer the matter until the next congress.⁵

The proceedings against Judge Pickering began in March of 1804 in the Senate chamber. The chairman of the House prosecuting committee, John Randolph of Virginia, persuaded two-thirds of the senators to convict Pickering. According to Dumas Malone, the testimony concerning Pickering's insanity was admitted with great reluctance, and this was disregarded by more than two-thirds of the Senate when they convicted Judge Pickering by a strict party vote. This was a confused and tragic episode in which many shared responsibility. On the surface, it appeared that the Federalists tried to keep in office a man of demonstrated incompetence and that the Republicans hounded an ill man out of office. But the truth was that Pickering was mentally ill and that impeachment was the only way to secure his removal from the bench.⁶

On the very day that the Senate convicted Judge Pickering, the House of Representatives decided to institute impeachment proceedings against the injudicious Associate Justice Samuel Chase of the United States Supreme Court. He

⁵Annals of Congress, 7 Cong., 2 sess., Feb. 4 and March 2, 1803; XII, 460, 642. Louis Boudin, Government by Judiciary (2 vols., New York, 1932), I, 247-249.

⁶Malone, Jefferson and His Time, IV, 460-464. Smelser, Democratic Republic, 68.

was such an arch-Federalist, who had been so provoked by the repeal of the Judiciary Act of 1801, that he denounced the new administration publicly as being terribly incompetent. However, this Marylander had signed the Declaration of Independence, and played a prominent role in the ratification struggle in 1788. The report recommending impeachment of the old judge was drawn up by a committee headed by John Randolph. John Trigg and his fellow Republicans voted 81 to 40 to begin proceedings. The trial itself took place before the senate in January, 1805, about seven months after Trigg died. The prosecution failed to win the necessary two-thirds majority for conviction because its members refused to convict on purely political grounds.⁷

The major event in the first term of President Thomas Jefferson was the annexation of Louisiana. Congressman Trigg did not take part in any debates on this subject, but he did take a behind-the-scenes interest in the issue as did many other Representatives in Congress. The Ultra-Federalists had been willing to go to war with France to annex the Louisiana territory outright. Instead, Jefferson sent as a special envoy his friend James Madison to join Robert Livingston, the American Minister resident at Paris. Their major mission was to buy New Orleans to continue the right

⁷Annals of Congress, 8 Cong., 1 sess., Jan. 5, 6 and 7, 1804; XIII, 805-876.

of deposit at all odds, if they could. The prospect of a renewed Anglo-French war and other bad auguries led Napoleon as First Consul to sell all of Louisiana to the American envoys for \$15,000,000.⁸

In the United States, domestic repercussions of the Louisiana purchase were quite favorable, but not without blemish. Because the Republican party, in general, and Jefferson, in particular had opposed the constitutional theory of implied powers, the constitution advocated by the Federalists, in general, and Hamilton and Marshall in particular, did not authorize Congress to purchase territory. The Jefferson Administration was embarrassed to admit that the 8th Congress of the United States convened early, on October 17, 1803, to consider the Louisiana purchase. The whole country rejoiced over the acquisition of such a large body of land to the Union. Piously, the President admitted that he may have transcended his constitutional bounds, but only in the interest of the people. It would have been inconceivable, said he, that the people would have desired so strict an observance of constitutional niceties that Louisiana might have slipped through the fingers of the United States into the grasp of some European monarchy instead of becoming "an Empire for Liberty." In the two

⁸Smelser, Democratic Republic, 83-103. Malone, Jefferson and His Time, IV, 311-332.

days after the submission of the United States-French Treaty of Purchase, the Senate ratified it by a vote of 24 to 7; the House soon afterwards concurred in the treaty's financial clauses by a majority of 89 to 23, including John J. Trigg.⁹

The most important measure after Louisiana and the impeachment business was the proposal of the Twelfth Amendment, which had been deferred from session to session since 1801. It was plainly desirable to avoid repetition of the long dead-lock that had occurred in the presidential election of 1800-1801 because electors did not designate their ballots for the first or the second office. When the bill to reform voting within the electoral college came before the House, there was surprisingly strong opposition by those who for various reasons opposed any and all constitutional change, and by Jefferson's enemies who thought that their only hope of defeating him was to retain the existing system and to support his vice-presidential running mate. When the vote was taken, the Speaker of the House had to vote in order to meet the requirement of a two-thirds majority necessary to submit an amendment to the constitution. On this issue, when one vote could have defeated the measure, Trigg voted

