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Robert J. Allison

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

A Very Short Introduction

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Ever learning new things

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Preface

"The History of our Revolution will be one continued lye from one end to the other," John Adams predicted. "The essence of the whole will be *that Dr. Franklin's electrical Rod smote the Earth and out sprung General Washington. That Franklin electrified him with his rod—and thence forward these two conducted all the Policy, Negotiations, Legislatures, and War*."

Adams objected partly because this fanciful retelling ignored him. But it also ignored other details, such as causes and consequences. What caused the Revolution? Political oppression? Economic hardship? Parliament reduced taxes on Americans, who were growing more prosperous than the English; despite widespread rioting in the colonies, the only people the British government arrested in the 1760s and 1770s were British soldiers who shot at protesting Americans. The American protests over taxes and government produced a new kind of political system in which the majority governs but individuals maintain their liberty.

The story of individuals protecting their rights in a system where the majority governs begins in the Revolution, when men and women set out to protect their liberty by mobilizing their neighbors and public opinion. To understand how this system came into being, if it was not simply created by Franklin's lightning rod and an electrified Washington, we must look into the "Policy, Negotiations, Legislatures, and War," and the many people who brought the Revolution about.

Acknowledgments

As this book introduces the American Revolution, I thank those who introduced me to that event. My mother, who hates history, took me to Washington's headquarters in Morristown; through a window I caught a quick glimpse of a white wig and a Continental uniform as a mysterious figure rose from Washington's desk, then vanished. Ever since I have trailed that elusive phantom, and I thank many good park rangers—in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and points south and west—for bringing us closer.

My late friend Mike Bare brought Fort Ticonderoga together with South Boston, Roxbury, and Dorchester; his memory will be cherished with the events he nobly reimagined. I am indebted to him and to the noble reimaginings of Bernard Bailyn, Robert Bellinger, John Cavanagh, David Hackett Fischer, William Fowler, Robert Gross, Robert Hall, Susan Lively, Pauline Maier, Louis Masur, Joseph McCarthy, Drew McCoy, Joseph McEttrick (thanks to whom I was both juror and defendant in the Boston Massacre Trial), Gary Nash, John Tyler, Ted Widmer, and Matt Wilding.

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Robert J. Allison
Boston, Massachusetts
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Chapter 1
The Revolution's origins

To a British policy maker in the 1750s, the "colonies" were Barbados or Jamaica, the important sugar-producing islands in the West Indies, or the rich provinces of India, whose governments and finances the East India Company was taking over. If he turned his attention to North America, he would not focus on Massachusetts, Virginia, or Pennsylvania but on the vast interior beyond the mountains, the area drained by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Though the Iroquois, Miami, Shawnee, Cherokee, and other native people possessed this territory, the Crown claimed it under grants it had given to the separate colonies. Now in the 1750s the French were moving in, across the Great Lakes from Canada and up the Mississippi from Louisiana to trade furs and make treaties with the native people. From Quebec to New Orleans, the French were taking control of the continent's interior, building forts and trading posts at Detroit, Vincennes, and St. Louis. The British had gained India but were about to lose North America.

Although not as lucrative as Jamaica or India, British North America was essential to the sugar economy. The colonies on the Atlantic coast had grown despite British policy. Religious dissenters had planted the New England colonies—Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut—in the seventeenth century. They prospered through trade, turning New England's forests into ships and barrels to carry the British Empire's goods and feeding the enslaved laborers of the West Indies with cod caught off New England's coast. Boston and Newport had become busy ports. The culturally homogeneous New Englanders had more power to govern themselves than anyone else in the British

empire—they had rebuffed England's attempt in 1688 to restructure their government and jealously guarded their local power.

Britain had taken New York from the Dutch in 1664 but preserved its commercial system: trade with the Iroquois, the most powerful Native Americans in North America, and rule by a landholding elite. New York City, on the southern tip of Manhattan Island, and Albany, up the Hudson River, were the most important trading centers, but New York's hegemony stretched into New Jersey, whose farmland fed the Manhattan settlement as well as the towns of New Brunswick and Elizabeth. New York also claimed all the up-river territory between the Hudson, Lake Champlain, and the Connecticut River, as well as the land on both shores of Long Island Sound. New Englanders did not recognize New York's imperial dreams.

Pennsylvania, founded by Quakers in the 1680s, culturally included the three counties of Delaware, as well as the areas of New Jersey on the Delaware River's east bank. Determined to be fair to the native people, Pennsylvania's merchants defied New York's claim to a monopoly on trade with the Iroquois by trading with the Tuscarora and Lenape, whom the Iroquois considered their own dependents. Richer soil and a milder climate made Pennsylvania better farmland than New England; fairer land distribution made it more appealing than New York or the colonies farther south. Philadelphia became the empire's second busiest port by 1750, sending grain to feed the laborers in Barbados and Jamaica and bringing English, German, and Scotch-Irish immigrants to become independent farmers in Pennsylvania.

The Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland, founded early in the seventeenth century, by the middle of the eighteenth were home to mature plantation societies. Large farms used slave labor to grow tobacco for the world market. Virginia—with half a million people—was the largest mainland colony in area and population; one of every six Americans lived in Virginia, and two of every five Virginians were slaves. Tobacco cultivation had exhausted the tidewater soil; tobacco planters looked inland, beyond the mountains, for more land to plant and sell.

North Carolina's coastal towns—New Bern and Edenton—were trading centers for tobacco gentry, much like the Chesapeake ports. But Scots-Irish and German immigrants were rapidly settling North Carolina's interior, making their way

down the piedmont from Pennsylvania. These back-country settlers on the Cherokee and Catawba borders were farmers, not planters; they did not recognize the coastal planters' cultural or political superiority. They swelled North Carolina's population, which quadrupled between 1750 and 1770, making it the fourth-largest and fastest-growing mainland colony. Immigrants were also filling South Carolina's backcountry. Barbadian and Jamaican planters with their slaves and rice plantations had settled South Carolina's coastal low-country in the 1680s. In parts of the low-country 90 percent of the people were enslaved, and fully 60 percent of South Carolinians were enslaved people of color. Slave labor built Charlestown (renamed Charleston in 1783), the only urban center south of Philadelphia. The white minority held on to power, having survived a slave revolt in 1739, but planters were wary of the growing power of the backcountry.

Georgia was the newest and smallest colony, with barely thirty thousand people, half of them enslaved. Founded in the 1730s as a barrier between South Carolina and Spanish Florida, Georgia gave British traders entrée into trade with the Creek and Cherokee, and a wedge against Spanish and French traders of Pensacola and New Orleans. It also was to be a refuge for England's debtors and poor, who arrived in Georgia and wondered why they could not own slaves, as the whites across the Savannah River in South Carolina did. Their philanthropic sponsors eventually relented to the white Georgians' demand for slaves, so Georgia shared the slave labor economy of South Carolina.

Thirteen colonies, with very different populations, economic systems, and social structures. The colonies had been swept by a religious revival—a "Great Awakening"—in the 1730s and 1740s, with evangelists such as George Whitefield preaching throughout the colonies; this was one of the first movements to bring together these colonies, but the evangelists also challenged the established religious orders. There still was no formal communication system joining the colonies politically except through London. Post roads linked Boston with Philadelphia, but most transit was by water. Few Americans visited the other colonies. George Washington visited Barbados as a youth, but not Philadelphia or New York; John Adams, of Massachusetts, did not see New York or Philadelphia until he was nearly forty.

Problems of communication and transportation did not stop the colonies' growth. Benjamin Franklin, an American who had traveled, noted that only

eighty thousand English people had come to America since 1607, but by 1751 more than a million English descendants lived in America, along with growing numbers of Germans, Africans, and Scots-Irish. England's population had risen from five to six million between 1700 and 1750; America's population had doubled in that same time. Franklin predicted it would double again in twenty-five years, and by 1850 the "greatest Number of *Englishmen* will be on this Side the Water. What an Accession of Power to the *British* Empire by Sea as well as Land! What Increase of Trade and Navigation! What numbers of Ships and Seamen!"

Franklin anticipated that these colonies would remain part of a thriving British empire. But there was an immediate threat. From the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi the French were taking control of the interior, threatening Britain's control of the continent.

Where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers join to form the Ohio, Pennsylvanians had built a small fort garrisoned with forty-four men to protect Pennsylvania traders from New York's Iroquois allies. In April 1754 the French and their Indian allies, with eighteen pieces of artillery, came down from Lake Erie on a fleet of 360 bateaux and canoes. They forced the Pennsylvanians to surrender the fort and give up £20,000 worth of trade goods.

The other colonies did not perceive this as a threat to them. New York thought the Pennsylvanians had intruded on their trading territory, and Virginia planters wanted to buy up in the Indian hunting grounds along the Ohio. Massachusetts and New York were on the verge of war over the land between the Connecticut and Hudson rivers; Connecticut and Pennsylvania both claimed the lands of the Lenape on the upper Susquehanna, or Wyoming, valley; Georgia and South Carolina competed for trade with the Creek and Cherokee. Though their survival depended on cooperation, no colony would overlook its immediate self-interest.

