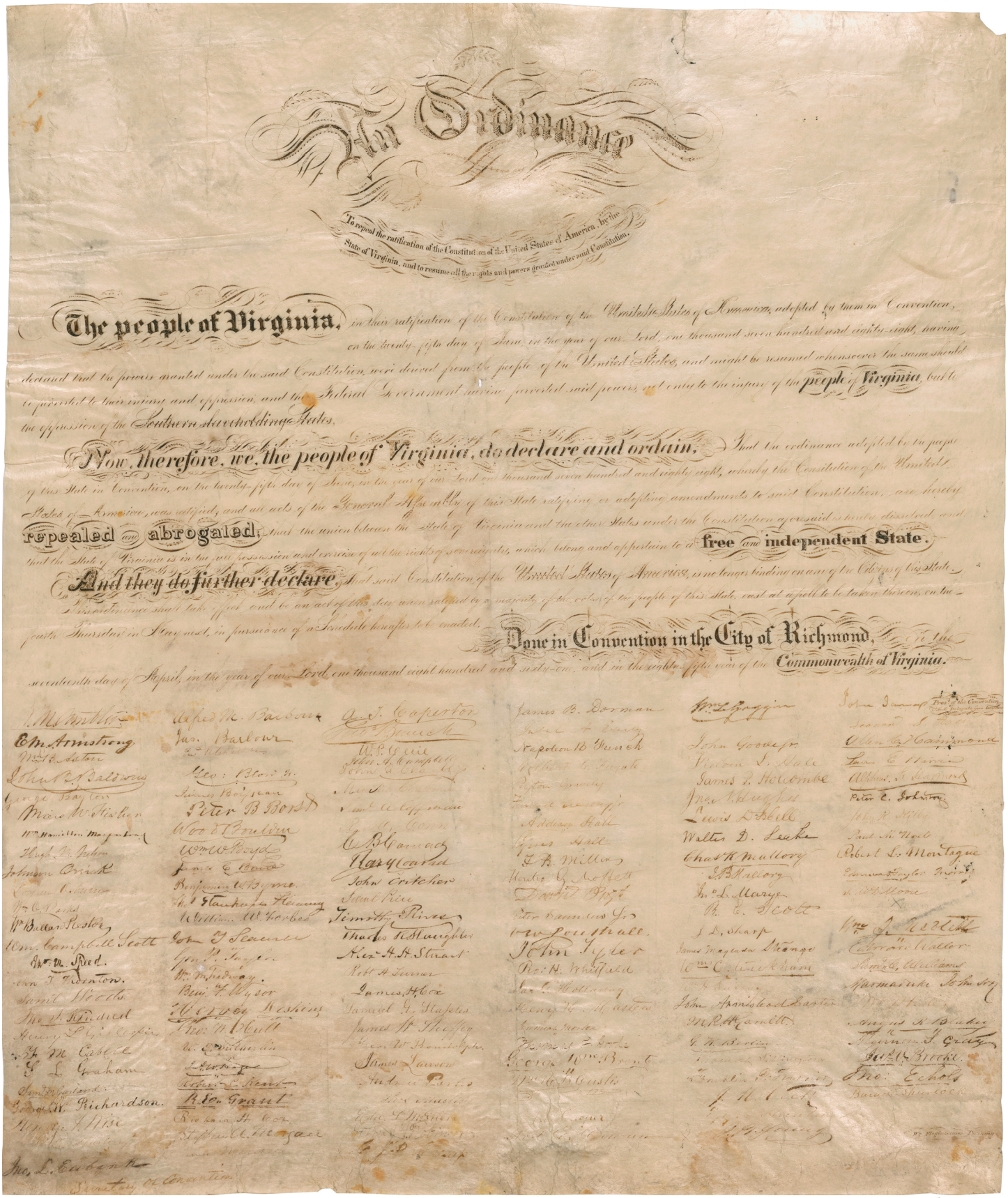
Ordinance of Secession, adopted April 17, 1861, ratified May 23, 1861, Virginia Convention (1861: Richmond), Records, 1861–1961, Acc. 40586, State Government Records Collection, Record Group 93, Library of Virginia



An Ordinance

To repeal the ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America, by the State of Virginia, and to resume all the rights and powers granted under said Constitution.

The people of Virginia, in their ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America, adopted by them in Convention, on the twenty-fifth day of June, in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight, having declared that the powers granted under the said Constitution, were derived from the people of the United States, and might be resumed whensoever the same should be perverted to their injury and oppression, and the Federal Government having perverted said powers, not only to the injury of the people of Virginia, but to the oppression of the Southern slaveholding States.

Now, therefore, we, the people of Virginia, do declare and ordain, That the ordinance adopted by the people of this State in Convention, on the twenty-fifth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight, whereby the Constitution of the United States of America was ratified, and all acts of the General Assembly of this State ratifying or adopting amendments to said Constitution, are hereby repealed and abrogated; that the union between the State of Virginia and the other States under the Constitution aforesaid is hereby dissolved, and that the State of Virginia is in the full possession and exercise of all the rights of sovereignty, which belong and appertain to a free and independent State.

And they do further declare, That said Constitution of the United States of America, is no longer binding on any of the citizens of this State.

This ordinance shall take effect, and be an act of this day, when ratified by a majority of the votes of the people of this State, cast at a poll to be taken thereon, on the fourth Thursday in May next, in pursuance of a schedule hereafter to be enacted.

Done in Convention in the City of Richmond, on the seventeenth day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one, and in the eighty-fifth year of the Commonwealth of Virginia.