⁹Annals of Congress, 8 Cong., 1 sess., Oct. 28, 1803; XIII, 546. Henry Adams, History of the United States During the Administration of Jefferson and Madison (9 vols., New York, 1886-1890), III, 72. Malone, Jefferson and His Time, IV, 311-332.

with most of his Republican brethren in favor of the amendment. This was ratified with only Delaware dissenting.¹⁰

The conflict over the Yazoo claims, took some of the time of this Congress, even though it was not to be resolved while John J. Trigg was in Congress or while Jefferson was President. The Yazoo affair has been called "the greatest land speculation in American History." A decade before, Georgia first made and then revoked the sale of 35,000,000 acres between the Yazoo and the Mississippi River to four companies for \$500,000. Subsequently, Georgia had given all her western lands to the federal government on provision that it compensate any legitimate purchasers of Yazoo land from the defunct companies. In 1802, Congress authorized a federal commission to settle these claims; but except for negotiating with Georgia to set aside 5,000,000 acres for the claimants, the commission soon was stymied. The Yazoo investors in 1804 petitioned the House, and it agreed 67 to 46, to permit them to present one-hundred and seventy-three petitions for personal relief to the 8th Congress. John Trigg, John Randolph, Abram Trigg and other fellow Republicans supported this resolution.¹¹

¹⁰Annals of Congress, 8 Cong., 1 sess., Dec. 9, 1803; XIII, 776. Malone, Jefferson and His Time, IV, 394.

¹¹Annals of Congress, 8 Cong., 1 sess., Jan. 11, 1804; XIII, 878. Magarh, Yazoo, 184-200. Malone, Jefferson and His Time, IV, 449.

In John Trigg's last four years in the House of Representatives there were a number of political matters which were less dramatic than those of his first three years, but which were still quite important. Whether John Trigg favored a strong Army and Navy cannot be deduced from his affirmative votes on appropriation bills for such purposes during each of his last four years in the House. In actual fact, he was a doctrinaire Republican whose frugality in such matters contributed to weakening the armed forces by attrition and meager allowances. John Trigg, like John Randolph of Roanoke favored a direct tax, but wished to retain existing duties on salt, sugar and coffee. Trigg also concurred with that part of Jefferson's first annual message to Congress which declared that: "The federal government was charged with the external and mutual relations only if the states, while the principle care of the person, property, and reputation was left to the states themselves."¹²

Almost three months after the close of the first session of the Eighth Congress on March 27, 1804, John Trigg's obituary was printed in the Richmond Argus, "John Trigg, Congressman, died in Bedford, Virginia, June 28, 1804,"

¹²Annals of Congress, 7 Cong., 1 sess., Jan. 25, March 22 and April 17, 1802; XI, 1073, 1202. Annals of Congress, 8 Cong., 1 sess., Jan. 16 and Feb. 14, 1804; XIII, 887, 990. Jefferson to Congress, Washington, D.C., Dec. 18, 1801; Writings, VIII, 120.

at the age of fifty-six.¹³ Trigg had been struck down at the peak of his political career. Considering his extreme taciturnity and his reluctance to command the limelight in 1797-1799 when there were no great leaders of the House and his greater conspicuousness during the years of Republican power, 1801-1804, Trigg probably would never have been placed on an important House Committee. The most that can be said of him is that he was a regular Republican, tenacious and reliable, but not a leader or a firebrand.