But the British government perceived the French threat and ordered the colonies to meet with the Iroquois to secure their alliance against the French. Delegates from seven colonies met with Iroquois representatives in the summer of 1754 at Albany, New York. The conference was a failure. Individual colonial agents made separate agreements with the Iroquois (Virginia bought Kentucky from the Iroquois, though the Shawnee owned the land) but devised no united strategy. Franklin and Massachusetts political leader Thomas Hutchinson drew up a plan

of union, under which each colony would chose delegates to a forty-eight-member grand council, to meet every year in a different colonial capital; this council would raise troops and taxes from the colonies for common defense, though each colony would continue to govern itself. The king would appoint a president-general, to ensure that the council did not conflict with British policy. Though the Albany conference approved the plan, the colonial assemblies did not. None would cede any of its powers or prerogatives to the other colonies. Somewhat bitterly, Franklin said the colonies would only unite if the British government forced them to do so.

Meanwhile, Virginia sent its militia, led by Major George Washington, to the Allegheny and Monongahela; he attacked the French, and killed a French diplomat. The French counterattacked, captured the fort Washington had built (Fort Necessity) and sent Washington back to Virginia. Washington's skirmishes on the Monongahela frontier led England and France to declare war on each other, and the war spread from North America to the Caribbean, to Europe, the Mediterranean, to Africa, to India and the Pacific. It was the first global war. Prime Minister William Pitt recognized that the keys to victory were control of the seas and of North America. Pitt mobilized British ships and regulars and thousands of American militia troops to wrest Montreal and Quebec from the French. A subsequent force took Cuba and Florida from Spain. At the war's end Britain controlled all of America east of the Mississippi.

The British had expelled the French from the Ohio territory, but had not reckoned with the native people in it. Ottawa leader Pontiac led the Native Americans against the British, quickly overwhelming their small garrisons and taking every British outpost west of Fort Pitt, the garrison at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela. The British saw that more white settlement in the area—which Pontiac effectively blocked—would lead to more conflicts with Native Americans, which would require more troops. To avoid these problems, and put a stop to the squabbles between New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia over control of the territory, the British crown simply barred white settlement and sale of lands between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi, from Quebec to Florida. Every colony from Georgia to Connecticut resented this Proclamation of 1763. Why had they gone to war if they were to be kept out of Ohio?

Reaction against the proclamation, though, was mild compared to the reaction

against Parliament's attempts to regulate colonial trade and to pay for the defense of the colonial frontiers. Parliament began its fiscal campaign with the Sugar Act in April 1764. This cut the tax on imported molasses in half, to three pence per gallon, but, unlike the previous tax, this one contained provisions to ensure collection. Merchants would have to post a bond, guaranteeing their obedience, and specially created vice-admiralty courts, not juries, would try violators.

Along with the Sugar Act, Parliament prohibited colonies from coining or printing their own money. The object was to standardize currency and prevent wildly fluctuating notes and coins. But the real effect was to take money out of circulation and stifle colonial trade.

Merchants protested, predictably. Less predictable was their rationale for protesting: they contended that they could not be taxed without their own consent; they had not elected Parliament, and so it could not tax them. And the merchants had support in this from some influential clergy. Boston minister Jonathan Mayhew warned that "People are not usually deprived of their liberties all at once, but gradually."

Boston lawyer James Otis wrote that it was not the tax but the principle that was wrong. If the colonists could be taxed without their consent, they were in fact slaves of Parliament:

> The colonists, being men, have a right to be considered as equally entitled to all the rights of nature with the Europeans, and they are not to be restrained in the exercise of any of these rights but for the evident good of the whole community. By being or becoming members of society they have not renounced their natural liberty in any greater degree than other good citizens, and if 'tis taken from them without their consent they are so far enslaved.

He went on to argue that slavery was wrong for whites as well as blacks:

> The colonists are by the law of nature freeborn, as indeed all men are, white or black.… Does it follow that 'tis right to enslave a man because he is black? Will short curled hair like wool instead of Christian hair, as 'tis called by those whose hearts are as hard as the nether millstone, help the argument? Can any logical inference in favor of slavery be drawn from a flat nose, a long or a short face? … It is a clear truth that those who every day barter away other men's liberty will soon care little for their own.

Otis continued: "Are not women born as free as men? Would it not be infamous

to assert that the ladies are all slaves by nature?" In arguing against Parliament's power to tax the sugar trade, Otis advanced arguments against any kind of arbitrary power. Otis saw the sugar tax leading to slavery; he also saw opposition to the tax leading to the liberation of men and women, black and white, to enjoy the fruits of their own labor.

Parliament moved quickly down the path Otis predicted. Lord George Grenville, the British chancellor of the exchequer, proposed a stamp tax for the American colonies, taxing all printed documents—newspapers, pamphlets, college diplomas, deeds, bills of sale and lading, marriage licenses, legal documents, playing cards, dice, wills—at rates from three pence to four pounds each, depending on the document's value, payable in hard currency. Proof of payment would be in the form of a stamp affixed to the document. Americans protested, not just against a new series of taxes, but against the principle that Parliament could tax them. Evangelist George Whitefield warned that these taxes were the beginning of "deep plot laid" against American liberty.

In support of the tax, Charles Townshend in February 1765 asked if "these Americans, Children planted by our Care, nourished up by our Indulgence until they are grown to a Degree of Strength & Opulence, and protected by our Arms," would "grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under?"

Immediately Isaac Barre disputed Townshend's interpretation of colonial history. "They planted by your Care? No! your Oppressions planted em in America. … They nourished up by *your* indulgence? they grew by your neglect of Em. … They protected by *your* Arms? they have nobly taken up Arms in your defence." The Americans, Barre said, were "as truly Loyal as any Subjects the King has, but a people Jealous of their Lyberties and who will vindicate them," especially against policies and officials that "caused the Blood of those Sons of Liberty to recoil within them."

American opponents of the Stamp Act, which Parliament passed on March 22, 1765, began calling themselves Sons of Liberty. They built on other institutions, particularly the colonial press: Benjamin Edes of Boston, printer of the *Boston Gazette*, William Goddard of the *Providence Gazette*, Samuel Hall of the *Newport Mercury*, and William Bradford of the *Pennsylvania Journal* were all critical leaders of the Sons of Liberty, whose real strength came from each

community's working people. For example, Ebenezer MacIntosh, a Boston shoemaker, longtime leader of Boston's South End Mob, became "captain general of the Sons of Liberty," and the large elm from which his mob hung effigies of unpopular officials became the "Liberty Tree."

Patrick Henry in the Virginia assembly (the House of Burgesses) in May 1765 argued that the people of Virginia had not given up "the distinguishing characteristick of British freedom," the right to be taxed only by one's own consent. Though the assembly rejected Henry's resolutions, they were published in newspapers throughout the colonies, becoming the basis for each colony's opposition.

In Boston rumors circulated that Andrew Oliver, a merchant, secretary to the provincial government, brother-in-law of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, and newly appointed tax agent, was storing the revenue stamps in his waterfront warehouse. A mob tore the warehouse apart on the night of August 14, 1765. They found no stamps, but built a bonfire with some of the wreckage (most they tossed into the harbor), theatrically stamping each piece before tossing it into the flames. Two weeks later a mob drove Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson and his daughter from their house, destroying everything within. Stamp agents in every colony but Georgia resigned.

James Otis called for delegates from all colonies to meet in October in New York, in a congress to join in protest against the Stamp Act. Nine colonies (all but Virginia, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Georgia) sent delegates, who drew up a careful protest, saying they had "the warmest sentiments of affection and duty to His Majesty's person and government" but that the stamp tax imposed a burden on them and violated their rights as British subjects. They sent their petition to King George III, who received it but referred the matter to Parliament.

As the petition made its way to London, the Stamp Act went into effect on November 1. Ebenezer MacIntosh organized protest parades in Boston and that night walked through the streets arm in arm with merchant William Brattle, a member of the Governor's Council, showing unity between Boston's commercial leaders and emerging political leaders like MacIntosh, whose power came from an ability to mobilize dockworkers, longshoremen, and rope makers to attack the Oliver warehouse or hang effigies from the Liberty Tree. Resistance

now could afford to be more civil. Americans showed a near-unanimous determination to boycott the stamps. Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson reported in March 1766 that “the authority of every colony is in the hands of the sons of liberty,” and customs agent John Robinson reported that stamp officers felt the anger “not of a trifling Mob, but of a whole Country.”

Wanting to know why Americans had united in opposition, Parliament summoned the Pennsylvania Assembly’s London lobbyist, Benjamin Franklin, to explain. Franklin told them their insistence on taxing Americans had changed Americans’ opinion of Parliament. No longer was it “the great bulwark and security of their liberties and privileges.” Unless Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, Americans would lose their “respect and affection” for the British and, more important, cut off “all the commerce that depends on that respect and affection.” Once proud to “indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great Britain,” Americans now proudly wore “their old clothes over again, till they can make new ones.” They had stopped wearing black mourning accessories to funerals, rather than buy them from the British, and they gave up eating lamb so that the lambs could grow into wool-producing sheep. Franklin told Parliament that “the sweet little creatures are all alive to this day, with the prettiest fleeces on their backs imaginable.”

