**The American Dream: Virginia and the Southern Colonies**

Issues: 1/ The search for wealth as a factor in the settlement of America

 2/ Getting ahead in early America: economic opportunity or exploitation?

1. The initiative in colonizing North America came from private merchants who formed Joint-Stock companies in the hope of making a profit in the New World.
2. In 1607 the London Company established a colony at James Town, Virginia, the first permanent English colony in North America.
3. The Jamestown settlers were ill prepared for life in the wilderness. A high percentage of the early settlers died, and the London Company investors lost their money.
4. The few remaining settlers had to acquaint with the local Indians in order to learn how to survive in the wilderness. The settlers were often unjust and unwise in their relations with the local Indians. Both groups suffered as a result.
5. After a few years experiments in tobacco growing succeeded and tobacco soon became the foundation of the colony’s economy.
6. Virginia was ruled by a Governor appointed in England, together with a locally elected House of Burgesses. A similar pattern developed in most of the colonies.
7. The Land Policy followed in Virginia presented opportunities for economic advancement. Even the poorer settlers could become land owners, while those who were better off could amass large property holdings.
8. The “headright system” was originally created in 1618 in Jamestown, Virginia. It was used as a way to attract new settlers to the region and address the labor shortage. With the emergence of tobacco farming, a large supply of workers was needed. New settlers who paid their way to Virginia received 50 acres of land.
9. As “Indentured Servants” the poor could migrate to the New World in return for seven years of labor. The servant’s headright went to his master, who could thus accumulate a large amount of land.
10. Bacon’s rebellion in 1676 points up some of the tensions that existed in Virginian society. The newer and the less well to do settlers in the western parts of the colony came into conflict with the more established settlers of the east over the question of Indian policy.
11. By the end of the 17th Century Virginia had developed into an agricultural society in which large plantations predominated.
12. Virginia society remained essentially rural, with little manufacturing.
13. Slavery became an increasingly important factor in plantation farming.
14. Large agricultural plantations based upon slavery became the pattern in all the southern colonies.
15. The demand of tobacco has considerably increased and more labor force was required for more land works.
16. As per cotton it became king of the southern colonies economy, thus the demand for the product grew bigger and bigger and the lands to grow it grew larger and larger for it encouraged slavery to become the main dominant labor force in the South.

**The American Dream: Puritans and New England**

Issues:

1/ - The role of a religious idealistic vision in the American tradition.

2/ - The relationship between church and state.

1. The movement known as “Puritanism” was an effort on the part of a group of English Christians to reform the established Anglican Church. During the early 15th Century Puritans in England faced harassment from the Government.
2. In 1620 a group of about 100 separatists, known as the Pilgrims sailed for America in search of freedom to practice their religion as they wished, they landed at Plymouth where they founded the first permanent settlement in New England.
3. Ten years later a new and larger group of Puritans arrived in New England. They came to the New World not simply to escape trouble at home, but with a powerful vision: The creation of a perfect society based on the strict practice of the religious principles.
4. New England presented the Puritans with a pure and empty environment in which to attempt their experiment of building a model community.
5. In order to put this vision into practice the “religious community” was closely intertwined with the “political community”.
6. The Puritans believed that God would give protection and prosperity to their settlements if the whole community lived according to a pattern of holy behaviour.
7. The way in which New England society was organised politically provided some of the roots from which later American democracy grew, but some aspects of the Puritans political tradition were later abandoned.
8. The Puritans believed that the source of political authority lay in the members of the community: It was they who selected the leaders.
9. Voting privileges were limited to church members; and freedom of religion was not tolerated.
10. The way in which New England towns were organised reflects well Puritan-Principles and ideals.
11. Roger Williams is an example of an early New Englander who advocated principles opposed to the main body of Puritans. He was forced to leave Massachusetts, and founded a colony where church and state are strictly separated: Rhode Island.
12. The original firm grip of Puritan Principles upon New England weakened in the decades leading up to 1700: but the Puritans have exercised an important influence on American life.

**Colonial America**

“Colonial America,” is about the English colonies along the Eastern seaboard. By the time Englishmen had begun to establish colonies in earnest, there were plenty of French, Spanish, Dutch and even Russian colonial outposts on the American continent. But those 13 colonies (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia) that came together to form the United States.

**English Colonial Expansion**

In Europe, the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 by the English resulted in Great Britain replacing Spain as the dominant world power and led to a gradual decline of Spanish influence in the New World and the widening of English imperial interests.

The 16th century was the age of mercantilism, an extremely competitive economic philosophy that pushed European nations to acquire as many colonies as they could. As a result, for the most part, the English colonies in North America were business ventures. They provided an outlet for England’s surplus population and (in some cases) more religious freedom than England did, but their primary purpose was the acquisition of wealth for their sponsors.

**The Tobacco Colonies**

In 1606, King James I divided the Atlantic seaboard into two, giving the southern half to the London Company (later the [**Virgini**a](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/virginia) Company) and the northern half to the Plymouth Company. The first English settlement in North America had actually been established some 20 years before, in 1587, when a group of colonists (91 men, 17 women and nine children) led by Sir [**Walter Raleigh**](http://www.history.com/topics/exploration/walter-raleigh)settled on the island of Roanoke. Mysteriously, by 1590 the Roanoke colony had vanished entirely. Historians still do not know what became of its inhabitants.

In 1606, just a few months after James I issued its charter, the London Company sent 144 men to Virginia on three ships: the Godspeed, the Discovery and the Susan Constant. They reached the Chesapeake Bay in the spring of 1607 and headed about 60 miles up the James River, where they built a settlement they called Jamestown. The Jamestown colonists had a rough time of it: They were so busy looking for gold and other exportable resources that they could barely feed themselves. It was not until 1616, when Virginia’s settlers learned how to grow tobacco, which it seemed the colony might survive. The first African slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619.

In 1632, the English crown granted about 12 million acres of land at the top of the Chesapeake Bay to Cecilius Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore. This colony, named [**Maryland**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/maryland)after the queen, was similar to Virginia in many ways. Its landowners produced tobacco on large plantations that depended on the labor of indentured servants and (later) African slaves.

But unlike Virginia’s founders, Lord Baltimore was a Catholic, and he hoped that his colony would be a refuge for his persecuted coreligionists. Maryland became known for its policy of religious toleration for all.

**The New England Colonies**

The first English emigrants to what would become the New England colonies were a small group of Puritan separatists, later called the Pilgrims, who arrived in Plymouth in 1620. November 9, the Mayflowershiplands at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, with 101 colonists. On November 11, the [**Mayflower Compact**](http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/revolution/mayflower.htm) is signed by the 41 men, establishing a form of local government in which the colonists agree to abide by majority rule and to cooperate for the general good of the colony. The Compact sets the precedent for other colonies as they set up governments. Ten years later, In March 1630, John Winthrop leads a Puritan migration of 900 colonists to Massachusetts Bay, where he will serve as the first governor. In September, Boston is officially established and serves as the site of Winthrop's government. With the help of local natives, the colonists soon got the hang of farming, fishing and hunting, and Massachusetts prospered. **Anne Hutchinson** arrives in Boston in 1934. And two years later, by 1636, **Harvard** was founded. And in 1638, the first colonial printing press is set up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Where also in1646, the general court approves a law that makes religious heresy punishable by death

As the Massachusetts settlements expanded, they generated new colonies in New England. Puritans who thought that Massachusetts was not pious enough formed the colonies of [**Connecticut**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/connecticut) and New Haven (the two combined in 1665). [**Rhode Island**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/rhode-island)**,** founded by Roger Williams who had been banished from Massachusetts for "new and dangerous opinions" calling for religious and political freedoms, including separation of church and state, not granted under the Puritan rules. Providence then becomes a haven for all those Puritans who thought that Massachusetts was too restrictive and where everyone–including Jews fleeing religious intolerance –enjoyed complete “liberty in religious concernments.”  Meanwhile, by 1638, Anne Hutchinson is banished from Massachusetts for nonconformist religious views that advocate personal revelation over the role of the clergy. She moved with her family to Rhode Island too. 1652 Rhode Island enacts the first law in the colonies declaring slavery illegal. To the north of the Massachusetts colony, a handful of adventurous settlers formed the colony of [**New Hampshire**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/new-hampshire).

**The Middle Colonies**

1640 – 1659, English Civil War erupted between the Royalists of King Charles I and the Parliamentary army, eventually resulting in defeat for the Royalists and the downfall of the monarchy. On January 30, 1649, Kings Charles I is beheaded. England then becomes a Commonwealth and Protectorate ruled by Oliver Cromwell. 1660, the English monarchy is restored under King Charles II. The same year, the English Crown approved a Navigation Act requiring the exclusive use of English ships for trade in the English Colonies and limits exports of tobacco and sugar and other commodities to England or its colonies. In 1663, King Charles II establishes the colony of Carolina and grants the territory to eight loyal supporters.

