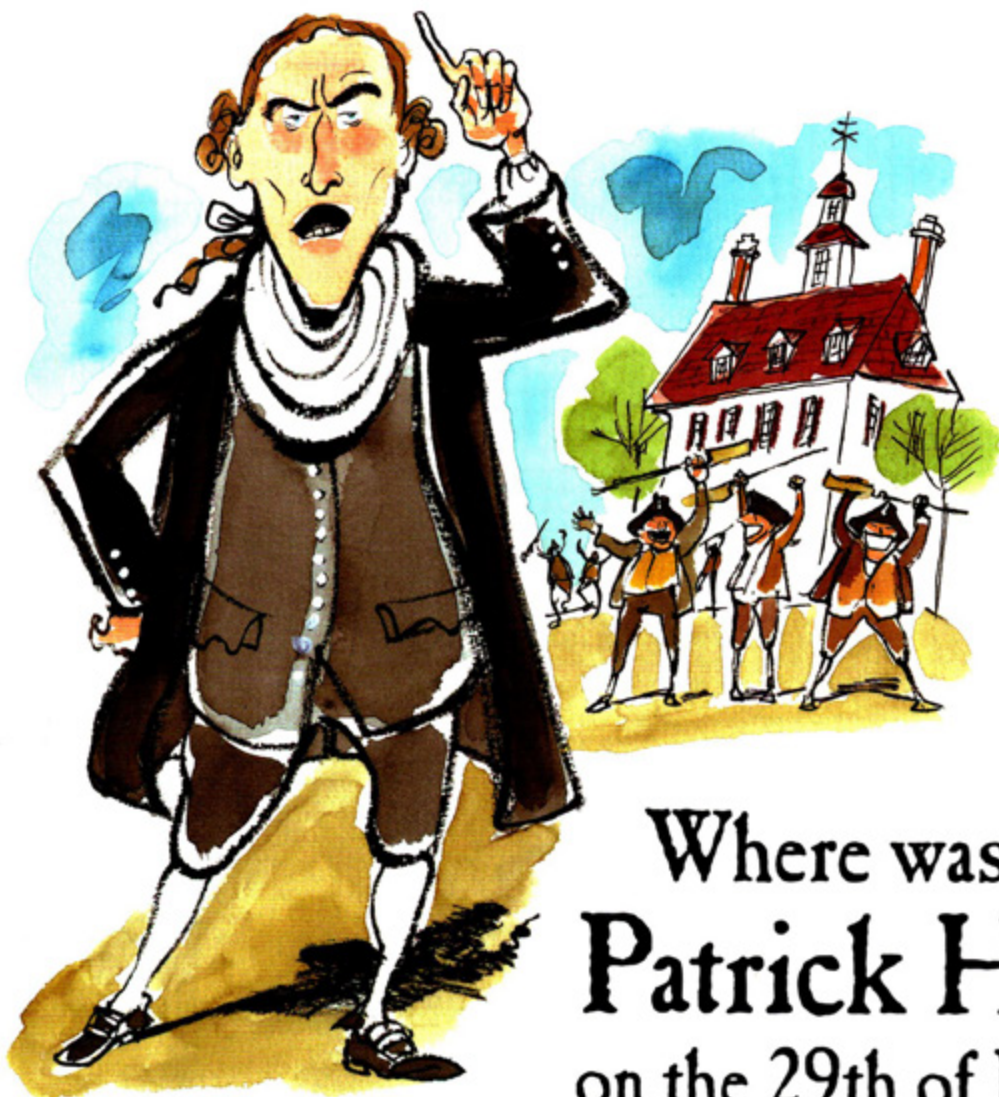




★ Bringing History to Life ★



Where was
Patrick Henry
on the 29th of May?