1. Mobs took to the streets in protest of the Stamp Act, 1765.

If Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, would the colonies give up their claim that Parliament could not tax them? “No, never,” Franklin said. “They will never do it, unless compelled by force of arms,” but “No power, how great soever, can force men to change their opinions.”

Could anything other than military power enforce the Stamp Act? Not even an army could enforce the stamp law in America. Soldiers would “find nobody in arms” there. “They will not find a rebellion; they may indeed make one.”

Former prime minister William Pitt called on Parliament to repeal the “unhappy,” “unconstitutional,” “unjust,” and “oppressive” act, and asked how Parliament could justify an English “borough with half a Dozen houses” having a representative in Parliament, when three million Americans had none. Pitt predicted that this struggle with America would force a reform of England’s

government, and the "rotten Part of our Constitution" would not survive.

Parliament rescinded the Stamp Act but passed the Declaratory Act, which asserted its power to control the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

Americans greeted the repeal as a victory within, not over, the British Empire. Philadelphians held off celebrating until June 4, when they observed George III's birthday. John Adams wrote that the repeal "has composed every wave of popular discord into a smooth and peaceful calm." This was a great change from the tumults, riots, and seditions of 1765. Americans believed those protests, petitions, and warnings about loss of trade, had forced Parliament to rescind the law. They could live with the Declaratory Act as long as Parliament did not enforce it.

But in 1767 Charles Townshend, chancellor of the exchequer, proposed a new series of revenue laws, taxing all lead, glass, paint, and tea imported into the colonies. Customs collectors were sent to America to make sure the taxes were paid, and new courts of admiralty were created to hear cases of ships violating the revenue acts. These new revenue laws, known as the Townshend Acts, touched off renewed political and social agitation.

More than 600 Bostonians—200 of them women—agreed not to purchase any of the taxed British imports. Philadelphia lawyer John Dickinson wrote a series of essays, *Farmer's Letters*, arguing that Parliament did not have the power to tax the colonies. Dickinson conceded that Parliament could regulate commerce but said that the colonists could only be taxed by their own consent, by assemblies they had chosen.

Sir Henry Moore, the governor of New York, suspended the assembly when it protested that Parliament did not have the power to raise revenues in the colonies. In Massachusetts, Governor Francis Bernard demanded that the assembly rescind the letter it sent to other colonies urging resistance; he dissolved the assembly when it refused. These attacks on assemblies transformed the struggle into one between arbitrary executive power and government by the people. Leaders of the suspended assemblies and the Sons of Liberty organized boycotts of British goods.

Women took to their spinning wheels—what had been a chore for solitary

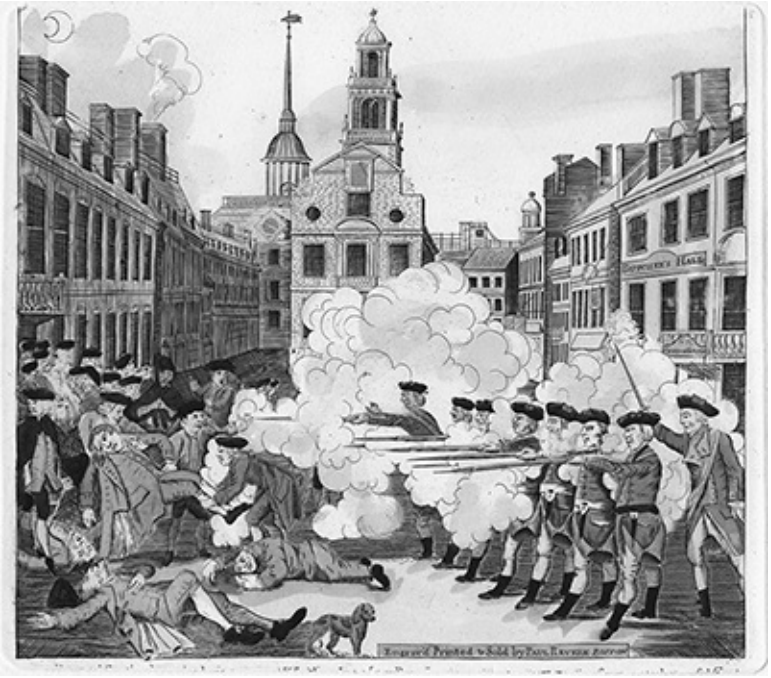
women, spinning wool into yarn, weaving yarn into cloth, now became a public political act. In Newport ninety-two “Daughters of Liberty” brought their wheels to the meeting house, producing 170 skeins of yarn as they spent the day spinning together. Making and wearing homespun cloth became political acts of resistance.

Fearing the boycotts and resistance would turn violent, Governor Bernard asked for British troops to keep peace in Boston. Two British regiments arrived in October 1768. Benjamin Franklin thought that sending troops to Boston would be “like setting up a smith’s forge in a magazine of gunpowder.”

Franklin was proven right. On March 5, 1770, rioters attacked the main British barracks, and in the ensuing street fight soldiers fired on a crowd of civilians. Five civilians were killed in what town leaders quickly called the “Horrid Massacre.” Paul Revere made an engraving of the scene, showing an orderly line of troops shooting at innocent and unarmed civilians, with the state house and the First Church looming over the tragedy; in this depiction the arbitrary power of the soldiers has usurped Boston’s legitimate civil and spiritual authority.

In the wake of the violence, Boston’s town government demanded removal of the troops, warning that ten thousand people in surrounding communities were ready to march in and drive the soldiers out. Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson (acting as governor after Bernard’s return to England) complied, having the soldiers involved in the shooting arrested and the others sent to New Jersey.

Two leading patriots, as the opponents of the tax laws called themselves, stepped forward to defend the accused soldiers. Josiah Quincy and John Adams wanted the troops out of town, but they also wanted to prove that Boston was not the ungovernable and riotous place Bernard had described. By giving British soldiers who shot unarmed civilians in the streets of Boston a fair trial, Quincy and Adams could prove that the people of Boston were law abiding. Two soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter, still a capital offense. Adams had their sentence reduced to branding on the thumbs, and the rest were acquitted. With the troops gone, Boston calmed down. Parliament eased the tension by repealing most of the Townshend duties, but to prove that it still could tax the Americans, it left in place the tax on tea.



2. Paul Revere's engraving shaped the way Americans thought of the Boston Massacre: British soldiers stand in a straight line firing into an unarmed crowd. A gun fires from the window of the Custom House (labeled "Butcher's Hall"). Looming above are the State House and First Church—legitimate government and spiritual order usurped by the armed men in uniform.

The colonies agreed on little other than that Parliament could not tax them. Massachusetts and New York had a long-standing dispute over the land between the Connecticut and Hudson rivers, and New York was on the verge of war with New Hampshire over Vermont, with the people of that area adamantly against being part of either. Pennsylvania and Connecticut both claimed the Wyoming Valley, which Connecticut settlers were farming under their seventeenth-century charter.

American hunger for land led to conflict among the colonial governments and with the native people; from Massachusetts to Georgia, white settlers eyed the land of the native people. The Mashpee Wampanoag of Cape Cod sent a delegation to ask the king to protect them from the Massachusetts government, which allowed whites to buy their land. In the Carolinas and Georgia, farmers in the backcountry were moving into the lands of the Cherokee and Creek. North Carolina sent Daniel Boone west to buy the land between the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers from the Cherokee, despite the fact that the Cherokee did not

own it.

Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, wrote to Lord Dartmouth, the secretary of state for American affairs, that the Proclamation of 1763 that closed off the trans-Appalachian west was "insufficient to restrain the Americans, and that they do and will remove as their avidity and restlessness incite them." The Americans "imagine the lands further off, are Still better than those upon which they are already settled." Dunmore said the Americans had "no attachment to Place, but wandering about seems engrafted in their Nature."

Dunmore saw two possible outcomes, neither palatable. Settlers might move into the territories and intermarry with the Indians, "the dreadful consequences" of which "may be easily foreseen." Or the provincial governments could supervise the westward movement, allowing white settlers "to form a Set of Democratical Governments of their own, upon the backs of the Old Colonies." Dunmore decided the Virginia government should take control of the frontier.

Under Dunmore's orders, Dr. John Connolly rebuilt the abandoned Fort Pitt in 1774, renamed it Fort Dunmore, and from it started a war against the Shawnees and Mingos of Kentucky and Ohio. Sir William Johnson, the British agent to the Iroquois, kept the Iroquois from supporting their Mingo and Shawnee allies against Virginia. Without Iroquois support, the Shawnee and Mingo could not hold off the aggressive Virginians, who won hunting rights in Kentucky and what is now West Virginia.