¹³Richmond Argus, July 14, 1804, 4. Annals of Congress, 8 Cong., 2 sess., Nov. 5, 1804; XIV, 821. James C. Steptoe to the Governor, August 4, 1804, Calendar of Virginia State Papers (10 vols., ed. by William Palmer and H. W. Flourney, Richmond; 1892), IX, 412. In special election Christopher Clark of Bedford, Va., was named to serve the unexpired portion of Trigg's term until March, 1805.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

John Johns Trigg began and ended his adult life as a small farmer and part-time lawyer. These activities satisfied in a literal way the requisites of membership in the ruling elite of the era. He was so little an attorney that he died intestate. Although his buying and selling of land had begun in the 1770's, he increased his own farm to 365 acres by the time of his death. Although times were good when he died, his wife Dianna, and his children John Jr., Stephen and Doria as heirs received less than \$14 an acre, or \$5,000 in all when they sold the acreage and dwelling in 1807 to David Saunders of Bedford.¹⁴

The greatest event in John Trigg's career was when as a congressman he played an active role in the Revolution of 1800. In John Trigg's nine years in the Virginia House of Delegates and eight years in the United States House of Representatives, the official journals of those bodies did not show that he made a single speech. He only voted "yea" or "nay." Voting records provide only a very limited

¹⁴Heirs of John Trigg, Dec., to David Saunders, Jan. 8, 1807, Bedford County Records, Deed Book L-12, 273. David H. Fischer, The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy (New York, 1969), 206, 209, 212-213.

understanding of a man's political beliefs, and John Trigg is no exception. It is fair to conclude, however, that he was a follower, and not a leader. At first, he followed Patrick Henry in voting in the Virginia Ratifying Convention to reject the new Federal Constitution. Later, he turned to Madison for inspiration, voting as did that leader of the Virginia Jeffersonians on all important issues. If he was in Congress a Southern sectionalist and states-righter, and if he blindly voted to implement Republican dogmas of frugality by parsimonious appropriations for the army and navy, he was also a persevering defender of the fundamental freedoms between 1797 and 1801. Faithful in attendance, he enabled the Republicans to provide a more effective opposition to such repressive measures as the Alien and Sedition Acts. When Jefferson needed his vote in the Election of 1801, the Representative from the Seventh District of Virginia was there and voted. So taciturn a man as Trigg probably did not aspire to greater prominence than as a regular Republican. Few Virginians surpassed his seventeen years of service in the House of Delegates and House of Representatives between 1784 and 1804.

The character of John Trigg is not exactly a puzzle, wrapped in a riddle or lost in an enigma. Interpretation need not become speculation, even though the paucity of technical information is slight. John Trigg was no great

man. He was such a small freeholder that he did not have more than five slaves to cultivate his farm of 365 acres. Consultation of the Bedford County Minute Books does not suggest an extensive legal practice. Financially, Trigg could not be accounted a member of the Republican elite in Virginia, as could most of his fellow congressmen from that state. His rudimentary education was a further bar to greater leadership than he enjoyed as an inconspicuous congressman. Corruption never touched him. He served his constituents by faithful attendance and participation in the deliberations of the Virginia House of Delegates and in the federal House of Representatives. If he is to be remembered for anything, it should be that in the party of Jefferson and Madison, he was one of the little men who was present when the big men needed support.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Official Records

Bedford County Records. Deed Books, Order Books, Will Books, Land Books. Bedford, Virginia.

Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, 1797-1804. VII-XIII, Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1849.

Fifth Census of the United States; 1830, Washington, D. C., The National Archives of the United States, 1934.

Hening, William W. The Statutes at large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia From the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619. Richmond: George Cochran, 1819-1823.

Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1784-1792. Richmond: Published annually by the Public Printer.

The College of William and Mary. A Provisional List of Alumni, Grammar School Students, Members of the Faculty, and Members of the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Richmond: The Division of Purchase and Printing; 1941.

Newspapers

Richmond Argus. "John Trigg's obituary," July 14, 1804, p. 4.

Roanoke Times. "Three Who Helped Open the Southwest," by Goodridge Wilson, July 14, 1968.

Articles and Journals

Cunningham, Noble E. "John Beckley; A American Party Manager," William & Mary Quarterly. 3rd. Ser., 1956, XIII, 40-52.

Evans, Emory G. "Private Indebtedness and the Revolution in Virginia, 1776-1796" William & Mary Quarterly. 3rd. Ser., XXVII, 1971.

Preston Papers, "William Christian to William Preston,"
Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. XXVII,
Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1919.

Books and Published Correspondence

Abernethy, Thomas P. Three Virginia Frontiers. Baton
Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1940.

Abernethy, Thomas P. Western Lands and the American
Revolution. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1937.

Adams, Henry B. History of the United States During the
Administration of Jefferson and Madison. New York:
A. & C. Boni, 1930.