NEWBERY HONOR-WINNING AUTHOR
JEAN FRITZ



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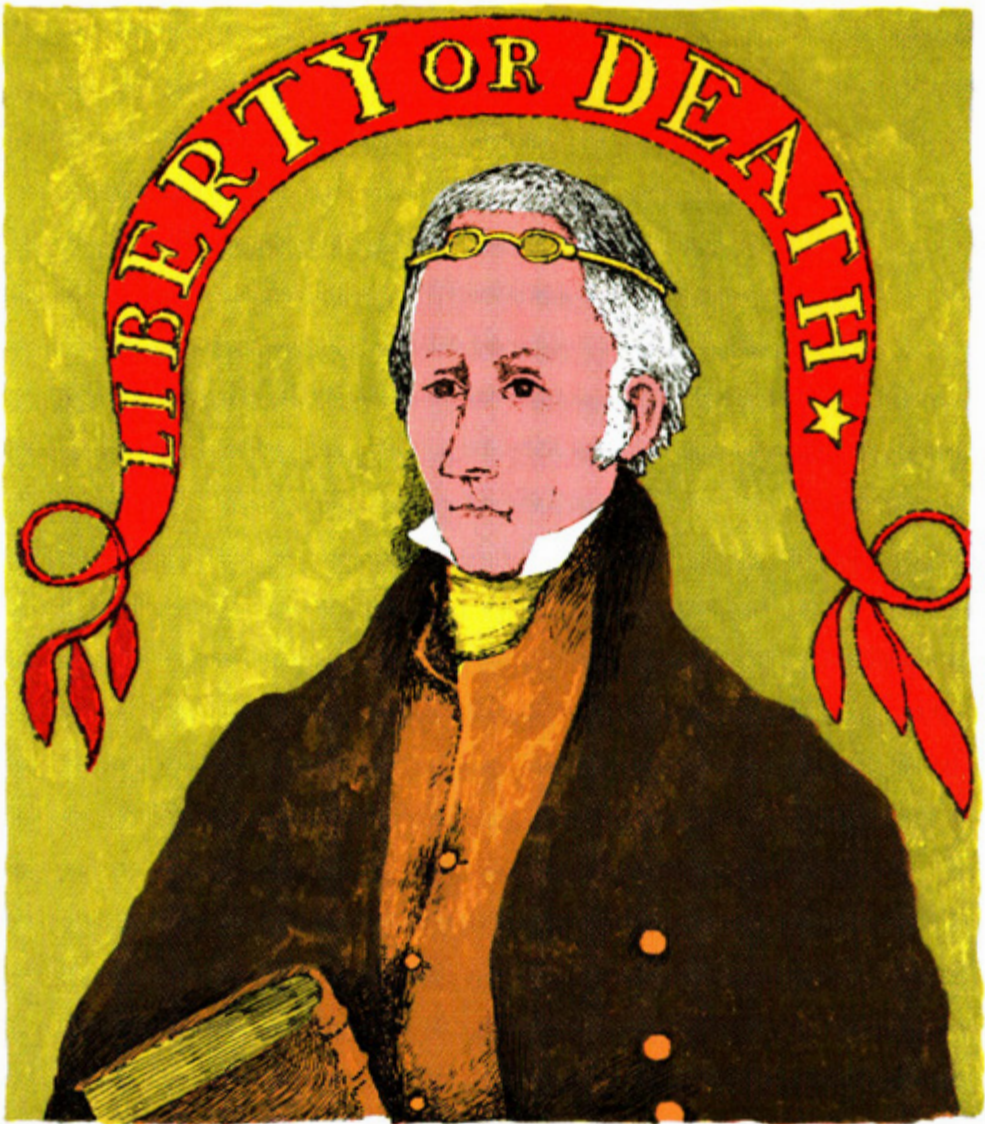
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BY JEAN FRITZ

PICTURES BY MARGOT TOMES

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID SMALL

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THE FIRST CAPITOL AT WILLIAMSBURG
BURNED DOWN IN 1747

BUILT IN 1701-5



May 29th, 1736, was a good day to be alive in Virginia. Spring was spilling over into birdsong and the countryside was wild with flowers—daisies, bluebonnets, golden ragwort, purple vetch on the hillsides, blue-eyed grass in the crannies, pink dragon heads in the lowlands. The rivers rushed, slanting across the face of the land, picking up tributaries along the way and darting off into so many crooked creeks that the old maps look as if they had been drawn by men with unsteady hands carried away by love for Virginia. The names of the creeks are themselves a wonder: Hat Creek, Dog Creek, Sailors Creek, Bear Garden Creek, Skin Creek.

In 1736 Hanover County had 322 square miles of land, three large rivers, each with its brood of creeks, and 2,000 men over sixteen years old.