North Carolina had just emerged from its own civil war. Farmers in the piedmont were outraged that the government, seated on the coast, controlled their land and taxed them. Government agents—magistrates and justices of the peace—charged excessive fees. Fearing riots by the piedmont farmers, and knowing that juries would stand by their neighbors, North Carolina's government ordered that trials for frontier troublemakers be held at New Bern, where Governor Thomas Tryon was building, at taxpayer's expense, an elegant governor's palace. Outraged at a government that taxed but did not protect or represent them, North Carolina's backcountry farmers set out to regulate their own affairs, shutting down the courts and taking the law into their own hands. Tryon raised troops to suppress the "Regulators," defeating them in a pitched battle at Alamance Creek in 1771. Suppressed but not defeated, the Regulators of North Carolina continued to be deeply suspicious of distant and unresponsive

governments. Tryon left North Carolina to become governor of New York.

All was still relatively quiet in Massachusetts. “If it were not for an Adams or two,” newly appointed governor Thomas Hutchinson wrote, “we should do well enough.” Samuel Adams was not idle. Following the model of the Sons of Liberty, who had established a communication network among like-minded people in the different colonies, Adams in November 1772 created the Boston Committee of Correspondence, a twenty-one-member group to keep in contact with like-minded people in other towns. “We are brewing something here which will make some people’s heads reel …,” Dr. Thomas Young wrote. As Massachusetts towns formed Committees of Correspondence, Adams, clerk of the Massachusetts Assembly, had that body form a Committee of Correspondence to communicate with other assemblies. By 1774, every colonial assembly had a committee to correspond with the other assemblies; this ensured that Boston would not be isolated during the crisis that quickly ensued.

“The seditious here have raised a flame in every colony,” General Thomas Gage, commander of British military forces in America, and based in New York, wrote home to England. He blamed the English opposition’s “speeches, writings, and protests” for fanning the flames of colonial discontent. London gossip Horace Walpole called this a cruel charge, that Britain’s weak and disorganized opposition party stirred their dissent: “Might as soon light a fire with a wet dishclout.”

Americans did not need the British opposition, as the government itself effectively lit the fire. Admiral John Montagu’s fleet patrolled the American coast, ostensibly for smugglers. Lieutenant William Dudingston on the *Gaspee* was certain every fishing boat and merchant vessel he saw off Rhode Island was smuggling. He stopped and searched every vessel he could, and reprovisioned the *Gaspee* by raiding Rhode Island farms. When the fishermen and farmers complained to their governor, who complained to the admiral, Montagu warned that he would hang anyone who interfered with Dudingston. The Lieutenant became even more severe with the Rhode Islanders.

Fishermen and merchants took matters into their own hands. When Dudingston brought the *Gaspee* too close to the Narragansett shore, they boarded, forced the sailors off, and set the schooner on fire. Montagu had orders from London to seize the culprits and bring them to England for trial as pirates. But Rhode Island

chief justice Stephen Hopkins refused to allow their arrest. Admiral Montagu bemoaned the fact that the laws of Parliament would not be enforced in America except by military force.

The British government had not regarded these thirteen colonies, with their different social structures and political systems, as essential parts of the empire as a whole. When the French threatened, the colonists had not united in the interest of the British Empire. But now, as the British government tried to make them cohesive parts of the imperial fabric, the colonists began to unite against the empire that sought to govern them.

Chapter 2
Rebellion in the colonies

George III was thoroughly English, and determined to be a “patriot king” in the best Enlightenment tradition. His grandfather, George II, and great-grandfather, George I, were German princes from Hanover; they spoke little or no English and returned regularly to their Germanic principality. But George III never left England and would grace its throne for nearly sixty years. The first decade of his reign was unsteady, until he appointed Frederick, Lord North to be prime minister. Lord North shared the King’s outlook on the Empire and would serve as prime minister from 1770 until 1782.

Neither the king nor his minister was thinking of Americans when North proposed the Tea Act, which had much to do with the empire and the North ministry. The East India Company had taken over the administration of India; this gave it great potential wealth, as well as immediate and tremendous debt. North proposed lending the Company £1.5 million (about $270 million today). In return, he would appoint the company’s governors. The company would also have a monopoly on tea sold in North America, and could ship tea directly to the American markets without paying British revenue duties.

The “Day is at length arrived,” a committee of Philadelphia merchants declared when they learned of the Tea Act, “in which we must determine to live as Freemen—or as Slaves to linger out a miserable existence.” The Tea Act would make Americans subservient to the “corrupt and designing Ministry” and change their “invaluable Title of American Freemen to that of Slaves.” Americans must not give Parliament the power to control their lives. The Philadelphians insisted

that no tea be landed.

A Boston mob attacked the home of tea merchant Richard Clarke, and when the first tea ship, the *Dartmouth*, reached Boston on November 28, 1773, more than a thousand people crowded into Faneuil Hall to protest its arrival. The Sons of Liberty sent guards to make sure no tea was unloaded. Under British law, a ship could remain in port twenty days without unloading; after that its cargo must be taxed. The Sons of Liberty and the town leaders—Samuel Adams, Josiah Quincy, and others—were determined not to let the tea be unloaded or taxed. The tea merchants—all Americans—wanted the tea unloaded and sold. The ship owners—all Americans—simply wanted their vessels unharmed so they could carry cargo back to England. Two more vessels reached Boston in the ensuing weeks, but none of the other ships had reached the American ports when Bostonians took action on December 16, the night the tea had to be unloaded and the tax paid. That night, Bostonians disguised as Indians boarded the three ships, hoisted the 342 chests up to the decks, and dumped 92,586 pounds of tea, worth £9,659 (about $1.7 million today) into the harbor.

“This is the most magnificent Movement of all,” John Adams wrote. “There is a Dignity, a Majesty, a Sublimity, in this last Effort of the Patriots, that I greatly admire. The People should never rise, without doing something to be remembered—something notable And striking. This Destruction of the Tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important consequences, and so lasting, that I cant but consider it an Epocha in History.”

The destruction of the tea (it would not be called the “Boston Tea Party” for fifty years) had dramatic consequences. Paul Revere carried the news to New York, which resolved not to land the tea, and the tea consignees resigned their commissions to sell tea. The news reached Philadelphia the day before Christmas; on Christmas Day the ship *Polly* entered the Delaware. Eight thousand Philadelphians gathered in front of the state house to demand the *Polly* immediately return to England. It did. Americans would not receive the tea. When an errant tea ship sailed into the Chesapeake in April, its owner feared the consequences to himself and his reputation if he were known as a tea merchant. He had the fully loaded ship set on fire.

As Americans united against Parliament and the East India tea, Parliament struck back, closing Boston harbor until the lawless town paid for the tea; suspending

Massachusetts's government, and requiring the governor's permission for town meetings; and giving the governor, not the people, the power to choose sheriffs, magistrates, and the Governor's Council. General Thomas Gage, commander of British military forces in North America, was named the new governor, and he was allowed to lodge troops in private homes. Finally, Parliament extended Quebec's boundaries to the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, cutting that territory off from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York and giving Canada's Catholics freedom to practice their religion. North and the British government believed that Massachusetts was particularly rebellious but that most colonists were loyal. Isolate Massachusetts, prevent the rebellious contagion from spreading, and ultimately even the troublesome and factious people of Massachusetts would come to their senses.

New Englanders mobilized to prevent isolation. Rhode Island's assembly called for delegates from all the colonies to a Continental Congress. John Adams predicted that "the wisest Men upon the Continent" would resolve the crisis.

Men and women were engaged now in the cause. Fifty one women in Edenton, North Carolina, signed a pledge not to buy tea or other British goods. Writing to his family in North Carolina from London, Arthur Iredell asked, "Is there a Female Congress at Edenton, too? I hope not, for we Englishmen are afraid of the Male Congress, but if the Ladies, who have ever, since the Amazonian Era, been esteemed the most formidable enemies, if they, I say, should attack us, the most fatal consequences is to be dreaded." While Iredell's tone was somewhat mocking, the fact that women now were engaged in this political campaign—that British policy had stirred resistance in the homes as well as the taverns and coffee houses—rightly alarmed the policy makers.

Every colony except Georgia was represented when Congress gathered in Philadelphia in September 1774. Would the colonies side with Boston? Or would they advise the Bostonians to pay for the tea and to stop being so troublesome?

Outside of Boston, which was now occupied by General Gage and British troops, delegates from Suffolk County's towns met and resolved that the "Intolerable Acts"—shutting the port, suspending the government, extending Quebec, allowing quartering of troops—violated the British constitution. They called for suspending trade with Britain, and, since Parliament had illegally suspended their charter, they called for the people of Massachusetts to form a

suspended their charter, they called for the people of Massachusetts to form a new government. Paul Revere left Boston with these resolutions on September 11; six days later Congress unanimously endorsed them. Adams called it “one of the happiest Days of my Life,” writing in his diary, “This Day convinces me that America will support the Massachusetts or perish with her.”

Congress petitioned the king to relieve Boston and change policy, and called on the people of Quebec to join them. It proposed meeting again in May 1775 if the British government did not respond favorably to their petition.

In Boston, General Gage tried to defuse the situation. Hearing that the towns were taking gunpowder from a provincial powder house in Charlestown (now in Somerville), Gage had the remaining powder brought to Boston. This provoked wild rumors that the British fleet had bombarded Boston, killing six men. Four thousand men gathered on Cambridge Common. Unable or unwilling to attack Gage or his troops, they stormed the homes of local Tories, who fled to Gage’s protection in Boston.