Ammon, Harry. James Monroe; The Quest for National Identity.
New York: McGraw Hill Co., 1971.

Anderson, Dice R. William Branch Giles; A Study in the
Politics of Virginia and the Nation from 1790-1830.
Menasha, Wis.: George Banta Publishing Co., 1914.

Bakeless, John. Master of the Wilderness; Daniel Boone.
New York: W. Morrow and Co., 1939.

Beveridge, Albert J. The Life of John Marshall. 4 vols.,
New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916.

Bicentennial Commission. History and Geography Supplement,
Bedford County. Bedford, Virginia: 1949.

Bicentennial Commission. Historical Sketch of Bedford
County, Virginia. Bedford, Virginia: J. P. Bell Co.,
1907.

Boudin, Louis B. Government by Judiciary. New York:
Russell and Russell, 1932.

Brant, Irving. James Madison. 5 vols., New York: Bobbs-
Merrill, 1941-1961.

Bruce, William C. John Randolph of Roanoke. Volume I,
New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922.

Brumbaugh, Gaius M. Revolutionary War Records, Virginia.
Volume I, Washington, D.C.: Lancaster Press, 1936.

- Channing, Edward. A History of the United States.
Volume IV, New York: Macmillan Co., 1905-1925.
- Clark, Thomas D. A History of Kentucky. New York:
Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1937.
- Creer, George. Early Virginian Immigrants. Richmond:
W. C. Hill Printing Co., 1912.
- Crozier, William, ed. Virginia County Records. Princeton,
New Jersey: Genealogical Assoc., 1909.
- Cunningham, Noble E. The Jefferson Republicans: The
Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801. Chapel
Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957.
- Dauer, Manning J. The Adams Federalists. Baltimore: The
Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.
- Dodd, William E. Life of Nathaniel Macon. Raleigh,
North Carolina: Edwards and Boughton Publishers, 1903.
- Eckenrock, H. J. List of the Revolutionary Soldiers of
Virginia; Special Report of the Department of Archieve
and History for 1911. Richmond: Daves Bottom Press,
1912.
- Ellis, Richard E. Jeffersonian Crisis: Courts & Politics
in the Young Republic. New York: Oxford University
Press, 1971.
- Fischer, David H. The Revolution of American Conservatism;
The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian
Democracy. New York: Macmillan Company, 1969.
- Grigsby, Hugh B. The History of the Virginia Federal
Convention of 1788, With Some Account of the Eminent
Virginians Who Were Members of the Body. Richmond:
William Ellis Jones, 1890.
- Gwathney, John. Historical Register of Virginians in the
Revolution, 1775-1783. Richmond: Dietz Press, 1938.
- Harrison, James L., ed. Biographical Dictionary of the
American Congresses, September 5, 1774, to October 21,
1799, and the Congress of the United States from the
First to the Eightieth Congress, March 4, 1789 to
January 3, 1949. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt.
Printing Office, 1950.

- Jefferson, Thomas. Papers of Thomas Jefferson. Edited by Julian P. Boyd. 17 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953---
- Jefferson, Thomas. The Works of Thomas Jefferson. Edited by Paul L. Ford. 10 Vols. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904.
- Jefferson, Thomas. The Writings of Thomas Jefferson. Edited by Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert F. Bergh. 20 Vols. Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Assoc. of the United States, 1904.
- Jensen, Merrill. The New Nation: A History of the United States During the Confederation 1781-1789. New York: Vintage Books, 1965.
- Johnson, Allen, and Malone, Dumas, eds. Dictionary of American Biography. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1944.
- Kurtz, Stephen G. The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism, 1795-1800. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957.
- Magarth, C. P. Yazoo: the Case of Fletcher v. Peck. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966.
- Malone, Dumas. Jefferson and His Time. 4 Volumes to 1971, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948----
- Mays, David J. Edmund Pendleton. 2 Volumes, Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge Press, 1952.
- Mcallister, John T. Virginia Militia in the Revolution. Hot Springs, Virginia: By the Author, 1913.
- Meade, Robert D. Patrick Henry. Volume II, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1969.
- Miller, John C. Crisis in Freedom: The Alien and Sedition Acts. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1951.
- Miller, John C. The Federalist Era, 1789-1801. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1960.
- Morgan, George. Patrick Henry. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1929.