Navigation Act of 1663 required that most imports to the colonies must be transported via England on English ships.

A year later, Maryland passes a law making lifelong servitude for black slaves mandatory to prevent them from taking advantage of legal precedents established in England which grant freedom under certain conditions, such as conversion to Christianity. Similar laws are later passed in New York, New Jersey, the Carolinas and Virginia. In 1664, King Charles II gave the territory between New England and Virginia, much of which was already occupied by Dutch traders and landowners called patroons, to his brother James, the Duke of York. The English soon absorbed Dutch New Netherland and renamed it [**New York**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/new-york)**,** but most of the Dutch people (as well as the Belgian Flemings and Walloons, French Huguenots, Scandinavians and Germans who were living there) stayed put. This made New York one of the most diverse and prosperous colonies in the New World.

In 1680, the king granted 45,000 square miles of land west of the [**Delaware**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/delaware) River to William Penn, a Quaker who owned large swaths of land in Ireland. Penn’s North American holdings became the colony of “Penn’s Woods,” or [**Pennsylvania**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/pennsylvania). Lured by the fertile soil and the religious toleration that Penn promised, people migrated there from all over Europe. Like their Puritan counterparts in New England, most of these emigrants from Germany and the British Isles, paid their own way to the colonies–they were not indentured servants–and had enough money to establish themselves when they arrived. As a result, Pennsylvania soon became a prosperous and relatively egalitarian place. And in 1688, the Quakers in Pennsylvania issued a formal protest against slavery in America. In June, the Pennsylvania assembly bans the import of slaves into that colony. In Massachusetts, the first sperm whale is captured at sea by an American from Nantucket.

 In 1720, the population of American colonists reached 475,000. Boston (pop. 12,000) was the largest city, followed by Philadelphia (pop. 10,000) and New York (pop. 7000). The population of black slaves in the American colonies reached about 75,000. In 1729, [**Benjamin Franklin**](http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/revolution/revgfx/benfranklin.jpg) began publishing The Pennsylvania Gazette, which eventually became the most popular colonial newspaper. For the next decade, he published Poor Richard's Almanac, containing weather predictions, humor, proverbs and epigrams, selling nearly 10,000 copies per year. Two years later, the first American public library is founded in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin.

**The Southern Colonies**

1702 - In March, Queen Anne ascends the English throne. In May, England declares war on France after the death of the King of Spain, Charles II, to stop the union of France and Spain. This War of the Spanish Succession is called Queen Anne's War in the colonies, where the English and American colonists will battle the French, their Native American allies, and the Spanish for the next eleven years. 1713 - Queen Anne's War ends with the Treaty of Utrecht. In August, King George I ascends to the English throne, succeeding Queen Anne.

The Carolina colony, a territory that stretched south from Virginia to [**Florida**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/florida)and west to the Pacific Ocean, was much less cosmopolitan. In its northern half, hardscrabble farmers eked out a living. In its southern half, planters presided over vast estates that produced corn, lumber, beef and pork, and–starting in the 1690s–rice. These Carolinians had close ties to the English planter colony on the Caribbean island of Barbados, which relied heavily on African slave labor, and many were involved in the slave trade themselves. As a result, slavery played an important role in the development of the Carolina colony. (In May 1712, the Carolina colony is officially divided into North Carolina and South Carolina).

February 22, 1732, George Washington is born in Virginia. That same year, inspired by the need to build a buffer between South Carolina and the Spanish settlements in Florida, the Englishman James Oglethorpe founded [**Georgia**](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/georgia) the 13th English colony. In many ways, Georgia’s development mirrored South Carolina’s. In 1739, England declares war on Spain. As a result, in America, hostilities break out between Florida Spaniards and Georgia and South Carolina colonists. Moreover, three separate violent uprisings by black slaves occur in South Carolina. Fifty black slaves are hanged in Charleston, South Carolina, after plans for another revolt are revealed. A year later in 1740, in Europe, the War of the Austrian Succession begins after the death of Emperor Charles VI and eventually results in France and Spain allied against England. The conflict is known in the American colonies as King George's War and lasts until 1748.

In 1750 the Iron Act is passed by the English Parliament, limiting the growth of the iron industry in the American colonies to protect the English Iron industry. A year later, the Currency Act is passed by the English Parliament, banning the issuing of paper money by the New England colonies.

And in1754, the French and Indian War erupts as a result of disputes over land in the Ohio River Valley. In May, George Washington leads a small group of American colonists to victory over the French, then builds Fort Necessity in the Ohio territory. In July, after being attacked by numerically superior French forces, Washington surrenders the fort and retreats. 1763 - The French and Indian War, known in Europe as the Seven Year's War, ends with the Treaty of Paris. Under the treaty, France gives England all French territory east of the Mississippi River, except New Orleans. The Spanish give up east and west Florida to the English in return for Cuba

By 1775, on the eve of revolution, there were nearly 2.5 million. These colonists did not have much in common, but they were able to band together and fight for their independence.

# The American Revolution

1. Issues: 1) How does the American Revolution compare with other revolutions of modern history?
2. In what ways have the circumstances of the nation’s birth left their mark on the United States?
3. During the century leading up to the 1760’s the American colonies developed habits of independence and self-government, free from tight control by Britain. Trade regulations existed but were not strictly enforced. Colonists increasingly developed a sense of being distinctly «American ».
4. British victory in the French and Indian war brought important changes in imperial policy toward the colonies. England sought to tighten her control in the 1760’s and 70’s, the result was revolution.
5. Key events of the American Revolution :
6. The Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act (1765) angered the colonists because they were « taxation without representation. »
7. Colonists organised resistance to these measures, and forced the repeal of the Stamp Act; but parliament asserted its right to legislate for the colonies in the declaratory Act (1766).
8. The Townshend Acts (1767), which introduced new indirect taxes on the colonies and gave British officials new powers to curb trade violations, aroused fresh protests and boycotts. British troops were sent to Boston, leading to tensions which erupted in the Boston Massacre (1770).
9. The Boston Tea Party - the colonists’ response to the Tea Act of 1773 - brought on British attempt to punish Boston, the « Intolerable acts »(1774).
10. The First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in September, 1774 to plan inter-colonial resistance to the Intolerable acts.
11. When British troops stationed in Boston tried to seize rebel leaders and arms in April, 1775, fighting broke out at Lexington and Concorde.
12. Representatives from all thirteen colonies met in the Second Continental Congress in May, 1775. A Continental Army was established, with George Washington as commander, and an « Olive Branch Petition » was sent to the King.
13. As the crisis grew worse more and more, Americans came to believe that a complete independence from Britain was the only course to take. The Continental Congress officially adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.
14. The French gave vital military assistance after the Americans won a key victory at Saratoga in 1777. Fighting continued until British forces were trapped and forced to surrender at Yorktown in October, 1781.
15. The treaty of Paris (1783) brought an end to the revolution. Britain recognised the independence of the United States and her right to all territory east of the Mississippi.
16. Ideas and political principles played a major role in leading the colonists to revolution. Many of these ideas had their roots in British political tradition, but Americans moved beyond their English heritage to a new Republicanism and greater democracy.
17. Not all American colonists favoured independence. The provinces of Canada did not join the revolution and many Loyalists fled the thirteen southern colonies during the war.
18. When the colonies broke away from British control they were forced to form new governments.
19. Each of the former thirteen colonies created its own new state constitution, in most cases in the year 1776.
20. The separate states united themselves through the Articles of Confederation, proposed in 1777 and finally ratified in 1781.
21. 7. The American Revolution has been called a « Conservative Revolution...» while changes in society took place, they were relatively limited.

***"The Revolution was effected before the war commenced.
The Revolution was in the hearts and minds of the people."
-- Former President John Adams, 1818***

Although some believe that the history of the American Revolution began long before the first shots were fired in 1775, England and America did not begin an overt parting of the ways until 1763, more than a century and a half after the founding of the first permanent settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. The colonies had grown vastly in economic strength and cultural attainment, and virtually all had long years of self-government behind them. In the 1760s their combined population exceeded 1,500,000 -- a six fold increase since 1700.

**A New Colonial System**

In the aftermath of the French and Indian War, Britain needed a new imperial design, but the situation in America was anything but favorable to change. Long accustomed to a large measure of independence, the colonies were demanding more, not less, freedom, particularly now that the French menace had been eliminated. To put a new system into effect, and to tighten control, Parliament had to contend with colonists trained in self-government and impatient with interference. One of the first things that British attempted was the organization of the interior. The conquest of Canada and of the Ohio Valley necessitated policies that would not alienate the French and Indian inhabitants. But here the Crown came into conflict with the interests of the colonies. Fast increasing in population, and needing more land for settlement, various colonies claimed the right to extend their boundaries as far west as the Mississippi River.