Despite having the king’s commission, Gage realized his actual power extended only as far as his troops controlled. The people in the Massachusetts towns recognized a different government—town governments, chosen by majority votes in town meetings. Men and women who wished to remain loyal to the king and the legitimate government had to flee from their homes to be under Gage’s protection.

The Portsmouth, New Hampshire, militia surprised and overwhelmed the six British soldiers garrisoning Fort William and Mary in December, spiriting away its cannon and munitions. Salem’s militia mobilized in February 1775 to seize cannon from the British regulars. The Americans would not attack the soldiers—they blocked the roads in Salem to stymie their march—but forced them either to surrender or to fire the first shot. “Put your enemy in the wrong, and keep him so,” Samuel Adams wrote in March, “is a wise maxim in politics, as well as in war.”

Gage and London both failed at conciliation. William Pitt, the former prime minister, proposed pulling Gage’s forces from Boston and limiting Parliament’s power to tax the colonies. Instead, Parliament followed Lord North’s lead. Declaring Massachusetts to be in rebellion on February 9, 1775, it ordered the arrest of provincial government leaders, and authorized Gage to use force to

arrest of provincial government leaders, and authorized Gage to use force to restore British rule. Gage moved quickly once he received these instructions on April 14, 1775. Four days later he sent eight hundred troops to destroy the munitions stored at Concord, seventeen miles from Boston.

Their march did not remain a secret for long. William Dawes and Paul Revere slipped out of Boston to alert the local militia, and by dawn, when the British troops reached Lexington, about seventy militia were gathered on the common. As they heard the regulars march into town, some militiamen urged their captain, John Parker, to abandon the common—a few dozen poorly trained militiamen were no match for eight hundred British regulars. But Parker ordered, “Stand your ground! Don’t fire unless fired upon! But if they want to have a war let it begin here!”

Parker had second thoughts as the British forces massed in front of him. “Disperse, you rebels,” an officer shouted, “damn you, throw down your arms and disperse.” Parker ordered his men to disperse. Some began to move off, but others had not heard the order. In the confusion, as more British soldiers joined the line, and others moved to militia’s left, a shot rang out. No one knows who—militiaman, British soldier, or bystander—fired that first shot, but the British opened fire. Few militiamen had time to fire as they fled from the British, leaving eight of their comrades dead on the common. One British soldier was wounded. The regulars marched on to Concord.

They did not find much in Concord. Alerted to the regulars’ approach, the rebels hid their supplies. The British destroyed three cannon, threw some bullets into a pond, and built a bonfire of gun carriages in front of Concord’s town house. When the bonfire threatened to spread, the soldiers helped the locals protect the town house.

Captain Walter Laurie’s detachment moved north of town. At the North Bridge over the Concord River, they met five hundred militiamen from surrounding towns, who had heard the alarm early in the morning and marched toward Concord. Now in perfect formation, these militia units joined men from Concord on the hill sloping down to the North Bridge. As the Americans neared the bridge, two more British units came to join Laurie on the other side. In the confusion the British fired across the river. Though two Americans fell dead, the rest continued advancing. Major John Buttrick of Concord, whose family had

farmed this field since 1638, shouted “Fire, fellow soldiers, for God’s sake fire!”

Buttrick’s men fired. To their surprise, the British began retreating toward Concord. Laurie had no reason to push on—he knew the munitions were destroyed—but to the American militia, the sight of British soldiers retreating under fire was a novelty. Emboldened, the militia pursued. By this time the alarm had spread further, bringing fresh militia from eastern Massachusetts as well as New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Six different New England militia units attacked as the regulars retreated from Concord to Lexington, and the entire retreat to Boston was a torment to the British. From behind walls, houses, and trees, the Americans fired at the British column, or waited in quickly organized ambushes to attack the soldiers. “We retired for 15 miles under an incessant fire,” reported Lord Hugh Percy, “which like a moving circle surrounded and followed us wherever we went.”

By the time the British reached the safety of Charlestown, sixty-five men were dead, 180 wounded, and another twenty-seven missing. The Americans had lost fifty men, with thirty-nine wounded and five missing. Worse than being drubbed by men they regarded as a peasant rabble, the regulars now found themselves surrounded by fifteen thousand New England militiamen, who camped in Cambridge, northwest of Boston, and to the south in Roxbury, cutting off Gage’s troops from supplies of food and firewood.

Militia rallied throughout New England. Benedict Arnold, a Connecticut merchant and sea captain, led a group of volunteers north to Lake Champlain. There he joined with Ethan Allen’s militia, the Green Mountain Boys—formed to defend Vermont from New York’s encroachments—and surprised the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga on May 9, demanding surrender of the fort and its cannon. When the surprised British commander asked to whom he was surrendering, Allen replied, “In the name of the great Jehovah, and the Continental Congress.”

The delegates to the Continental Congress did not know of Allen’s audacious capture in their name when they reconvened the next day. But they knew about Lexington and Concord, which seemed to be Britain’s answer to their petitions. George Washington signaled that the time for petitioning had passed by arriving in his Virginia militia colonel’s uniform. John Adams proposed that Congress adopt the militiamen surrounding Boston as a Continental Army and nominated

Washington to command them. His cousin Samuel seconded the motion. Washington accepted on the stipulation he serve without pay. Telling Patrick Henry this would be the ruin of his public reputation, Washington left for Cambridge, arriving to take command of the militia forces—now the Continental Army—on July 3, 1775.

What was this Continental Army fighting for? Congress adopted a Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms, reiterating loyalty to the king but insisting on the people's fundamental right to govern themselves. Some leaders in Congress, such as John Dickinson, were not prepared to go further. John Adams compared Congress to a "large Fleet sailing under convoy. The fleetest Sailors must wait for the dullest and slowest." But the fleet's destination was still a mystery.

Britain had a clearer aim—restoring colonial loyalty—but no clear strategy for achieving it. Some British military advisors favored a blockade, though if their navy patrolled North America, France and Spain would threaten India, the West Indies, and even Britain itself. Military subjection by land forces would require at least twenty thousand men—more than were available in Britain. Fundamental disagreements among government ministers, between the ministers and the British commanders, and among the generals in America stymied the war effort. Strategists disagreed about how to win the war, but all agreed that most Americans outside New England were loyal to Britain. Isolate New England, and Britain could secure the loyalty of the rest of the Americans.

By now three more British generals had arrived in Boston. William Howe replaced Gage as commander in chief; Henry Clinton came as second in command (and would ultimately succeed Howe); John Burgoyne came as well. Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne disagreed about everything except that Gage had been too conciliatory. Perhaps he had. Clinton believed that Gage's American wife, Margaret Kemble Gage, was a conduit for information to the rebels. Though the allegations have never been proven, Mrs. Gage, like most Americans, was torn in her loyalties.

Howe also was torn. Running for Parliament in 1774, he had opposed the ministerial policies, which he charged were bringing on a war against the Americans, a war he had pledged not to fight. His brother George had died leading Massachusetts troops in the Seven Years' War, and his family cherished the fact that Massachusetts had contributed to George Howe's Westminster

the fact that Massachusetts had contributed to George Howe's Westminster Abbey monument. His sister Catherine had arranged informal meetings between their brother Richard, the admiral, and the American agent Benjamin Franklin. Now Howe was in Boston to direct a war whose end was to restore American loyalty. He thought an overwhelming show of force would scatter the American militia; after that the New Englanders could be reconciled.

Clinton saw the matter differently. The British should isolate the New Englanders, not try to reconcile them. Instead of Boston, their base should be New York, a city he knew well since his father had been its governor for ten years. Ten thousand British troops could protect the loyal subjects in the middle colonies, while ten thousand moved down from Canada along Lake Champlain and the Hudson, rallying Loyalists and the Iroquois, and cutting off New England. This would require twenty thousand troops and a naval blockade. If this was too much, Clinton proposed simply withdrawing British forces to Canada and Florida. A taste of the "anarchy and confusion which must naturally be their lot" would convince Americans that rebellion was folly.

Howe and Clinton disagreed on long- and short-term goals, but also found a situation in Boston they had not anticipated. When they left England they did not know that an American army surrounded Boston and controlled the countryside. With Cape Cod whaleboats, the rebels scoured the harbor islands of sheep and hogs, leaving British forces to subsist on salted meat. When a British foraging party brought some badly needed cows back from far-off Connecticut, the local press mocked them:

> In days of yore the British troops
> Have taken warlike kings in battle;
> But now, alas! their valor droops,
> For Gage takes naught but—harmless cattle.

Still, the newly arrived generals were optimistic. "Let us get in," Burgoyne said when told of the British soldiers' cramped quarters on Boston's narrow peninsula, "and we will soon find elbow room." Establishing himself in John Hancock's elegant Beacon Hill mansion, Clinton advised that the best elbow room would be Dorchester Neck to the south, the highest point in the surrounding area. Control of the heights would give the British command of the harbor, Castle Island, and the towns of Boston, Dorchester, and Roxbury. But, certain the rebels could not hold Dorchester Heights, the British left them unfortified.

unfortified.