- Nettels, Curtis P. The Emergence of a National Economy 1775-1815. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962.
- Nugent, Nell M. Cavaliers and Pioneers; Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants 1623-1666. Princeton: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., 1929.
- Palmer, William, and Flournoy, H. W., eds. Calendar of Virginia State Papers. X Volumes, Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1875-1893.
- Rawlings, James S. Virginia Colonial Churches. Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1963.
- Risjord, Norman K. The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.
- Rosenberger, Francis C., ed. Jefferson Reader: A Treasury of Writings About Thomas Jefferson. New York: Dutton and Company Inc., 1953.
- Rutland, Robert A., ed. Papers of George Mason. 2 Volumes, Chapel Hill: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.
- Smelser, Marshall. The Democratic Republic, 1801-1815. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.
- Stoner, Robert D. A Seed-Bed of the Republic: A Study of the Pioneers in the Upper (Southern) Valley of Virginia. Roanoke: Roanoke Historical Society, 1962.
- Summers, Lewis P. Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1769-1800. Abington, Virginia: Lewis Preston Summers, 1929.
- Tyler, Lyon G. Cyclopedia of Virginia Biography. Volume II, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1915.
- Tyler, Lyon G., ed. History of Virginia. Volume VI, New York: Historical Society, 1924.
- Walters, Raymond. Albert Gallatin: Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat. New York: Macmillan, 1957.
- Wharton, Anne H. Social Life in the Early Republic. Williamstown, Mass.: B. Blom Publish, 1970.

Works Projects Administration. Roanoke, Story of County and City. Roanoke: Roanoke City School Board, 1942.

Wulfick, Dorothy I. Marriages of Some Virginia Residents 1607-1800. Naugatuch, Conn.: Series I, Volume VII, By Author, 1967.

Young, Elizabeth. The History of Bedford County, Virginia. Bedford, Virginia, 1948.

Typescripts

Trigg, Sue Pelham. "Trigg Family Genealogy" Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

APPENDIX I
(continued)

Doria Trigg
m. Jesse Leftwich July 20, 1791

John Trigg II
m. Susanna Collier March 30, 1797

Stephen Trigg (1771-1834)
m. Elizabeth Clark (1772-1822)

APPENDIX II

The Inventory of William Trigg's Estate
(March 19, 1773)

To 9 cows and three calfs	E20-00-00
To 3 stears and one Bowl	6-00-00
To 6 yearlins	4-10-00
To 1 waggon and gear	3-00-00
To 1 gray mare and two colts	20-00-00
To 1 Sorrel Horse £ to 1 Bay £	11-00-00
To 1 Dark Bay	6-00-00
To 3 Ews and one lamb	1-10-00
To 1 chear	5-00-00
To 2 great ploughs	2-10-00
To a parsel of hether	2-05-00
To 6 slauter Hides	1-16-00
To 1 Grindstone 2/6 to 4 pole axes	1-04-00
To 1 Barr of Iron & 6 Narrow Holes	1-05-00
To 4 B. Holes, 3 Mattocks and 2 G. Hves	1-10-00
To 1 spade and Parsel of old Iron	0-17-06
To 1 Pare of Stilards Sicles and Old Iron	1-05-00
To 1 Pare of Spurs, 1 Chaffin Dish	0-11-00
To 2 Pare of Tongs and Tribert	0-05-00
To 1 Pare of Dogs	0-07-06
To 1 Negro Mean Jack	80-00-00
To 1 Negro Peter	65-00-00
To 1 Negro Boy Soloman	70-00-00
To 1 Negro Boy Jacob	70-00-00
To 1 Negro Boy Bobb	50-00-00
To 1 Negro Girl Ester	60-00-00
to 1 Negro Girl Hettey	50-00-00
To 1 Negro Woman Lusseey	70-00-00
To Lusey's child James	25-00-00
To 1 Negro Boy Sam	45-00-00
To 1 Linning Wheel, 1 Wh. of Tob.	5-05-00
To Jude and her child Peter	65-00-00
To 1 Negro Hannah and her child Will	80-00-00
To 1 Negro Girl Pegg	30-00-00
To Bacon	15-00-00
To Shewmakers Tools	0-07-06
To 1 Loom	1-00-00
To 32 Head of Hogs	10-00-00
To A Quantity of Corn	22-00-00
To Coopers Ware, 2 Iron Potts and Dutch Oven	1-13-00
To Earthen Ware and 1 Frieing Pan	0-12-00
To a Parsel of puter	1-17-00
To a Flesh Fork and ladle and a Quantity of tin ware	0-03-09