The British government, fearing that settlers migrating into the new lands would provoke a series of Indian wars, believed that the lands should be opened to colonists on a more gradual basis. Restricting movement was also a way of ensuring royal control over existing settlements before allowing the formation of new ones. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 reserved all the western territory between the Alleghenies, Florida, the Mississippi River and Quebec for use by Native Americans. Thus the Crown attempted to sweep away every western land claim of the 13 colonies and to stop westward expansion. Though never effectively enforced, this measure, in the eyes of the colonists, constituted a high-handed disregard of their most elementary right to occupy and settle western lands. More serious in its repercussions was the new financial policy of the British government, which needed more money to support its growing empire. Unless the taxpayer in England was to supply all money for the colonies' defense, revenues would have to be extracted from the colonists through a stronger central administration, which would come at the expense of colonial self-government.

The first step in inaugurating the new system was the replacement of the **Molasses Act of 1733**, which placed a prohibitive duty, or tax, on the import of rum and molasses from non-English areas, with the **Sugar Act of 1764**. This act forbade the importation of foreign rum; put a modest duty on molasses from all sources and levied duties on wines, silks, coffee and a number of other luxury items. The hope was that lowering the duty on molasses would reduce the temptation to smuggle it from the Dutch and French West Indies for processing in the rum distilleries of New England. To enforce the Sugar Act, customs officials were ordered to show more energy and effectiveness. British warships in American waters were instructed to seize smugglers, and "**writs of assistance**," or warrants, authorized the king's officers to search suspected premises. Both the duty imposed by the Sugar Act and the measures to enforce it caused consternation among New England merchants. They contended that payment of even the small duty imposed would be ruinous to their businesses. Merchants, legislatures and town meetings protested the law, and colonial lawyers found in the preamble of the Sugar Act the first intimation of "taxation without representation," the slogan that was to draw many to the American cause against the mother country.

Later in 1764, Parliament enacted a Currency Act "to prevent paper bills of credit hereafter issued in any of His Majesty's colonies from being made legal tender." Since the colonies were a deficit trade area and were constantly short of hard currency, this measure added a serious burden to the colonial economy. Equally objectionable from the colonial viewpoint was the Quartering Act, passed in 1765, which required colonies to provide royal troops with provisions and barracks.

**Stamp Act**

The last of the measures inaugurating the new colonial system sparked the greatest organized resistance. Known as the "Stamp Act," it provided that revenue stamps be affixed to all newspapers, broadsides, pamphlets, licenses, leases or other legal documents, the revenue (collected by American customs agents) to be used for "defending, protecting and securing" the colonies he Stamp Act bore equally on people who did any kind of business. Thus it aroused the hostility of the most powerful and articulate groups in the American population: journalists, lawyers, clergymen, merchants and businessmen, North and South, East and West. Soon leading merchants organized for resistance and formed non-importation associations.

Trade with the mother country fell off sharply in the summer of 1765, as prominent men organized themselves into the "**Sons of Liberty**" -- secret organizations formed to protest the Stamp Act, often through violent means. From Massachusetts to South Carolina, the act was nullified, and mobs, forcing luckless customs agents to resign their offices, destroyed the hated stamps. Spurred by delegate **Patrick Henry**, the Virginia House of Burgesses passed a set of resolutions in May denouncing **taxation without representation** as a threat to colonial liberties. The **House of Burgesses** declared that Virginians had the rights of Englishmen, and hence could be taxed only by their own representatives. On June 8, the Massachusetts Assembly invited all the colonies to appoint delegates to the so-called Stamp Act Congress in New York, held in October 1765, to consider appeals for relief from the king and Parliament. Twenty-seven representatives from nine colonies seized the opportunity to mobilize colonial opinion against parliamentary interference in American affairs. After much debate, the congress adopted a set of resolutions asserting that "no taxes ever have been or can be constitutionally imposed on them, but by their respective legislatures," and that the Stamp Act had a "manifest tendency to subvert the rights and liberties of the colonists."

**Taxation without Representation**

The issue thus drawn centered on the question of representation. From the colonies' point of view, it was impossible to consider themselves represented in Parliament unless they actually elected members to the House of Commons. But this idea conflicted with the English principle of "virtual representation," according to which each Member of Parliament represented the interests of the whole country, even the empire, despite the fact that his electoral base consisted of only a tiny minority of property owners from a given district. The rest of the community was seen to be "represented" on the ground that all inhabitants shared the same interests as the property owners who elected members of Parliament.

Most British officials held that Parliament was an imperial body representing and exercising the same authority over the colonies as over the homeland. The American leaders argued that no "imperial" Parliament existed; their only legal relations were with the Crown. It was the king who had agreed to establish colonies beyond the sea and the king who provided them with governments. They argued that the king was equally a king of England and a king of the colonies, but they insisted that the English Parliament had no more right to pass laws for the colonies than any colonial legislature had the right to pass laws for England. The British Parliament was unwilling to accept the colonial contentions. British merchants, however, feeling the effects of the American boycott, threw their weight behind a repeal movement, and in 1766 Parliament yielded, repealing the Stamp Act and modifying the Sugar Act. However, to mollify the supporters of central control over the colonies, Parliament followed these actions with passage of the Declaratory Act. This act asserted the authority of Parliament to make laws binding the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

**Townsend Acts**

The year 1767 brought another series of measures that stirred anew all the elements of discord. Charles Townshend, British Chancellor of the Exchequer, was called upon to draft a new fiscal program. Intent upon reducing British taxes by making more efficient the collection of duties levied on American trade, he tightened customs administration, at the same time sponsoring duties on colonial imports of paper, glass, lead and tea exported from Britain to the colonies. The so-called Townshend Acts were based on the premise that taxes imposed on goods imported by the colonies were legal while internal taxes (like the Stamp Act) were not.

The Townshend Acts were designed to raise revenue to be used in part to support colonial governors, judges, customs officers and the British army in America. In response, Philadelphia lawyer John Dickinson, in Letters of a Pennsylvania Farmer, argued that Parliament had the right to control imperial commerce but did not have the right to tax the colonies, whether the duties were external or internal. The agitation following enactment of the Townshend duties was less violent than that stirred by the Stamp Act, but it was nevertheless strong, particularly in the cities of the Eastern seaboard. Merchants once again resorted to non-importation agreements, and people made do with local products. Colonists, for example, dressed in homespun clothing and found substitutes for tea. They used homemade paper and their houses went unpainted. In Boston, enforcement of the new regulations provoked violence. When customs officials sought to collect duties, they were set upon by the populace and roughly handled. For this infraction, two British regiments were dispatched to protect the customs commissioners.

The presence of British troops in Boston was a standing invitation to disorder. On March 5, 1770, antagonism between citizens and British soldiers again flared into violence. What began as a harmless snowballing of British soldiers degenerated into a mob attack. Someone gave the order to fire. When the smoke had cleared, three Bostonians lay dead in the snow. Dubbed the "Boston Massacre," the incident was dramatically pictured as proof of British heartlessness and tyranny. Faced with such opposition, Parliament in 1770 opted for a strategic retreat and repealed all the Townshend duties except that on tea, which was a luxury item in the colonies, imbibed only by a very small minority. To most, the action of Parliament signified that the colonists had won a major concession, and the campaign against England was largely dropped. A colonial embargo on "English tea" continued but was not too scrupulously observed. Prosperity was increasing and most colonial leaders were willing to let the future take care of itself.

**Samuel Adams**

During a three-year interval of calm, a relatively small number of radicals strove energetically to keep the controversy alive, however. They contended that payment of the tax constituted an acceptance of the principle that Parliament had the right to rule over the colonies. They feared that at any time in the future, the principle of parliamentary rule might be applied with devastating effect on all colonial liberties. The radicals' most effective leader was Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, who toiled tirelessly for a single end: independence. From the time he graduated from Harvard College in 1740, Adams was a public servant in some capacity -- inspector of chimneys, tax-collector and moderator of town meetings. A consistent failure in business, he was shrewd and able in politics, with the New England town meeting his theater of action. Adams's goals were to free people from their awe of social and political superiors, make them aware of their own power and importance and thus arouse them to action. Toward these objectives, he published articles in newspapers and made speeches in town meetings, instigating resolutions that appealed to the colonists' democratic impulses. In 1772 he induced the Boston town meeting to select a "Committee of Correspondence" to state the rights and grievances of the colonists. The committee opposed a British decision to pay the salaries of judges from customs revenues; it feared that the judges would no longer be dependent on the legislature for their incomes and thus no longer accountable to it -- thereby leading to the emergence of "a despotic form of government." The committee communicated with other towns on this matter and requested them to draft replies. Committees were set up in virtually all the colonies, and out of them grew a base of effective revolutionary organizations. Still, Adams did not have enough fuel to set a fire.

**Boston “Tea Party”**

In 1773, however, Britain furnished Adams and his allies with an incendiary issue. The powerful East India Company, finding itself in critical financial straits, appealed to the British government, which granted it a monopoly on all tea exported to the colonies. The government also permitted the East India Company to supply retailers directly, bypassing colonial wholesalers who had previously sold it. After 1770, such a flourishing illegal trade existed that most of the tea consumed in America was of foreign origin and imported, illegally, duty- free. By selling its tea through its own agents at a price well under the customary one, the East India Company made smuggling unprofitable and threatened to eliminate the independent colonial merchants at the same time. Aroused not only by the loss of the tea trade but also by the monopolistic practice involved, colonial traders joined the radicals agitating for independence.