Clinton on June 16 observed rebels moving onto Bunker Hill in Charlestown, the highest point to Boston's north. British forces had begun fortifying Bunker Hill in April, but Gage had called them off, not thinking the rebels would use the hill for an attack on Boston.

Clinton and Howe now urged an immediate attack. The next morning, June 17, the British forces began their assault to disperse the rebels from Bunker Hill, then drive the rebels from their camps in Cambridge, and cross the Charles River to drive the rebels from Roxbury. This three-day campaign would disperse the rebel militia and give the British forces their badly needed elbow room. As regulars were ferried to Charlestown that morning, others baked bread and roasted meat for the expedition.

It was early afternoon on a sweltering June day when the regulars were ready on the Charlestown shore. After his men finished dinner, at about three, Howe had the well-prepared soldiers begin a slow march up Breed's Hill, just to the south of Bunker Hill. From its summit they would be able to see the rebel fortifications on Bunker Hill.

They never had the chance. As the British line reached the top of Breed's Hill, a furious raking fire erupted from a redoubt buried on the summit. This Breed's Hill redoubt had not existed the previous day. Now it was filled with New England militiamen, who aimed low, targeted officers, and held their fire until they were sure of a hit. Legend has it that to save ammunition and make sure of their aim, Captain Thomas Prescott shouted, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes!" The first lines of British infantry took heavy casualties and retreated to the base of the hill.

Howe ordered another assault. Stepping over the wounded and dead, the British troops reached the top, but again the well-aimed fire turned them back.

From Copp's Hill in Boston, Burgoyne saw snipers in Charlestown picking off British soldiers as they advanced. He had artillery lob incendiary bombs into Charlestown, setting it ablaze. General Clinton had himself rowed across to lead more men into battle. For the third assault the regulars left their packs at the base and quickly marched to the top.

Now nearly out of ammunition, the American defenders decided to give up Breed's Hill and Bunker Hill but save their army to fight again. Gathering the remaining ammunition, a cadre of men prepared to stall the British while the rest retreated to Cambridge. On the third assault the British troops stormed the battlements with bayonets fixed, attacking the remaining defenders who now were out of ammunition. This final and brutal assault won the day—the British flag flew over Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill. But more than a thousand British soldiers and officers were dead or wounded, the rest could not move beyond Charlestown, and the American army survived. During the entire eight year war, the British army would lose 77 officers; 25 of them died on June 17, 1775. Rhode Islander Nathanael Greene wished the Americans could sell the British another hill at the same price.

A defeat for the Americans, Bunker Hill had nevertheless proven they could fight and left Howe and the British with a new respect for their enemy. On June 16 Breed's Hill was a pasture; the next day its fortification held off two British assaults. If the Americans could do this overnight, what must they have done in Cambridge or Roxbury? Colonel James Abercrombie reported idle reports among his men were "magnified to such a degree that the rebels are seen in the air carrying cannon and mortars on their shoulders."

Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne realized that Boston, politically and militarily, was a poor British base. Their best option was to leave, but the British government had sent them to win the war, not give up territory, and would not tolerate a sudden evacuation. But as they held Boston, the Americans gained elsewhere. Richard Montgomery led an American army up Lake Champlain, and occupied Montreal while Benedict Arnold besieged Quebec. Virginia's rebel militia defeated British regulars and their Loyalist allies, forcing Lord Dunmore, the royal governor, to take refuge on a British warship. In Parliament, Charles James Fox noted that though the British held Boston, they were besieged there and in Quebec, their governor was exiled from Virginia, and the Americans were in Montreal. Not William Pitt, he declared, nor Alexander the Great, nor Julius Caesar, in all their wars had gained as much territory as Lord North had lost in one campaign.

From his vessel on the Chesapeake, Dunmore declared martial law and offered freedom to slaves who would rise against their rebellious masters. A desperate act, it still threatened the slave-holding Virginians. A South Carolinian told John Adams that a British officer promising "Freedom to all the Negroes who would

Adams that a British officer promising "Freedom to all the Negroes who would join his Camp," could quickly enlist twenty-thousand blacks in Georgia and South Carolina. "The Negroes have a wonderfull Art of communicating Intelligence among themselves. It will run severall hundreds of Miles in a Week or Fortnight," though the British knew in case of emancipation "the Slaves of the Tories would be lost as well as those of the Whiggs," and did not want rebellion among their own West Indian slaves, on whose labor the sugar economy depended.

British authority in America crumbled as 1775 came to a close. The king proclaimed the colonies all to be in a state of rebellion, and Parliament forbade trade with the colonies, declared them out of British protection, and threatened to seize any American ships found on the high seas. Dunmore sent a raiding party ashore on the first day of 1776 to burn Norfolk. But banning trade and burning towns would not restore the inhabitants' loyalty.

Could the generals subdue the rebels? Or would a more conciliatory ministry that would not tax the Americans replace Lord North? Could the militia surrounding Boston maintain a siege through the winter, or would they return to their homes? If they went home, would they willingly return to the siege in the spring? Neither side, rebel or British, had a clear end in sight. Was the aim reconciliation? Or subjugation? Or was it independence?

Clarification came in the second week of January, 1776, in fifty pages of an anonymous pamphlet. *Common Sense* forcefully argued that the united colonies should break with the British crown. Americans had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by remaining in the British Empire, and Americans had the resources to defeat the greatest military power in the world. Independence was not only possible, the pamphlet argued, but necessary.

Common Sense looked to the future, not the past. It did not recite the history of the years since 1763 or dwell on the colonists' grievances. The cause was not merely America's.

> The sun never shone on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom; but of a continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time, by the proceedings now … .
>
> O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every

> spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for all mankind.

America and England had to part. Americans could not remain tied to Europe. Though England's government was better than the despotisms of France or Spain, still its monarchy and aristocracy put up artificial barriers to the full enjoyment of the rights of man. Americans needed new governments based not on Europe's antiquated systems but on their own ideals.

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again." Not "since the days of Noah" had people had such an opportunity. "The birthday of a new world is at hand, and a race of men, perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom from the events of a few months."

By March, 120,000 copies of *Common Sense* had been sold; half a million copies were in print by year's end. The author did not remain anonymous for long. Thomas Paine had arrived from England just a year earlier, leaving behind a failed marriage and a failed career as an excise-tax officer. Carrying a letter of introduction from Franklin, he found work in Philadelphia writing magazine pieces. With *Common Sense* he changed the political dynamic in America.

As the anonymous author Thomas Paine changed the political dynamic, in New England an unknown former book seller, Henry Knox, shifted the military dynamic. Now an officer in Washington's army, Knox trekked to Fort Ticonderoga late in 1775. With hired oxen, Knox and his men dragged Ticonderoga's heavy artillery, captured by Allen and Arnold in the spring, across the frozen roads and rivers of Massachusetts. He delivered them to Washington in Cambridge in February. While Washington's Cambridge batteries fired on Boston from the north, General John Thomas, a physician turned soldier, brought the cannon from Roxbury to Dorchester Heights—which Clinton had urged fortified in June—on the bitterly cold night of March 4, 1776.

When the sun rose on March 5, Howe and the British forces saw a fortress where yesterday had been a barren hilltop. Expecting Howe to storm Dorchester Heights, Washington asked the "men of Boston" if they would allow a British triumph on that day—the Fifth of March—the anniversary of the Boston Massacre. The men were ready for an attack, though it never came.

A northeast storm brought snow and wind and made a British attack impossible. Recognizing that Boston was not an effective base from which to win back colonial loyalty, and wary of another victory as costly as Bunker Hill, Howe ordered his forces to evacuate. On March 17, 1776, the British army and fleet, along with several thousand Massachusetts Loyalists, left the town, and civil government was restored.

Washington anticipated that Howe and his army would sail for New York. As soon as the last British soldiers were on their transports, Washington ordered his own men to begin their march to New York to secure its harbor. Howe and his forces sailed for New York by way of Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they put more than a thousand exiled Loyalists ashore.

While the British were evacuating Boston, Henry Clinton was trying to preserve loyal Georgia and the Carolinas. He had arrived in March off North Carolina, expecting to be met by six thousand Scottish Highlanders from the North Carolina Piedmont. Instead he met the governors of North and South Carolina, Josiah Martin and William, Lord Campbell, respectively, accompanied by a few slaves. The six thousand Highlanders had been beaten by rebel militia at Moore's Creek Bridge, near present-day Wilmington, North Carolina. As they asked to take refuge on his warship, Martin and Campbell assured Clinton that the Carolinas remained loyal. Clinton put the governors ashore on an island, to await the rising of their loyal people, while their slaves caught fish and foraged for wild cabbages to feed them.

Clinton meanwhile received new instructions from London. The loyal Carolinas would not need him, and once he secured Charleston he should return to Boston to assist Howe. Clinton thought this plan "false" and "chimerical" as there were not enough "friends of government" in Georgia or the Carolinas to "defend themselves when the troops are withdrawn." Any Loyalists he mobilized would "be sacrificed" when he left; neither he nor his government knew that Howe had already abandoned Boston.