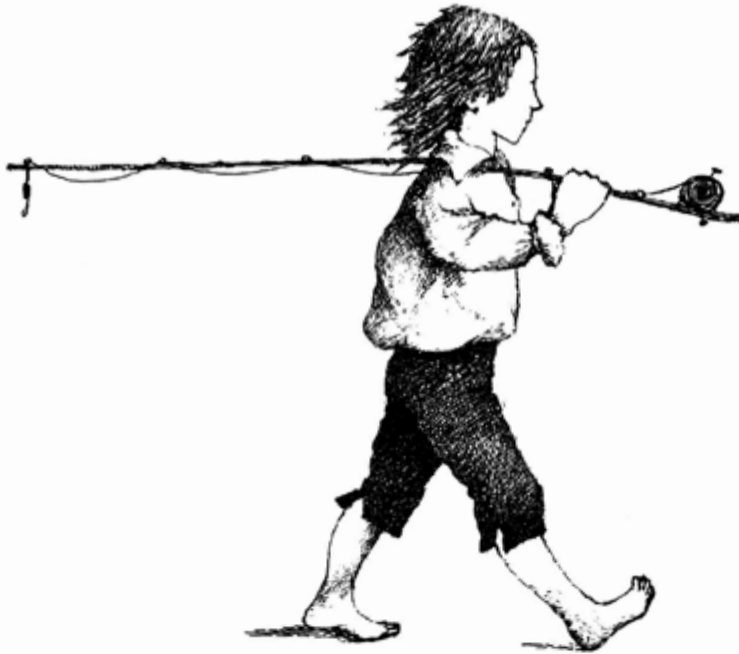
And it had Patrick Henry.

And where was Patrick on the 29th of May?

Well, he was in bed. Crying, most likely. Drowning out the birdsong. And why not? He had just been born and didn't know about the creeks and woodlands. He was too small to know a fox from a flower and too young to be counted when they added up the men in Virginia.



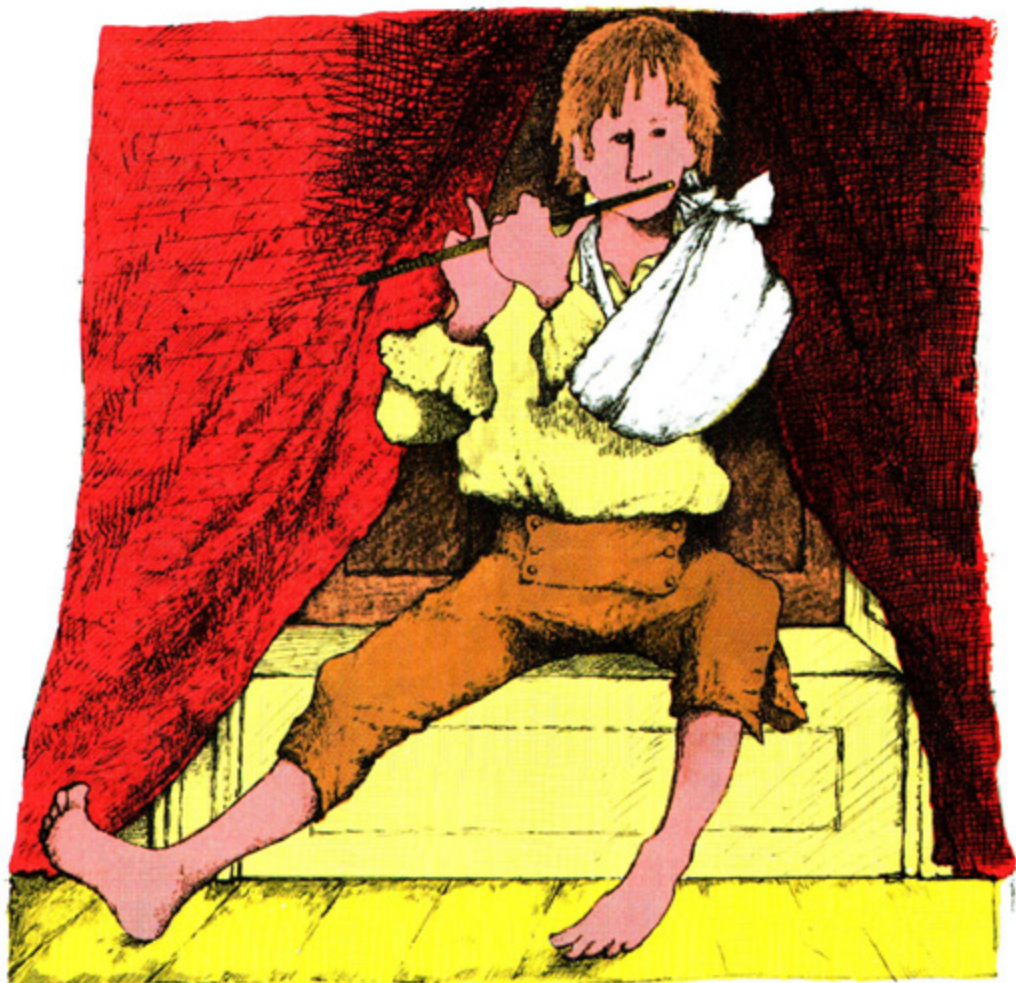
In a few years, of course, it would be different. Come a nice spring day with redbirds calling and Patrick would be off to the nearest creek, a fishing pole over his shoulder. (The creeks quivered with life in those days.