APPENDIX II
(continued)

To 4 Bells and Plowgears	0-15-00
To 1.3 part of and cut saw, 1 Rible Gun	3-05-00
To 1 Feather Bed and Furniture	10-00-00
To 1 Feather Bed	9-00-00
To 1 B. Walnut Chest and 1 Feather Bed	8-15-00
To 1 feather Bed and 1 Feather Bed	12-00-00
To 1 Saddle and a deer skin	1-12-00
To 1 womans Saddle and 1 pare of Scales	0-08-06
To a Quantity of Salt Cotton wool	0-09-00
To 2 Iron pot racks and 1 table	2-18-09
To 1 Cooper kettle	1-10-00
To a parsel of Books and 1 gilt trunk	3-00-00
To 1 Desk and 2 ovel table stands	9-00-00
To 1 Hone and a Parsel of Earthen Ware	2-10-00
To 8 chears and 1 table and 1 Sword	2-19-09
To 1 looking Glass and 1 Iron skillet	1-19-06
Total	E984-00-00

APPENDIX III

Significant Votes of John Trigg
in the Virginia House of Delegates

	Y=yea M=majority	N=nay m=minority	Trigg's Vote	Total Vote	Y	N
<hr/>						
1784-1785						
Disestablishment of Anglican Church			Y(M)	62	23	
Extradition of Virginian citizens			N(m)	41	37	
Encorporating Protestant Episcopal Church			N(m)	47	38	
Discharge from 1/2 of revenue tax of 1785			N(m)	51	29	
Election of Benjamin Harrison as Delegate from Survy County is legal			N(m)	57	49	
Not to call 1/2 tax levied for 1785			Y(M)	52	42	
Act for appointing Harbour Masters			Y(m)	48	50	
Bill to keep out British West Indies Island products			Y(M)	60	33	
Amendment to religion bill			N(M)	38	66	
Bill for establishing religious freedom			Y(M)	74	20	
<hr/>						
1786-1787						
To pay taxes with tobacco			Y(M)	72	33	
Bill to repeal restrictions on foreign vessels			Y(m)	35	69	
Bill to make provision for the erection of the district of Kentucky to an independent state			Y(M)	67	40	
Amendment to bill for admission of emigrants to rights of citizenship			N(m)	42	38	
Bill of laws concerning naval officers			Y(M)	79	32	
£6,000 for completion of Capital in Richmond			Y(M)	65	24	
All laws of Virginia repugnant to treaty of Peace between U.S. and King of England be repealed			Y(m)	42	75	
Tobacco in payment of certain taxes for 1787			Y(M)	88	27	
Suspend debts due British subjects until Br. delieve frontier posts to U.S.			Y(M)	80	31	
Bill for establishing District Courts			N(m)	80	34	

APPENDIX III
(continued)

	Trigg's Vote	Total Y	Vote N
<hr/>			
1788-1789			
Bill to U.S. Congress recommending a Bill of Rights be added to Constitution	N(M)	39	85
Substitute tobacco for specie for tax	Y(M)	88	27
Help Chickasaws against Creeks	Y(M)	81	34
Repairing the road over the Blueridge in county of Rockingham	N(m)	70	65
Communication from Legislature to U.S. Congress stating Bill of Rights be added to Constitution	Y(tie)*	62	62
*carried by speaker			
<hr/>			
1790-1792			
Increase salaries of Sheriffs and collectors of taxes	Y(m)	61	69
Payment of interest of military Debt Va. should honor Acts of Assembly	N(m)	65	60
concerning purchase of Indian land	Y(M)	125	4
State wide divorce court	N(M)	51	84
Raising salaries of clerks of county courts	N(M)	36	71
Reduce into one the several acts concerning the county and other inferior courts of Va.	Y(M)	66	62
To establish a town at courthouse cite of county of Bath	N(M)	8	90
Establishing Bank of Alexandria	Y(M)	71	58

