

Saving the Declaration of Independence T-56

On 22 Aug. 1814, two days before British forces entered Washington, Sec. of State James Monroe ordered government records, including the Declaration of Independence, removed to Virginia for safekeeping. They were first deposited in an abandoned mill just across the Potomac River. State Department clerk Stephen Pleasonton, believing the documents still in danger of discovery, sent them 35 miles west to Leesburg. They were secured south of town here at the abandoned Rokeby mansion, probably in its brick vault. The Declaration, the papers of the Continental Congress, and other historical government records remained here for several weeks until they were returned to Washington.