In ports up and down the Atlantic coast, agents of the East India Company were forced to resign, and new shipments of tea were either returned to England or warehoused. In Boston, however, the agents defied the colonists and, with the support of the royal governor, made preparations to land incoming cargoes regardless of opposition. On the night of December 16, 1773, a band of men disguised as Mohawk Indians and led by Samuel Adams boarded three British ships lying at anchor and dumped their tea cargo into Boston harbor. They took this step because they feared that if the tea were landed, colonists would actually comply with the tax and purchase the tea. Adams and his band of radicals doubted their countrymen's commitment to principle.

A crisis now confronted Britain. The East India Company had carried out a parliamentary statute, and if the destruction of the tea went unpunished, Parliament would admit to the world that it had no control over the colonies. Official opinion in Britain almost unanimously condemned the Boston Tea Party as an act of vandalism and advocated legal measures to bring the insurgent colonists into line.

**The Coercive Acts**

Parliament responded with new laws that the colonists called the "Coercive or Intolerable Acts." The first, the Boston Port Bill, closed the port of Boston until the tea was paid for -- an action that threatened the very life of the city, for to prevent Boston from having access to the sea meant economic disaster. Other enactments restricted local authority and banned most town meetings held without the governor's consent. A Quartering Act required local authorities to find suitable quarters for British troops, in private homes if necessary. Instead of subduing and isolating Massachusetts as Parliament intended, these acts rallied its sister colonies to its aid.

The Quebec Act, passed at nearly the same time, extended the boundaries of the province of Quebec and guaranteed the right of the French inhabitants to enjoy religious freedom and their own legal customs. The colonists opposed this act because, by disregarding old charter claims to western lands, it threatened to hem them in to the North and Northwest by a Roman Catholic-dominated province. Though the Quebec Act had not been passed as a punitive measure, it was classed by the Americans with the Coercive Acts, and all became known as the "Five Intolerable Acts." At the suggestion of the Virginia House of Burgesses, colonial representatives met in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, "to consult upon the present unhappy state of the Colonies." Delegates to this meeting, known as the First Continental Congress, were chosen by provincial congresses or popular conventions. Every colony except Georgia sent at least one delegate, and the total number of 55 was large enough for diversity of opinion, but small enough for genuine debate and effective action. The division of opinion in the colonies posed a genuine dilemma for the delegates. They would have to give an appearance of firm unanimity to induce the British government to make concessions and, at the same time, they would have to avoid any show of radicalism or spirit of independence that would alarm more moderate Americans. A cautious keynote speech, followed by a "resolve" that no obedience was due the Coercive Acts, ended with adoption of a set of resolutions, among them, the right of the colonists to "life, liberty and property," and the right of provincial legislatures to set "all cases of taxation and internal polity."

The most important action taken by the Congress, however, was the formation of a "Continental Association," which provided for the renewal of the trade boycott and for a system of committees to inspect customs entries, publish the names of merchants who violated the agreements, confiscate their imports, and encourage frugality, economy and industry. The Association immediately assumed the leadership in the colonies, spurring new local organizations to end what remained of royal authority. Led by the pro-independence leaders, they drew their support not only from the less-well-to-do, but from many members of the professional class, especially lawyers, most of the planters of the Southern colonies and a number of merchants. They intimidated the hesitant into joining the popular movement and punished the hostile. They began the collection of military supplies and the mobilization of troops. And they fanned public opinion into revolutionary ardor.

Many Americans, opposed to British encroachment on American rights, nonetheless favored discussion and compromise as the proper solution. This group included Crown-appointed officers, many Quakers and members of other religious sects opposed to the use of violence, many merchants -- especially from the middle colonies -- and some discontented farmers and frontiersmen from Southern colonies. The king might well have effected an alliance with these large numbers of moderates and, by timely concessions, so strengthened their position that the revolutionaries would have found it difficult to proceed with hostilities. But George III had no intention of making concessions. In September 1774, scorning a petition by Philadelphia Quakers, he wrote, "The die is now cast, the Colonies must either submit or triumph." This action isolated the Loyalists who were appalled and frightened by the course of events following the Coercive Acts.

**The Revolution Begins**

General Thomas Gage, an amiable English gentleman with an American-born wife, commanded the garrison at Boston, where political activity had almost wholly replaced trade. Gage's main duty in the colonies had been to enforce the Coercive Acts. When news reached him that the Massachusetts colonists were collecting powder and military stores at the town of Concord, 32 kilometers away, Gage sent a strong detail from the garrison to confiscate these munitions. After a night of marching, the British troops reached the village of Lexington on April 19, 1775, and saw a grim band of 70 Minutemen -- so named because they were said to be ready to fight in a minute -- through the early morning mist. The Minutemen intended only a silent protest, but Major John Pitcairn, the leader of the British troops, yelled, "Disperse, you damned rebels! You dogs, run!" The leader of the Minutemen, Captain John Parker, told his troops not to fire unless fired at first. The Americans were withdrawing when someone fired a shot, which led the British troops to fire at the Minutemen. The British then charged with bayonets, leaving eight dead and 10 wounded. It was, in the often quoted phrase of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "the shot heard 'round the world." Then the British pushed on to Concord. The Americans had taken away most of the munitions, but the British destroyed whatever was left. In the meantime, American forces in the countryside mobilized, moved toward Concord and inflicted casualties on the British, who began the long return to Boston. All along the road, however, behind stone walls, hillocks and houses, militiamen from "every Middlesex village and farm" made targets of the bright red coats of the British soldiers. By the time the weary soldiers stumbled into Boston, they suffered more than 250 killed and wounded. The Americans lost 93 men.

While the alarms of **Lexington** and **Concord** were still resounding, the **Second Continental Congress** met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 10, 1775. By May 15, the Congress voted to go to war, inducting the colonial militias into continental service and appointing Colonel **George Washington of Virginia as commander-in-chief of the American forces**. In the meantime, the Americans would suffer high casualties at Bunker Hill just outside Boston. Congress also ordered American expeditions to march northward into Canada by fall. Although the Americans later captured Montreal, they failed in a winter assault on Quebec, and eventually retreated to New York.

Despite the outbreak of armed conflict, the idea of complete separation from England was still repugnant to some members of the Continental Congress. In July, John Dickinson had drafted a resolution, known as the Olive Branch Petition, begging the king to prevent further hostile actions until some sort of agreement could be worked out. The petition fell on deaf ears, however, and King George III issued a proclamation on August 23, 1775, declaring the colonies to be in a state of rebellion. Britain had expected the Southern colonies to remain loyal, in part because of their reliance on slavery. Many in the Southern colonies feared that a rebellion against the mother country would also trigger a slave uprising against the planters. In November 1775, in fact, Lord Dunmore, the governor of Virginia, offered freedom to all slaves who would fight for the British. However, Dunmore's proclamation had the effect of driving to the rebel side many Virginians who would otherwise have remained Loyalist. The governor of North Carolina, Josiah Martin, also urged North Carolinians to remain loyal to the Crown. When 1,500 men answered Martin's call, they were defeated by revolutionary armies before British troops could arrive to help. British warships continued down the coast to Charleston, South Carolina, and opened fire on the city in early June 1776. But South Carolinians had time to prepare, and repulsed the British by the end of the month. They would not return south for more than two years.

**Common Sense and Independence**

In January 1776, Thomas Paine, a political theorist and writer who had come to America from England in 1774, published a 50-page pamphlet, Common Sense. Within three months, 100,000 copies of the pamphlet were sold. Paine attacked the idea of hereditary monarchy, declaring that one honest man was worth more to society than "all the crowned ruffians that ever lived." He presented the alternatives -- continued submission to a tyrannical king and an outworn government, or liberty and happiness as a self-sufficient, independent republic. Circulated throughout the colonies, Common Sense helped to crystallize the desire for separation.

There still remained the task, however, of gaining each colony's approval of a formal declaration. On May 10, 1776 -- one year to the day since the Second Continental Congress had first met -- a resolution was adopted calling for separation. Now only a formal declaration was needed. On June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced a resolution declaring "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states...." Immediately, a committee of five, headed by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, was appointed to prepare a formal declaration.

Largely Jefferson's work, the Declaration of Independence, adopted July 4, 1776, not only announced the birth of a new nation, but also set forth a philosophy of human freedom that would become a dynamic force throughout the entire world. The Declaration draws upon French and English Enlightenment political philosophy, but one influence in particular stands out: John Locke's Second Treatise on Government. Locke took conceptions of the traditional rights of Englishmen and universalized them into the natural rights of all humankind. The Declaration's familiar opening passage echoes Locke's social-contract theory of government:

|  |
| --- |
| *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.*  |

In the Declaration, Jefferson linked Locke's principles directly to the situation in the colonies. To fight for American independence was to fight for a government based on popular consent in place of a government by a king who had "combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws...." Only a government based on popular consent could secure natural rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Thus, to fight for American independence was to fight on behalf of one's own natural rights.