APPENDIX IV

Significant Votes of John Trigg
in the United States House of Representatives

	Y=yea M=majority	N=nay m=minority	Trigg's Vote	Total Vote Y N
<hr/>				
5th Congress of the United States (March 4, 1797-March 3, 1799)				
Approval amendment raising amounts for defense measures		N(m)		48 41
Prohibiting use of naval vessels as convoys		Y(M)		50 48
Resolution to consider salt tax		N(m)		47 41
Expelling Matthew Lyon (2/3 required)		N(m)		52 44
Reprimand Lyon and Griswold		Y(m)		47 48
Repeal of Stamp Act		Y(M)		51 42
Reducing vessels from 16 to 12		Y(M)		45 37
Creating Department of the Navy		N(m)		47 41
Reduce Provisional Army to 10,000		Y(M)		56 35
Provisional Army		N(m)		51 40
Recommitting Alien Bill		Y(M)		46 44
Call for XYZ papers		Y(M)		65 27
Permission to capture French vessels privateering		N(m)		50 40
Suspending commercial intercourse with France		N(m)		55 25
Senate Alien Bill		N(m)		46 40
Sedition Act		N(m)		44 41
Four percent Stamp tax		N(m)		49 40
Increase of Navy		N(m)		54 42
Expelling Mr. Lyon (2/3 required)		N(m)		49 45
<hr/>				
6th Congress of the United States (March 4, 1799-March 3, 1801)				
To disagree to reduce army		N(m)		60 39
Passage of House disputed Election Bill		N(m)		52 37
Judiciary Bill		N(m)		51 43
Resolution to continue Sedition Act		N(tie)*		48 48
To repeal certain sections of the Sedition Act, first reading		Y(M)		50 49

*carried by speaker

APPENDIX IV
(continued)

	Trigg's Vote	Total Y	Vote N
<hr/>			
7th Congress of the United States (March 4, 1801-March 3, 1803)			
Repeal of the Judiciary Act	Y(M)	59	32
Reducing time for naturalization	Y(M)	59	27
Bill for Navy Pensions	N(m)	34	29
Bill to admit part of the Northwest Territory as a State	Y(M)	47	29
Bill for redemption of public debt	Y(M)	55	19
On the Naval appropriation bill	Y(M)	39	24
Amendment of Judicial System of 1789	Y(M)	46	30
On resolution to impeach Judge Pickering	Y(M)	45	8
<hr/>			
8th Congress of the United States (March 4, 1803-March 3, 1805)*			
Bill for taking possession of territories ceded by France (Louisiana Purchase)	Y(M)	89	23
Bill to protect seaman against the Barbary Powers	Y(M)	98	0
Twelfth amendment to the Constitution	Y(not 2/3)**	83	42
Resolution respecting Virginia Yazoo Company	Y(M)	61	49
Bill to reduce Marine Corps	not voting	73	40
Bill for tax of \$10 on every slave imported into the United States	N(M)	55	62

*Served only first session

**Carried by Speaker

**The vita has been removed from
the scanned document**

JOHN JOHNS TRIGG, CONGRESSMAN

Ronald Paris Beck

(ABSTRACT)

John Johns Trigg of Bedford County, Virginia, was a veteran of the American Revolutionary War. As a Captain, he fought and witnessed the surrender of Cornwallis' army at Yorktown.

From his days as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, 1784-1792, and of the Virginia Convention of 1788, Trigg consistently opposed any resolution which he believed might stifle the growth of his own state. He was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1797 and served in the next three succeeding congresses until his death in 1804. Trigg was never a prominent figure in his own right, but he did oppose any attempts to centralize power. During his time in Congress, his importance lay in his unswerving loyalty to the Republican party. This was particularly true during the dark days of the Alien and Sedition Acts when men like Trigg were sorely needed in congress to temper, since unable to smother, the fire of the Federalists.

During President Jefferson's first term in office, 1801-1805, John Trigg could be described as a "regular republican." He voted on all issues as a stanch supporter

of the new Republican administration. When time came to undo the Federalist's legislation which Adams had passed, he was again to be counted on as a follower of the Republican program.