



## Virginia C.A.R. Patriots of the Round Table Jack Jouett

### He's like Paul Revere, only better!

Jack Jouett was born on December 7, 1754, in Albemarle County, Virginia, to tavernkeeper John Jouett Sr. and his wife, Mourning Harris. When the American Revolution began, Jack, who was not yet 22 years old, decided to leave his farm to fight for the American cause. Little did that young man know that his decision would impact not only the course of the Revolution, but also the entire history of the United States.



By 1781, Jouett was a captain in the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Virginia Militia. Late on the evening of June 3, 1781, the now 26-year-old Jouett was asleep on the lawn in front of the "Cuckoo Tavern" when he was awoken by the sound of a large number of British horsemen passing by. The soldiers were from Colonel Banastre Tarleton's cavalry regiment. Jouett overheard their conversations and learned that they were on their way to Charlottesville to capture the Governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson. The soldiers also hoped to capture members of the Virginia Legislature who were with Jefferson.

*The only known depiction of Jack Jouett made while he was living was a silhouette by his son, Matthew.*

The local militia unit was ill-equipped and too few in numbers to stop Tarleton's calvary. Most of Virginia's fighting men were up north with General George Washington, who would not begin the march south until August 1781. Jouett knew nobody else would be able to help Jefferson and the Virginia lawmakers before Tarleton's forces arrived at Monticello. He knew the task to warn Jefferson was his to carry out. Mounting his best horse, he began the 40-mile ride across the backroads of Virginia in an attempt to make it there under the cover of the night ahead of Tarleton's cavalry. At about 4:30 am on June 4, he reached the foot of the mountain on which Monticello sits. At Monticello, Jouett woke Jefferson and his guests including Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Benjamin Harrison, and Thomas Nelson. Jouett then remounted to ride two miles further to warn the town of Charlottesville.

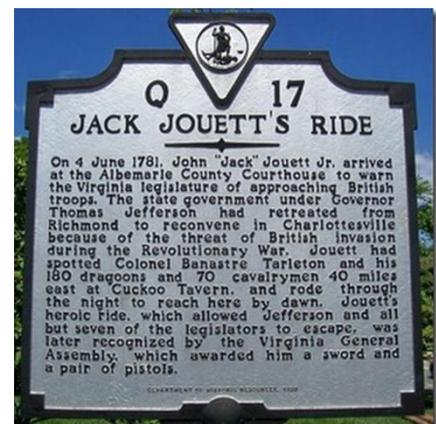
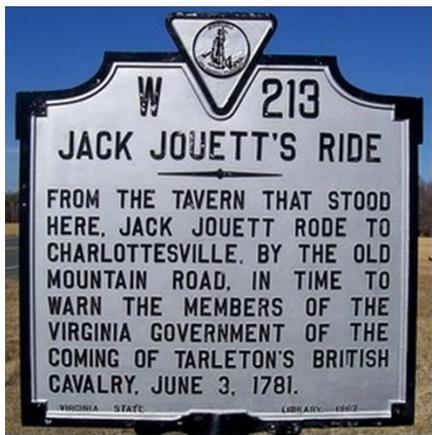
Shortly after Governor Jefferson received the warning, he dispatched his family, gathered his important papers, and then, he too departed. In his haste, he dropped his light walking sword. Realizing it a few minutes later, he returned to Monticello and retrieved it. While

there he observed British Dragoons on his property a short distance away. Mounting his horse, he again galloped away. In Henry Randall's book, "The Life of Thomas Jefferson," he reported that while Jefferson was on the lawn of Monticello observing the Dragoons, a captain of the British Dragoons was already in the house. It was a narrow escape.

What if Jack Jouett's ride had failed, and Thomas Jefferson along with Patrick Henry and Thomas Nelson were captured by "Bloody Ban" and his calvary on June 4, 1781?

The blow to patriot morale in Virginia would have been significant. At that time, Cornwallis and his troops were still trying to subdue Virginia – no thought yet of moving to Yorktown in the hope of a getting resupplied by the British Royal Navy. In all probability, Thomas Jefferson – the author of the Declaration of Independence – and Patrick Henry would have been hung as traitors to the King. Brigadier General Thomas Nelson Jr.'s capture would have left the militia without a leader at a critical time, as their efforts under the general command of the Marquis de Lafayette that month would lead to Cornwallis's decision not to continue west but instead turn back east. Even if the British did not execute the traitors right away and instead marched them in chains across Virginia to Yorktown, how would that have affected the siege of Yorktown? Could Cornwallis have used the celebrity prisoners to gain more time? To negotiate better terms for his army?

Instead of being captured and executed in June 1781, Thomas Jefferson went on to serve as Secretary of State under President George Washington and the third President of the United States. While President, Jefferson led the effort to purchase the Louisiana territory from France, doubling the size of the nation's territory, and in 1819 he founded the University of Virginia. Patrick Henry would serve another term as Governor of Virginia. And Thomas Nelson went on to play a key part in the battle of Yorktown, commanding a third of the American troops at Yorktown. According to legend, he urged the American troops to fire on his own home in Yorktown, the Nelson House, where General Cornwallis had his headquarters. He is purported to have offered five gold coins to the first man to hit his house.



No other person in the Revolution saved so many important leaders all at once. Only Jack Jouett. After the war, Jouett's heroism would be acknowledged by the Virginia Assembly who presented him with a brace of silver-mounted pistols and a jeweled sword. To this day in Virginia, June 3rd and 4th are Jack Jouett Days by act of the General Assembly. Jouett has two schools named after him (unfortunately, however, the school in Albemarle County will be renamed "Journey Middle School" on July 1, 2022), and there are historic markers along the route he took.

The Jack Jouett Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is located in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Jack Jouett Society of the Children of the American Revolution is located in Louisville, Kentucky.

### *Discussion Questions for Local Societies*

Compare the famous ride of Paul Revere to Jack Jouett's ride? What are the differences? Which was harder? Which was more successful? Which was more important?

What did Jouett do after the Revolution?

<https://explorekyhistory.ky.gov/items/show/469>

Watch a recitation of a poem written to honor Jouett and tell the story of his ride:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjrywYpuMgg>

Why are there two Jack Jouett Days in Virginia?

<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/jack-jouetts-ride-1781>

Where can I learn more about Jack Jouett and his ride to Charlottesville?

<https://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/the-midnight-ride-that-saved-jefferson-and-henry/>  
<https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jack-jouetts-ride>