**The Franco-American Alliance**

In France, enthusiasm for the American cause was high: the French intellectual world was itself in revolt against feudalism and privilege. However, the Crown lent its support to the colonies for geopolitical rather than ideological reasons: the French government had been eager for reprisal against Britain ever since France's defeat in 1763. To further the American cause, Benjamin Franklin was sent to Paris in 1776. His wit, guile and intellect soon made their presence felt in the French capital, and played a major role in winning French assistance.

France began providing aid to the colonies in May 1776, when it sent 14 ships with war supplies to America. In fact, most of the gun powder used by the American armies came from France. After Britain's defeat at Saratoga, France saw an opportunity to seriously weaken its ancient enemy and restore the balance of power that had been upset by the Seven Years' War (the French and Indian War). On February 6, 1778, America and France signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce, in which France recognized America and offered trade concessions. They also signed a Treaty of Alliance, which stipulated that if France entered the war, neither country would lay down its arms until America won its independence, which neither would conclude peace with Britain without the consent of the other, and that each guaranteed the other's possessions in America. This was the only bilateral defense treaty signed by the United States or its predecessors until 1949.

The Franco-American alliance soon broadened the conflict. In June 1778 British ships fired on French vessels, and the two countries went to war. In 1779 Spain, hoping to reacquire territories taken by Britain in the Seven Years' War, entered the conflict on the side of France, but not as an ally of the Americans. In 1780 Britain declared war on the Dutch, who had continued to trade with the Americans. The combination of these European powers, with France in the lead, was a far greater threat to Britain than the American colonies standing alone.

**The British Move South**

With the French now involved, the British stepped up their efforts in the southern colonies since they felt that most Southerners were Loyalists. A campaign began in late 1778, with the capture of Savannah, Georgia. Shortly thereafter, British troops drove toward Charleston, South Carolina, the principal Southern port. The British also brought naval and amphibious forces into play there, and they managed to bottle up American forces on the Charleston peninsula. On May 12 General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered the city and its 5,000 troops, the greatest American defeat of the war. But the reversal in fortune only emboldened the American rebels. Soon, South Carolinians began roaming the countryside, attacking British supply lines. By July, American General Horatio Gates, who had assembled a replacement force of untrained militiamen, rushed to Camden, South Carolina, to confront British forces led by General Charles Cornwallis. But the untrained soldiers of Gates's army panicked and ran when confronted by the British regulars. Cornwallis's troops met the Americans several more times, but the most significant battle took place at Cowpens, South Carolina, in early 1781, where the Americans soundly defeated the British. After an exhausting, but unproductive chase through North Carolina, Cornwallis set his sights on Virginia.

**Victory and Independence**

In July **1780 France's Louis XVI** had sent to America an expeditionary force of 6,000 men under the **Comte Jean de Rochambeau**. In addition, the French fleet harassed British shipping and prevented reinforcement and resupply of British forces in Virginia by a British fleet sailing from New York City. French and American armies and navies, totaling 18,000 men, parried with Cornwallis all through the summer and into the fall. Finally, on October 19, 1781, after being trapped at Yorktown near the mouth of **Chesapeake Bay**, **Cornwallis** surrendered his army of 8,000 British soldiers.

Although Cornwallis's defeat did not immediately end the war -- which would drag on inconclusively for almost two more years -- a new British government decided to pursue peace negotiations in Paris in early 1782, with the American side represented by **Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and John Jay**. On **April 15, 1783**, Congress approved the final treaty, and Great Britain and its former colonies signed it on September 3. Known as the **Treaty of Paris**, the peace settlement acknowledged the independence, freedom and sovereignty of the 13 former colonies, now states, to which Great Britain granted the territory west to the Mississippi River, north to Canada and south to Florida, which was returned to Spain. The fledgling colonies that Richard Henry Lee had spoken of more than seven years before, had finally become "free and independent states." The task of knitting together a nation yet remained.

# The Making of the United States Constitution, 1778-1788

1. Between 1778 & 1788 the thirteen former British colonies were bound together as a new nation, the United States of America, under the Articles of Confederation.
2. The Articles of Confederation were produced by the Continental Congress in 1777 in order to provide a legal constitution and a national government for the thirteen states that had declared their independence in 1776.
3. According to the Articles and in the minds of most Americans, the individual state was the most important political unit. Thus the United States was viewed more as a League of Sovereign and independent states rather than as a united central governed nation.
4. The national congress had only limited powers.
5. The articles did not provide for a strong national executive, nor for a national court.
6. Several problems faced the new nation after independence had been gained, and many Americans began to feel that the Articles of Confederation did not provide for a national government strong enough to handle them.
7. Threats from the foreign powers such as Britain and Spain, could not be dealt with effectively without a strong national government.
8. Lack of central control of commerce, both with the foreign powers and the states themselves, caused severe economic problems.
9. The nation faced severe financial difficulties, congress lacked power to effectively deal with them.
10. Many conservative citizens feared that uncontrolled democracy might destroy stability and social order.
11. In 1787 delegates from the thirteen states met in Philadelphia, Pa, to consider making changes for a stronger national government. A completely new constitution was prepared, which has remained the foundational document of the United States government up to the present day.
12. The delegates were generally in agreement over the basic principles of Federalism and of Republican and Democratic government.
13. B. The powers of the new national government were expanded to include the right to levy taxes, regulate commerce, and issue money.
14. A compromise was made between big states, which favoured representation according to population, and small states, which favoured equal representation for each state regardless of size. The Congress was divided into two houses: the “**Senate”** with two representatives from each state; and the “**House of Representatives”** with representativesaccording to population.
15. The **“Three fifth Compromise”** designed to as an answer to the question of whether or not slaves should be counted as part of the population when determining the number of representatives allowed for the state.
16. The **Constitution** provided for a strong **Presiden**t to execute the laws of the new government, and for a **Supreme Court** to insure that the constitution was upheld.
17. The constitution was submitted to the states for ratification. Its acceptance did not come easily, because many feared the loss of state rights and liberty to a strong central government.
18. The **constitution** was to be ratified by the people through specially elected state conventions, and not by the legislators.
19. Those who supported the constitution were known as the **Federalists.** Led by **Alexander Hamilton** they campaigned to convince people that the constitution was good for the nation.
20. Those who feared a possible loss of individual liberty and states’ rights under the new constitution were reassured by the promise that special amendments, the **Bill of Rights**, would be added.
21. In June 1788, **New Hampshire** became the ninth state to ratify, thus making the constitution operative. **Rhode Island** was the last state to ratify in May of 1790.

**The Formation of a United States National Government**

***"Every man and every body of men on Earth,
possess the right of self-government"
-- Thomas Jefferson, 1790***

**State Constitutions**

The success of the Revolution gave Americans the opportunity to give legal form to their ideals as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and to remedy some of their grievances through state constitutions. As early as May 10, 1776, Congress had passed a resolution advising the colonies to form new governments "such as shall best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents." Some of them had already done so, and within a year after the Declaration of Independence, all but three had drawn up constitutions.

The new constitutions showed the impact of democratic ideas. None made any drastic break with the past, since all were built on the solid foundation of colonial experience and English practice. But each was also animated by the spirit of republicanism, an ideal that had long been praised by Enlightenment philosophers.

Naturally, the first objective of the framers of the state constitutions was to secure those "unalienable rights" whose violation had caused the former colonies to repudiate their connection with Britain. Thus, each constitution began with a declaration or bill of rights. Virginia's, which served as a model for all the others, included a declaration of principles, such as popular sovereignty, rotation in office, freedom of elections and an enumeration of fundamental liberties: moderate bail and humane punishment, speedy trial by jury, freedom of the press and of conscience, and the right of the majority to reform or alter the government. Other states enlarged the list of liberties to guarantee freedom of speech, of assembly and of petition, and frequently included such provisions as the right to bear arms, to a writ of habeas corpus, to inviolability of domicile and to equal protection under the law. Moreover, all the constitutions paid allegiance to the three-branch structure of government -- executive, legislative and judiciary -- each checked and balanced by the others. Pennsylvania's constitution was the most radical. In that state, Philadelphia artisans, Scots-Irish frontiersmen and German-speaking farmers had taken control. The provincial congress adopted a constitution that permitted every male taxpayer and his sons to vote, required rotation in office (no one could serve as a representative more than four years out of every seven) and set up a single-chamber legislature.