Clinton was sailing in June for Charleston, South Carolina. He would first take the poorly defended key to Charleston harbor, Sullivan's Island. But bad weather kept him at sea, and by the time wind and tide shifted, the rebel militia had fortified the island. Local intelligence told Clinton that from undefended Long Island his men could wade to Sullivan's Island at low tide, when the water

would barely reach their knees. But it turned out the channel at low tide was seven feet deep. Under heavy fire from Sullivan's Island, Clinton's men floundered in the water before retreating to their ships. They tried again on Sullivan's Island, but though their artillery pounded the rebel defenses, the militia repulsed them. Humiliated, and mocked by the Carolina militia, Clinton sailed to join Howe, who was now on his way to New York.

British strategists knew they needed more men than England could provide. Clinton thought Russians would be ideal for fighting in America—tough, used to a variety of climates, and best of all, unlikely to desert as they could not speak English. But Catherine the Great politely refused, saying she did not want to imply that George III could not put down his own rebellions. So the British turned to Germany. As elector of Hanover, George III lent five of his own German battalions to himself as the king of England. These men replaced British troops garrisoning Minorca and Gibraltar, and the British troops sailed for America. Hanoverians stayed in Europe, but troops leased from Hesse-Cassel and Brunswick went to America. Twelve thousand men—one of every four able-bodied subjects—and thirty-two cannon went from Hesse-Cassel to America; the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel received the soldiers' pay and expenses, plus £110,000 for each year they served and for one year after they returned home. The Duke of Brunswick received £15,000 for every year of service and £30,000 for two years after the return of the seven thousand Brunswickers dispatched in service of the British king in America.

Losing Boston, the American occupation of Montreal, and governors exiled by supposedly loyal subjects made the restoration of the American colonies more difficult, but not less likely. The British were surprised, but not defeated. The Americans would need more weapons and ships to defeat the British and German troops. But loyalty and good will are not fostered by military force. But the American goal still was not clear. Was it independence, as Thomas Paine and John Adams insisted? Or was it Parliament's disavowal of its intrusive power over them? The first question raised too many others to seem viable; the second seemed even less likely, as Parliament now hired German mercenaries to enforce its will.

Chapter 3
Independence

“I long to hear that you have declared an independency,” Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John, in April 1776, “and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors.” She urged him not to “put such unlimited power into the hands of Husbands,” who, under the law, controlled all of a wife’s property. She urged her husband to protect women from the “vicious and Lawless” who could, under the law, treat women with “cruelty and indignity.”

“Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could,” she said, quoting a well-known political axiom. Abigail’s quote, though, was more pointedly about men than about human nature. “If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies,” she warned, “we are determined to foment a Rebelion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.”

John’s response from Philadelphia, where he and Congress were grappling with questions of government and independence, did not please her. “As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our struggle has loosened the bands of Government everywhere. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient—that schools and Colledges were grown turbulent—that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to the Masters.” But her letter revealed that a more numerous and powerful group was now rising up, he thought, at the instigation of the British government. “After

stirring up Tories, Landjobbers, Trimmers, Bigots, Canadians, Indians, Negroes, Hanoverians, Hessians, Russians, Irish Roman Catholicks, Scotch Renegadoes, at last they have stimulated them to demand new Priviledges and threaten to rebell."

Men knew better, he said, than to repeal their "masculine system" of governing—which he said was only imaginary. This exchange reveals how complex declaring independence would be. Americans were taking a position not only on their relationship with the British Empire but on the very basis of government, and on the nature of society itself. Why were women subject to the arbitrary rule of husbands and fathers? Why, if the Americans claimed liberty as a fundamental birthright, was one out of every five Americans enslaved? What role would native people or religious dissenters have in a new political society? Declaring independence, difficult though it was, would prove less complicated than resolving these other conundrums that would follow from it.

By spring 1776 British authority had collapsed in all of the colonies. Provincial congresses and committees of safety, mainly composed of members of the suspended colonial assemblies, took on the tasks of government administration. But, having rebelled against a Parliament that exceeded its powers, these men were wary of exceeding their own. They had been created as temporary bodies—what gave them the power to tax or to demand military service? Late in 1775 Congress instructed two colonies that had asked for guidance—South Carolina, whose white minority needed a government to prevent rebellion by the black majority, and New Hampshire—to form new governments. On May 10, 1776, it called on all the colonies to create new governments. William Duane of New York said this call was "a machine for fabricating independence."

North Carolina's provincial congress instructed its delegates to Congress to vote for independence, and the towns of Massachusetts (except Barnstable), voted for independence in April 1776. Virginia's provincial congress resolved in May that "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states." Richard Henry Lee introduced and John Adams seconded this resolution in Congress on June 7. Some delegates—the New Yorkers, who had been instructed not to support independence, and Delaware's John Dickinson—balked. Rather than have a bitter debate, Congress put off a vote. But it appointed Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert Livingston of New York to draft a declaration.

Adams knew from Jefferson's 1774 "Summary View of the Rights of British America" and the 1775 declaration on the "Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms" that the Virginian could state complicated arguments with grace and efficiency. The declaration's purpose was not to break new philosophical ground, but to prepare a platform on which everyone in Congress, and in the states they represented, could stand. It had to be clear, not controversial, and utterly consistent with the country's prevailing mood.

The declaration begins with an explanation of the document's purpose. One group of people is preparing to separate from another, and to take their place among the world's nations. They respect the rest of the world's opinions enough to explain their reasons, beginning with a series of "self-evident" truths—basic assumptions that justify all further actions. These truths are: all men are created equal; all men have certain "inalienable rights," including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; in order to secure these rights, people create governments, which derive their powers "from the consent of the governed"; when a government begins violating rather than protecting these rights, the people have a right to change that government or to abolish it and create a new one to protect their rights. This was all expressed in one sentence.

The next sentence observes that prudent men would not change a government for "light and transient causes," and in fact people were more likely to suffer than to change their customary systems. But when "a long train" of abuses showed that the government was attempting "to reduce them under absolute despotism," the people have a right—indeed, a duty—to "throw off such government" and create a new one to protect their fundamental rights.

Having explained the right to throw off a government before it became despotic, the declaration lists the British government's actions that now made rebellion necessary. The grievances were not surprising: since 1764 the colonists had been protesting against the acts of Parliament—the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, Declaratory Act, the Townshend duties, the Quartering Act, the Tea Act, the Boston Port Bill, the Quebec Act, the Prohibitory Act. But the declaration shifted the blame from Parliament to the king. In fact, "Parliament" is never mentioned. All is charged against the King, and each of the twenty-seven indictments begins with "he."

The king had refused to approve laws their assemblies passed, made judges

dependent for their salaries on the crown, kept standing armies in peace time, quartered troops in private homes, and protected those soldiers “by a mock trial from punishment for any murders which they should commit” on peaceful inhabitants. This reference to the Boston massacre was somewhat ironic, since John Adams had been the counsel for the accused in that “mock trial.” The list of grievances continued: the king had cut off colonial trade; he had set up the Quebec government, or, as the declaration put it, abolished “the free system of English laws” in that province (which had only recently been introduced to English law). He had taken away colonial charters and suspended their legislatures. Declaring the Americans out of his protection, he had “plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, & destroyed the lives of our people,” and now was sending “large armies of foreign mercenaries, to compleat the works of death, desolation & tyranny,” and, as if this was not enough, he was instigating domestic insurrections by arming slaves and the “merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes & conditions.”

Congress cut the final charge in Jefferson’s draft, which charged the king with waging “cruel war against human nature itself,” violating the sacred rights of life and liberty of a “distant people, who never offended him” by forcing them into slavery in a distant hemisphere. The African slave trade—“this piratical warfare”—was the shameful policy of the “Christian king of Great Britain,” who was so “determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold” he had vetoed their attempts to “restrain this execrable commerce.”

This passage on the slave trade is far longer than any of the other charges against the king. It concluded with a related but very different charge. Not only had the king forced Americans to buy slaves, he was now trying to get these wronged people “to rise in arms among us” and win the liberty “of which he has deprived them” by killing the Americans he had forced to buy these enslaved men and women. Jefferson accused the king of atoning for his crimes against the liberties of one people—the enslaved—by having them take the lives of another people—the colonists. Congress struck out this whole passage on slavery and the slave trade.

After this list of charges, the declaration insisted that the Americans’ petitions for redress had been answered only by repeated injuries. A “prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be

the ruler of a free people." Later in life Adams thought that perhaps they should not have called George III a tyrant. George III, determined to be a "patriot king," smarted at this label. But he alone was not to blame. Americans had "warned" the British people of attempts by "their legislature"—a reference to Parliament—"to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us." But the British people had been deaf to "the voice of justice and consanguinity," so Americans had no choice but to "hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends."

For all these reasons, the declaration stated, the united colonies "are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states," absolved from all allegiance to the British crown. It concluded by announcing that all connection between the people of the colonies and the state of Great Britain was totally dissolved.