Bullheads, redeyes, flatbacks, rockfish—to mention only a few.) Or he'd be off to the woods, a gun in his hand and a dog or two at his heels. (There were still wolves in Hanover County when Patrick was young. And of course fox, deer, possum, coon and other game.)

Sometimes he would just go off. He'd mosey about, barefoot, through the woods or lie down by a creek and listen. Mostly to birdsong. He had the idea that if he listened long enough and hard enough, he'd be able to figure out what the birds were saying. Meanwhile he practiced imitating their songs so he'd be ready to talk back. He became so expert, he could not only imitate a mockingbird, he could imitate a mockingbird imitating a jay.

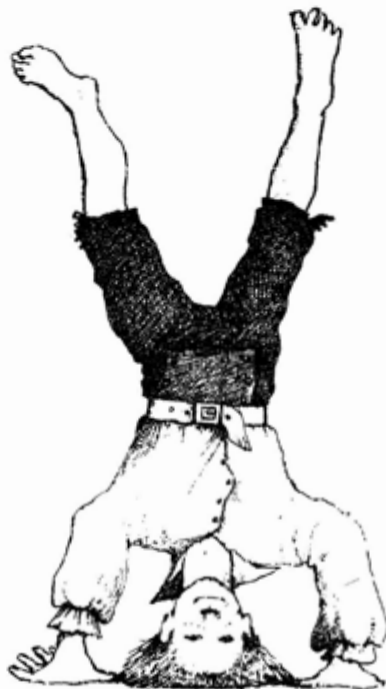
Patrick had other listening pleasures. The sound of rain on the roof was one. The long, low, lonesome far-away echo of his father's foxhorn. The bugling of the dogs on the trail. The sweet music of fiddles and flutes. (He taught himself to play the flute when he had to stay indoors with a broken collar bone.) The voice of his






Uncle Langloo Winston when he made a speech. On Election Day, it was said, Langloo Winston would roll his rich words into a crowd until he had the hair standing up on people's heads. (His uncle was also a famous hunter and spent six months of the year hunting deer and camping with Indians.)

It was a small, cheerful world that Patrick lived in with many pleasures, but school was not one of them. Patrick had, of course, to fit school into growing up, but he gave it no more attention than was necessary. Come a nice spring day with redbirds calling and he might not even make it to the schoolhouse door. But generally he was there, waiting for the day to end so he'd be free again, running barefoot and wild on the land. It was as if Patrick Henry had soaked up through the bottoms of his bare feet the two things that he prized most all his life—freedom and the good Virginia land. Not that he thought much about them. He took his days for granted and as for the future, he had no plans.





His father, on the other hand, gave Patrick's future considerable thought. John Henry was a planter, a surveyor, an officer in the Virginia militia, a justice in the county court, and one of the few men in Hanover County who had a university education, but he had a large family and money was a problem. By the time Patrick was fifteen, he had, in addition to his older brother William, seven younger sisters—all of whom would have to be supported until they were married and then, according to custom, they would have to be provided with substantial gifts of land or money. So of course William and Patrick were expected to go out in the world and make their own living as soon as they could. William, however, was so irresponsible as a young man that John Henry centered his hopes on Patrick.



Patrick Henry was not a particularly remarkable boy.

He was always fidgeting in school and was not a natural scholar. He didn't turn out to be a natural storekeeper or farmer either and failed at both. Even when he finally became a lawyer, he bumbled and mumbled through some of his early cases. But when the issue was freedom, Patrick Henry was transformed; and he became a natural orator who influenced and moved a nation.

Discover the man who uttered one of the most influential phrases of the American Revolution: "Give me liberty or give me death!"

"This . . . is totally captivating. . . and the text presents Patrick Henry as a human being, not a sterilized historic figure."
—*Publishers Weekly*

★ "A refreshing change . . . this stresses both good and bad characteristics of Henry and throws in unusual and often humorous facts."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "This life is far from dull."

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Newbery Honor-winning author **JEAN FRITZ** brings history to life with her engaging biographies focusing on pivotal figures and events in America's history—together with wonderful interior illustrations by Margot Tomes and a cover by Caldecott Medal winner David Small.



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