The state constitutions had some glaring limitations, particularly by more recent standards. Constitutions established to guarantee people their natural rights did not secure for everyone the most fundamental natural right -- equality. The colonies south of Pennsylvania excluded their slave populations from their inalienable rights as human beings. Women had no political rights. No state went so far as to permit universal male suffrage, and even in those states that permitted all taxpayers to vote (Delaware, North Carolina and Georgia, in addition to Pennsylvania), office-holders were required to own a certain amount of property.

**Articles of Confederation**

*About the Articles of Confederation George Washington said: “The thirteen colonies were tied up by a rope of sand”*

The struggle with England had done much to change colonial attitudes. Local assemblies had rejected the Albany Plan of Union in 1754, refusing to surrender even the smallest part of their autonomy to any other body, even one they themselves had elected. But in the course of the Revolution, mutual aid had proved effective, and the fear of relinquishing individual authority had lessened to a large degree.

John Dickinson produced the "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union" in 1776. The Continental Congress adopted them in November 1777, and they went into effect in 1781, having been ratified by all the states. The governmental framework established by the Articles had many weaknesses. The national government lacked the authority to set up tariffs when necessary, to regulate commerce and to levy taxes. It lacked sole control of international relations: a number of states had begun their own negotiations with foreign countries. Nine states had organized their own armies, and several had their own navies. There was a curious hodgepodge of coins and a bewildering variety of state and national paper bills, all fast depreciating in value.

Economic difficulties after the war prompted calls for change. The end of the war had a severe effect on merchants who supplied the armies of both sides and who had lost the advantages deriving from participation in the British mercantile system. The states gave preference to American goods in their tariff policies, but these tariffs were inconsistent, leading to the demand for a stronger central government to implement a uniform policy. Farmers probably suffered the most from economic difficulties following the Revolution. The supply of farm produce exceeded demand, and unrest centered chiefly among farmer-debtors who wanted strong remedies to avoid foreclosure on their property and imprisonment for debt. Courts were clogged with suits for debt. All through the summer of 1786, popular conventions and informal gatherings in several states demanded reform in the state administrations. In the autumn of 1786, mobs of farmers in Massachusetts under the leadership of a former army captain, **Daniel Shays**, began forcibly to prevent the county courts from sitting and passing further judgments for debt, pending the next state election. In January 1787 a ragtag army of 1,200 farmers moved toward the federal arsenal at Springfield. The rebels, armed chiefly with staves and pitchforks, were repulsed by a small state militia force; General Benjamin Lincoln then arrived with reinforcements from Boston and routed the remaining Shaysites, whose leader escaped to Vermont. The government captured 14 rebels and sentenced them to death, but ultimately pardoned some and let the others off with short prison terms. After the defeat of the rebellion, a newly elected legislature, whose majority sympathized with the rebels, met some of their demands for debt relief.

**The Problem of Expansion**

With the end of the Revolution, the United States again had to face the old unsolved Western question -- the problem of expansion, with its complications of land, fur trade, Indians, settlement and local government. Lured by the richest land yet found in the country, pioneers poured over the Appalachian Mountains and beyond. By 1775 the far-flung outposts scattered along the waterways had tens of thousands of settlers. Separated by mountain ranges and hundreds of kilometers from the centers of political authority in the East, the inhabitants established their own governments. Settlers from all the tidewater states pressed on into the fertile river valleys, hardwood forests and rolling prairies of the interior. By 1790 the population of the trans-Appalachian region numbered well over 120,000.

Before the war, several colonies had laid extensive and often overlapping claims to land beyond the Appalachians. To those without such claims this rich territorial prize seemed unfairly apportioned. Maryland, speaking for the latter group, introduced a resolution that the western lands be considered common property to be parceled by the Congress into free and independent governments. This idea was not received enthusiastically. Nonetheless, in 1780 New York led the way by ceding its claims to the United States. In 1784 Virginia, which held the grandest claims, relinquished all land north of the Ohio River. Other states ceded their claims, and it became apparent that Congress would come into possession of all the lands north of the Ohio River and west of the Allegheny Mountains. This common possession of millions of hectares was the most tangible evidence yet of nationality and unity, and gave a certain substance to the idea of national sovereignty. At the same time, these vast territories were a problem that required solution.

The Articles of Confederation offered an answer. Under the Articles, a system of limited self-government (set forth in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787) provided for the organization of the Northwest Territory, initially as a single district, ruled by a governor and judges appointed by the Congress. When this territory had 5,000 free male inhabitants of voting age, it was to be entitled to a legislature of two chambers, itself electing the lower house. In addition, it could at that time send a non-voting delegate to Congress. No more than five nor fewer than three states were to be formed out of this territory, and whenever any one of them had 60,000 free inhabitants, it was to be admitted to the Union "on an equal footing with the original states in all respects." The Ordinance guaranteed civil rights and liberties, encouraged education and guaranteed that "there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory."

The new policy repudiated the time-honored concept that colonies existed for the benefit of the mother country and were politically subordinate and socially inferior. That doctrine was replaced by the principle that colonies are but the extension of the nation and are entitled, not as a privilege but as a right, to all the benefits of equality. These enlightened provisions of the Northwest Ordinance formed the basis for America's public land policy.

**Constitutional Convention**

George Washington wrote of the period between the Treaty of Paris and the writing of the Constitution that the states were united only by a "rope of sand.” Disputes between Maryland and Virginia over navigation on the Potomac River led to a conference of representatives of five states at Annapolis, Maryland, in 1786. One of the delegates, Alexander Hamilton, convinced his colleagues that commerce was too much bound up with other political and economic questions, and that the situation was too serious to be dealt with by so unrepresentative a body. He advocated calling upon all the states to appoint representatives for a meeting to be held the following spring in Philadelphia. The Continental Congress was at first indignant over this bold step, but its protests were cut short by the news that Virginia had elected George Washington a delegate. During the next fall and winter, elections were held in all states but Rhode Island.

It was a gathering of notables that assembled at the Federal Convention in the Philadelphia State House in May 1787. The state legislatures sent leaders with experience in colonial and state governments, in Congress, on the bench and in the army. George Washington, regarded as the country's outstanding citizen because of his integrity and his military leadership during the Revolution, was chosen as presiding officer.

Prominent among the more active members were two Pennsylvanians: Governor Morris, who clearly saw the need for national government, and James Wilson, who labored indefatigably for the national idea. Also elected by Pennsylvania was Benjamin Franklin, nearing the end of an extraordinary career of public service and scientific achievement. From Virginia came James Madison, a practical young statesman, a thorough student of politics and history and, according to a colleague, "from a spirit of industry and application...the best-informed man on any point in debate." Madison today is recognized as the "Father of the Constitution." Massachusetts sent Rufus King and Elbridge Gerry, young men of ability and experience. Roger Sherman, shoemaker turned judge, was one of the representatives from Connecticut. From New York came Alexander Hamilton, who had proposed the meeting. Absent from the Convention were Thomas Jefferson, who was serving in France as minister, and John Adams, serving in the same capacity in Great Britain. Youth predominated among the 55 delegates -- the average age was 42.

The Convention had been authorized merely to draft amendments to the Articles of Confederation but, as Madison later wrote, the delegates, "with a manly confidence in their country," simply threw the Articles aside and went ahead with the building of a wholly new form of government. They recognized that the paramount need was to reconcile two different powers -- the power of local control, which was already being exercised by the 13 semi-independent states, and the power of a central government. They adopted the principle that the functions and powers of the national government, being new, general and inclusive, had to be carefully defined and stated, while all other functions and powers were to be understood as belonging to the states. But realizing that the central government had to have real power, the delegates also generally accepted the fact that the government should be authorized -- among other things -- to coin money, to regulate commerce, to declare war and to make peace.

**Debate and Compromise**

The 18th-century statesmen who met in Philadelphia were adherents of Montesquieu's concept of the balance of power in politics. This principle was supported by colonial experience and strengthened by the writings of John Locke, with which most of the delegates were familiar. These influences led to the conviction that three equal and coordinate branches of government should be established. Legislative, executive and judicial powers were to be so harmoniously balanced that no one could ever gain control. The delegates agreed that the legislative branch, like the colonial legislatures and the British Parliament, should consist of two houses.

On these points there was unanimity within the assembly. But sharp differences arose as to the method of achieving them. Representatives of the small states -- New Jersey, for instance -- objected to changes that would reduce their influence in the national government by basing representation upon population rather than upon statehood, as was the case under the Articles of Confederation. On the other hand, representatives of large states, like Virginia, argued for proportionate representation. This debate threatened to go on endlessly until Roger Sherman came forward with arguments for representation in proportion to the population of the states in one house of Congress, the House of Representatives, and equal representation in the other, the Senate.

The alignment of large against small states then dissolved. But almost every succeeding question raised new problems, to be resolved only by new compromises. Northerners wanted slaves counted when determining each state's tax share, but not in determining the number of seats a state would have in the House of Representatives. According to a compromise reached with little dissent, the House of Representatives would be apportioned according to the number of free inhabitants plus three-fifths of the slaves. Certain members, such as Sherman and Elbridge Gerry, still smarting from the Shays Rebellion, feared that the mass of people lacked sufficient wisdom to govern themselves and thus wished no branch of the federal government to be elected directly by the people. Others thought the national government should be given as broad a popular base as possible. Some delegates wished to exclude the growing West from the opportunity of statehood; others championed the equality principle established in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

There was no serious difference on such national economic questions as paper money, laws concerning contract obligations or the role of women, who were excluded from politics. But there was a need for balancing sectional economic interests; for settling arguments as to the powers, term and selection of the chief executive; and for solving problems involving the tenure of judges and the kind of courts to be established. Laboring through a hot Philadelphia summer, the Convention finally achieved a draft incorporating in a brief document the organization of the most complex government yet devised -- a government supreme within a clearly defined and limited sphere. In conferring powers, the Convention gave the federal government full power to levy taxes, borrow money, establish uniform duties and excise taxes, coin money, fix weights and measures, grant patents and copyrights, set up post offices, and build post roads. The national government also had the power to raise and maintain an army and navy, and to regulate interstate commerce. It was given the management of Indian affairs, foreign policy and war. It could pass laws for naturalizing foreigners and controlling public lands, and it could admit new states on a basis of absolute equality with the old. The power to pass all necessary and proper laws for executing these clearly defined powers rendered the federal government able to meet the needs of later generations and of a greatly expanded body politic.

The principle of separation of powers had already been given a fair trial in most state constitutions and had proved sound. Accordingly, the Convention set up a governmental system with separate legislative, executive and judiciary branches -- each checked by the others. Thus congressional enactments were not to become law until approved by the president. And the president was to submit the most important of his appointments and all his treaties to the Senate for confirmation. The president, in turn, could be impeached and removed by Congress. The judiciary was to hear all cases arising under federal laws and the Constitution; in effect, the courts were empowered to interpret both the fundamental and the statute law. But members of the judiciary, appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, could also be impeached by Congress.

To protect the Constitution from hasty alteration, Article V stipulated that amendments to the Constitution be proposed either by two-thirds of both houses of Congress or by two-thirds of the states, meeting in convention. The proposals were to be ratified by one of two methods: either by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states, or by convention in three-fourths of the states, with the Congress proposing the method to be used.

Finally, the Convention faced the most important problem of all: how should the powers given to the new government be enforced? Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government had possessed -- on paper -- significant powers, which, in practice, had come to naught, for the states paid no attention to them. What was to save the new government from the same fate?

At the outset, most delegates furnished a single answer -- the use of force. But it was quickly seen that the application of force upon the states would destroy the Union. The decision was that the government should not act upon the states but upon the people within the states, and should legislate for and upon all the individual residents of the country. As the keystone of the Constitution, the Convention adopted two brief but highly significant statements:

|  |
| --- |
| *Congress shall have power...to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the...powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States....(Article I, Section 7)*  |

This Constitution and the laws of the United States, which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding. (Article VI)

Thus the laws of the United States became enforceable in its own national courts, through its own judges and marshals, as well as in the state courts through the state judges and state law officers. Debate continues to this day about the motives of those who wrote the Constitution. In 1913 Charles Beard, in An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution, argued that the Founding Fathers stood to gain economic advantages from the stability imposed by a powerful and authoritative national government because they held large amounts of depreciated government securities. However, James Madison, principal drafter of the constitution, held no bonds, while some opponents of the Constitution held large amounts of bonds and securities. Economic interests influenced the course of the debate, but so did state, sectional and ideological interests. Equally important was the idealism of the framers. Products of the Enlightenment, the Founding Fathers designed a government that, they believed, would promote individual liberty and public virtue. The ideals embodied in the U.S. Constitution are an essential element of the American national identity.

**Ratification and the Bill of Rights**

On September 17, 1787, after 16 weeks of deliberation, the finished Constitution was signed by 39 of the 42 delegates present. Franklin, pointing to the half-sun painted in brilliant gold on the back of Washington's chair, said:

|  |
| --- |
| *I have often in the course of the session...looked at that [chair] behind the president, without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting; but now, at length, I have the happiness to know that it is a rising, and not a setting, sun.*  |

The Convention was over; the members "adjourned to the City Tavern, dined together, and took a cordial leave of each other." Yet a crucial part of the struggle for a more perfect union was yet to be faced. The consent of popularly elected state conventions was still required before the document could become effective.

The Convention had decided that the Constitution would take effect upon ratification by conventions in nine of the 13 states. By June 1788 the required nine states ratified the Constitution, but the large states of Virginia and New York had not. Most people felt that without the support of these two states, the Constitution would never be honored. To many, the document seemed full of dangers: would not the strong central government that it established tyrannize them, oppress them with heavy taxes and drag them into wars? Differing views on these questions brought into existence two parties, the Federalists, who favored a strong central government, and the Antifederalists, who preferred a loose association of separate states. Impassioned arguments on both sides were voiced by the press, the legislatures and the state conventions. In Virginia, the Antifederalists attacked the proposed new government by challenging the opening phrase of the Constitution: "We the People of the United States." Without using the individual state names in the Constitution, the delegates argued, the states would not retain their separate rights or powers. Virginia Antifederalists were led by Patrick Henry, who became the chief spokesman for back-country farmers who feared the powers of the new central government. Wavering delegates were persuaded by a proposal that the Virginia convention recommend a bill of rights, and Antifederalists joined with the Federalists to ratify the Constitution on June 25.

In New York, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison pushed for the ratification of the Constitution in a series of essays known as The Federalist Papers. The essays, published in New York newspapers, provided a now-classic argument for a central federal government, with separate executive, legislative and judicial branches that checked and balanced one another. With The Federalist Papers influencing the New York delegates, the Constitution was ratified on July 26.

Antipathy toward a strong central government was only one concern among those opposed to the Constitution; of equal concern to many was the fear that the Constitution did not protect individual rights and freedoms sufficiently. Virginian **George Mason**, author of **Virginia's 1776 Declaration of Rights**, was one of three delegates to the Constitutional Convention who refused to sign the final document because it did not enumerate individual rights. Together with Patrick Henry, he campaigned vigorously against ratification of the Constitution by Virginia. Indeed, five states, including Massachusetts, ratified the Constitution on the condition that such amendments be added immediately.

When the first Congress convened in New York City in September 1789, the calls for amendments protecting individual rights were virtually unanimous. Congress quickly adopted 12 such amendments; by December 1791, enough states had ratified 10 amendments to make them part of the Constitution. Collectively, they are known as the Bill of Rights. Among their provisions: freedom of speech, press, religion, and the right to assemble peacefully, protest and demand changes (First Amendment); protection against unreasonable searches, seizures of property and arrest (Fourth Amendment); due process of law in all criminal cases (Fifth Amendment); right to a fair and speedy trial (Sixth Amendment); protection against cruel and unusual punishment (Eighth Amendment); and provision that the people retain additional rights not listed in the Constitution (Ninth Amendment).

Since the adoption of the Bill of Rights, only 16 more amendments have been added to the Constitution. Although a number of the subsequent amendments revised the federal government's structure and operations, most followed the precedent established by the Bill of Rights and expanded individual rights and freedoms

**President Washington**

One of the last acts of the Congress of the Confederation was to arrange for the first presidential election, setting March 4, 1789, as the date that the new government would come into being. One name was on everyone's lips for the new chief of state -- George Washington -- and he was unanimously chosen president on April 30, 1789. In words spoken by every president since, Washington pledged to execute the duties of the presidency faithfully and, to the best of his ability, to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

When Washington took office, the new Constitution enjoyed neither tradition nor the full backing of organized public opinion. Moreover, the new government had to create its own machinery. No taxes were forthcoming. Until a judiciary could be established, laws could not be enforced. The Army was small. The Navy had ceased to exist. Congress quickly created the departments of State and Treasury, with Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton as their respective secretaries. Simultaneously, the Congress established the federal judiciary, establishing not only a Supreme Court, with one chief justice and five associate justices, but also three circuit courts and 13 district courts. Both a secretary of war and an attorney general were also appointed. And since Washington generally preferred to make decisions only after consulting those men whose judgment he valued, the American presidential Cabinet came into existence, consisting of the heads of all the departments that Congress might create.

Meanwhile, the country was growing steadily and immigration from Europe was increasing. Americans were moving westward: New Englanders and Pennsylvanians into Ohio; Virginians and Carolinians into Kentucky and Tennessee. Good farms were to be had for small sums; labor was in strong demand. The rich valley stretches of upper New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia soon became great wheat-growing areas.

Although many items were still homemade, the Industrial Revolution was dawning in America. Massachusetts and Rhode Island were laying the foundation of important textile industries; Connecticut was beginning to turn out tin ware and clocks; New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania were producing paper, glass and iron. Shipping had grown to such an extent that on the seas the United States was second only to Britain. Even before 1790, American ships were traveling to China to sell furs and bring back tea, spices and silk.

At this critical juncture in the country's growth, Washington's wise leadership was crucial. He organized a national government, developed policies for settlement of territories previously held by Britain and Spain, stabilized the northwestern frontier and oversaw the admission of three new states: Vermont (1791), Kentucky (1792) and Tennessee (1796). Finally, in his Farewell Address, Washington warned the nation to "steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world." This advice influenced American attitudes toward the rest of the world for generations to come.

**Hamilton vs Jefferson**

The conflict that took shape in the 1790s between the Federalists and the Antifederalists exercised a profound impact on American history. The Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, who had married into the wealthy Schuyler family, represented the urban mercantile interests of the seaports; the Antifederalists, led by Thomas Jefferson, spoke for the rural and southern interests. The debate between the two concerned the power of the central government versus that of the states, with the Federalists favoring the former and the Antifederalists advocating states' rights.

Hamilton sought a strong central government acting in the interests of commerce and industry. He brought to public life a love of efficiency, order and organization. In response to the call of the House of Representatives for a plan for the "adequate support of public credit," he laid down and supported principles not only of the public economy, but of effective government. Hamilton pointed out that America must have credit for industrial development, commercial activity and the operations of government. It must also have the complete faith and support of the people. There were many who wished to repudiate the national debt or pay only part of it. Hamilton, however insisted upon full payment and also upon a plan by which the federal government took over the unpaid debts of the states incurred during the Revolution. He also devised a Bank of the United States, with the right to establish branches in different parts of the country. He sponsored a national mint, and argued in favor of tariffs, using a version of an "infant industry" argument: that temporary protection of new firms can help foster the development of competitive national industries. These measures -- placing the credit of the federal government on a firm foundation and giving it all the revenues it needed -- encouraged commerce and industry, and created a solid phalanx of businessmen who stood firmly behind the national government.

Jefferson advocated a decentralized agrarian republic. He recognized the value of a strong central government in foreign relations, but he did not want it strong in other respects. Hamilton's great aim was more efficient organization, whereas Jefferson once said "I am not a friend to a very energetic government." Hamilton feared anarchy and thought in terms of order; Jefferson feared tyranny and thought in terms of freedom. The United States needed both influences. It was the country's good fortune that it had both men and could, in time, fuse and reconcile their philosophies. One clash between them, which occurred shortly after Jefferson took office as secretary of state, led to a new and profoundly important interpretation of the Constitution. When Hamilton introduced his bill to establish a national bank, Jefferson objected. Speaking for those who believed in states' rights, Jefferson argued that the Constitution expressly enumerates all the powers belonging to the federal government and reserves all other powers to the states. Nowhere was it empowered to set up a bank.

Hamilton contended that because of the mass of necessary detail, a vast body of powers had to be implied by general clauses, and one of these authorized Congress to "make all laws which shall be necessary and proper" for carrying out other powers specifically granted. The Constitution authorized the national government to levy and collect taxes, pay debts and borrow money. A national bank would materially help in performing these functions efficiently. Congress, therefore, was entitled, under its implied powers, to create such a bank. Washington and the Congress accepted Hamilton's view -- and an important precedent for an expansive interpretation of the federal government's authority.

**Foreign Policy**

Although one of the first tasks of the new government was to strengthen the domestic economy and make the nation financially secure, the United States could not ignore foreign affairs. The cornerstones of Washington's foreign policy were to preserve peace, to give the country time to recover from its wounds and to permit the slow work of national integration to continue. Events in Europe threatened these goals. Many Americans were watching the French Revolution with keen interest and sympathy, and in April 1793, news came that made this conflict an issue in American politics. France had declared war on Great Britain and Spain, and a new French envoy, **Edmond Charles Genet** -- known as **Citizen Genet** -- was coming to the United States.

After the execution of King Louis XVI in January 1793, Britain, Spain and Holland had become involved in war with France. According to the Franco-American Treaty of Alliance of 1778, the United States and France were perpetual allies, and America was obliged to help France defend the West Indies. However, the United States, militarily and economically a very weak country, was in no position to become involved in another war with major European powers. On April 22, 1793, Washington effectively abrogated the terms of the 1778 treaty that made American independence possible by proclaiming the United States to be "friendly and impartial toward the belligerent powers." When Genet arrived, he was cheered by many citizens, but treated with cool formality by the government. Angered, he violated a promise not to outfit a captured British ship as a privateer. Genet then threatened to take his cause directly to the American people, over the head of the government. Shortly afterward, the United States requested his recall by the French government.

The Genet incident strained American relations with France at a time when relations with Great Britain were far from satisfactory. British troops still occupied forts in the West, property carried off by British soldiers during the Revolution had not been restored or paid for, and the British navy was seizing American ships bound for French ports. To settle these matters, Washington sent John Jay, first chief justice of the Supreme Court, to London as a special envoy, where he negotiated a treaty securing withdrawal of British soldiers from western forts and London's promise to pay damages for Britain's seizure of ships and cargoes in 1793 and 1794. Reflecting the weakness of the U.S. position, the treaty placed severe limitations on American trade with the West Indies and said nothing about either the seizure of American ships in the future, or "impressment" -- the forcing of American sailors into British naval service. Jay also accepted the British view that naval stores and war materiel were contraband which could not be conveyed to enemy ports by neutral ships.

**Jay's Treaty** touched off a stormy disagreement over foreign policy between the Antifederalists, now called Republicans, and the Federalists. The Federalists favored a pro-British policy because the commercial interests they represented profited from trade with Britain. By contrast, the Republicans favored France, in large measure for ideological reasons, and regarded the Jay Treaty as too favorable to Britain. After long debate, however, the Senate ratified the treaty.

**Adams and Jefferson**

Washington retired in 1797, firmly declining to serve for more than eight years as the nation's head. His vice president, John Adams of Massachusetts, was elected the new president. Even before he entered the presidency, Adams had quarreled with Alexander Hamilton -- and thus was handicapped by a divided party. These domestic difficulties were compounded by international complications: France, angered by Jay's recent treaty with Britain, used the British argument that food supplies, naval stores and war materiel bound for enemy ports were subject to seizure by the French navy. By 1797 France had seized 300 American ships and had broken off diplomatic relations with the United States. When Adams sent three other commissioners to Paris to negotiate, agents of Foreign Minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand (whom Adams labeled X, Y and Z in his report to Congress) informed the Americans that negotiations could only begin if the United States loaned France $12 million and bribed officials of the French government. American hostility to France rose to an excited pitch. The so-called XYZ Affair led to the enlistment of troops and the strengthening of the fledgling U.S. Navy.

In 1799, after a series of sea battles with the French, war seemed inevitable. In this crisis, Adams thrust aside the guidance of Hamilton, who wanted war, and sent three new commissioners to France. Napoleon, who had just come to power, received them cordially, and the danger of conflict subsided with the negotiation of the Convention of 1800, which formally released the United States from its 1778 defense alliance with France. However, reflecting American weakness, France refused to pay $20 million in compensation for American ships taken by the French navy.

Hostility to France led Congress to pass the Alien and Sedition Acts, which had severe repercussions for American civil liberties. The Naturalization Act, which changed the requirement for citizenship from five to 14 years, was targeted at Irish and French immigrants suspected of supporting the Republicans. The Alien Act, operative for two years only, gave the president the power to expel or imprison aliens in time of war. The Sedition Act proscribed writing, speaking or publishing anything of "a false, scandalous and malicious" nature against the president or Congress. The few convictions won under the Sedition Act only created martyrs to the cause of civil liberties and aroused support for the Republicans.

The acts met with resistance. Jefferson and Madison sponsored the passage of the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions by the legislatures of the two states in November and December 1798. According to the resolutions, states could "interpose" their views on federal actions and "nullify" them. The doctrine of nullification would be used later for the Southern states' defense of their interests vis-a-vis the North on the question of the tariff, and, more ominously, slavery.

By 1800 the American people were ready for a change. Under Washington and Adams, the Federalists had established a strong government, but sometimes failing to honor the principle that the American government must be responsive to the will of the people, they had followed policies that alienated large groups. For example, in 1798 they had enacted a tax on houses, land and slaves, affecting every property owner in the country.

Jefferson had steadily gathered behind him a great mass of small farmers, shopkeepers and other workers, and they asserted themselves in the election of 1800. Jefferson enjoyed extraordinary favor because of his appeal to American idealism. In his inaugural address, the first such speech in the new capital of Washington, D.C., he promised "a wise and frugal government" to preserve order among the inhabitants but would "leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry, and improvement." Jefferson's mere presence in The White House encouraged democratic procedures. He taught his subordinates to regard themselves merely as trustees of the people. He encouraged agriculture and westward expansion. Believing America to be a haven for the oppressed, he urged a liberal naturalization law. By the end of his second term, his far-sighted secretary of the treasury, Albert Gallatin, had reduced the national debt to less than $560 million. As a wave of Jeffersonian fervor swept the nation, state after state abolished property qualifications for the ballot and passed more humane laws for debtors and criminals.