Congress voted in favor of independence on July 2; two days later, it adopted the declaration. Printer John Dunlap published five hundred copies to distribute throughout the country. At the top are the words, "In Congress, July 4, 1776." The document is titled "A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled." Prominently appearing in one bold line were the words "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA," appearing in print for the first time. The new country had a name.

Bells rang and cannon fired after the people of Philadelphia heard independence declared on July 8. The militia paraded and tore down symbols of royal authority after the reading. Throughout the country, as the people heard the declaration read in public gatherings, they reacted the same way, ringing bells, firing cannon, and tearing down royal symbols. Washington on July 9 had the declaration read to his troops in New York. Then his soldiers and the people of New York together pulled down the statue of George III and cut it to pieces. The women—both New Yorkers and the women following the army—melted the king's statue down into bullets.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

ATTEST. CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

3. The first printing of the Declaration of Independence, on July 4, 1776, of the Americans' reasons for rebelling. This document created a nation with a birthdate (July 4) and a name: The United States of America.

Bullets they would need. As the declaration was being read in Manhattan, thirty-thousand British troops, the largest European force ever sent overseas, were coming ashore on Staten Island. Washington knew his poorly armed and poorly trained New England soldiers could not defend New York from the army commanded by General William and the navy under his brother, Admiral Sir Richard Howe. Washington also had learned by now that the Americans had failed in Canada. The French along the St. Lawrence too well remembered New England's wars against them, and the able British governor, General Sir Guy Carleton, rallied them to break the American siege of Quebec, then beat them at Trois-Rivières. By June the badly depleted Americans—ravaged by smallpox and a Canadian winter—were retreating from Montreal.

Washington realized New York was indefensible. To hold the city of twenty-two

Washington realized New York was indefensible. To hold the city of twenty-two thousand at the lower tip of Manhattan, he would also have to hold Brooklyn, whose heights loomed across the East River. To hold Brooklyn he would have to defend all of Long Island, impossible with no ships and only nineteen thousand men. Washington realized this; so did General Howe. He sent Clinton on August 22 to Long Island's south shore. American Loyalists thronged to support Clinton's landing; no American rebels opposed him. Quickly Clinton's German and British troops killed or captured fourteen hundred American troops, as the rest fled to their Brooklyn stronghold. The Battle of Long Island, the largest-scale battle in the entire Revolutionary War, was a disaster for the Americans.

Half of Washington's army was now trapped in Brooklyn. Howe could easily destroy it and crush the rebellion. But, hoping to avoid unnecessary casualties both of his own men and the deluded Americans, he decided on a siege of Brooklyn. Clinton advised him to seize Kings Bridge over the Harlem River, before Washington's Manhattan troops escaped into the Bronx. But Howe was more interested in lower Manhattan, where his brother's fleet could dock, and also in reconciliation.

Admiral Howe had written to Franklin when he reached Staten Island, proposing they meet to discuss reconciliation. He recalled that they had met over games of chess in 1774 at Catherine Howe's London home, discussing ways to preserve what Franklin called "that fine and noble China Vase the British Empire." Franklin now said reconciliation was impossible, that he hoped for peace between the two countries—not among people of one country. He advised Howe to resign his command rather than pursue a war he knew to be unwise and unjust.

But this was before the debacle on Long Island. Howe sent captured American general John Sullivan to Philadelphia to propose that Congress send someone to discuss reconciliation. Sullivan reported enthusiastically that Howe could have the Declaratory Act set aside. John Adams opposed negotiating with Howe, wishing that "the first ball that had been fired on the day of the defeat of our army [on Long Island] had gone through [Sullivan's] head." Congress sent Adams, Franklin, and Edward Rutledge, to meet the admiral on Staten Island.

On their way to Staten Island, Adams was not inspired by the "thoughtless dissipation" of the American officers and soldiers "straggling and loitering" in New Jersey. They put on a bold front in their meeting with Howe, bringing with

[illegible] them to Staten Island the officer Howe had dispatched as a hostage, to wait on the New Jersey shore. Howe's face brightened when he saw this, and he told the Americans their trust "was the most sacred of Things."

This was the high point of the three-hour meeting. Howe supplied "good Claret, good Bread, cold Ham, Tongues, and Mutton," but said he could consider his guests only as influential citizens, not as a committee of Congress. "Your Lordship may consider me, in what light you please," John Adams said quickly, "and indeed I should be willing to consider myself, for a few moments, in any Character which would be agreeable to your Lordship, except that of a *British Subject*."

"Mr. Adams is a decided Character," Howe said to Franklin and Rutledge. They replied that they had come to listen. Howe outlined his proposal—if the Americans resumed their allegiance to the king, the king would pardon them for rebelling. (Adams learned later that this amnesty did not include him.) Rutledge spoke up: after two years of anarchy, the states had created new governments; it was now too late for reconciliation.

Howe spoke of his own gratitude to Massachusetts for the Westminster Abbey monument to honor his brother, and he now "felt for America, as for a Brother, and if America should fall, he should feel and lament it, like the loss of a Brother."

"We will do our Utmost Endeavours," Franklin assured him with a smile and a bow, "to save your Lordship that mortification."

The diplomats crossed back to New Jersey, and Howe prepared to crush Washington's army. A violent storm had prevented an attack on the Brooklyn camp, and a dense fog then had allowed Washington to get his army across the East River. They had a chance now to escape into New Jersey or up the Hudson, but also had Congress's wish that they hold New York. As the commissioners departed from Staten Island, Howe's forces began their attack on Washington's lines on Manhattan. Four days later, Howe and the British army held New York, which would be their base for the next seven years.

Washington held Harlem Heights (now Washington Heights) at Manhattan's northern tip, and his men built Fort Washington and Fort Lee on either side of

northern tip, and his men built Fort Washington and Fort Lee on either side of the Hudson. But Guy Carleton was now moving down from Canada, destroying the American vessels trying to hold Lake Champlain. Carleton held Crown Point, just a dozen miles from Ticonderoga, by mid-October. Ticonderoga would give him control of the Hudson, and he could trap Washington between his Canadian army and Howe's forces in New York.

"Whenever an army composed as this of the rebels is," Clinton wrote, "has once felt itself in a situation so alarming, it can never recover." The British strategy was destroying Americans' confidence in themselves and in Washington. "It loses all confidence in its chief; it trembles whenever its rear is threatened."

The British moved up the East River, through the deadly currents of Hell Gate—they anticipated losing hundreds of men in this treacherous maneuver, but only lost two boats—and landed their forces on Throggs Neck. They now had access to Westchester County and could trap Washington in Harlem. Washington moved from Harlem to White Plains, where the British had attacked in October, squeezing his remaining eleven thousand Americans into a narrow tract divided by the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, between Harlem and Peekskill. Washington crossed over to Hackensack, New Jersey.

Howe sent General Charles Cornwallis to protect New Jersey's loyal farmers, whom he needed to provision his army in New York; and though Clinton advised taking Philadelphia, Howe instead sent him to Newport, Rhode Island—unlike the rivers near New York, Narragansett Bay rarely froze, and the fleet would need a winter anchorage. The year had begun with Washington surrounding the British in Boston; as it neared its end he was himself surrounded in Westchester, with the Howes confidently waiting for Carleton and his Canadians to come down the Hudson to finish the American army and rebellion in one stroke.

But Carleton did not arrive. Benedict Arnold had built a fleet of gunboats on Lake Champlain that kept Carleton from advancing to Ticonderoga. Carleton's military experience told him not to stretch his supply lines too far; his long Canadian experience taught him not to stay in Crown Point over the winter. He retreated to Canada in November.

Even without Carleton, Howe pushed the remaining Americans out of

Manhattan. Johann Gottlieb Rall's Hessians took Fort Washington and nearly two thousand prisoners on December 16. Two days later they crossed the Hudson and drove the Americans from Fort Lee. The "rebels fled like scared rabbits," a British officer wrote," leaving some poor pork, a few greasy proclamations, and some of that scoundrel 'Common Sense' man's letters; which we can read at our leisure, now that we have got one of 'the impregnable redoubts' of Mr. Washington to quarter in."

Paine had joined the army at Fort Lee, one of the few new recruits in a rapidly disappearing army. Washington had nineteen thousand men with him in New York; barely three thousand were still with him when he reached the Delaware. Just ahead of Cornwallis, he commandeered all of the boats on the Delaware's New Jersey banks and crossed into Pennsylvania. Congress fled to Baltimore.

As Washington retreated across the Delaware, the British captured Charles Lee, the one American general whose rank they acknowledged. Lee had been a general in the British army, and like the Howes and Cornwallis he sympathized with the American cause. Unlike them, he resigned to join the Americans in 1776. Because he was a former British officer, both the Americans and British regarded him more highly than he deserved. He had been slowly making his way to join Washington but tarried late in the morning on December 13, still in his dressing gown at a New Jersey tavern telling the assembled company about Washington's incompetence when a British patrol interrupted the party at eleven a.m. Having driven Washington out of New York and New Jersey and captured Lee, Howe's men could rest over the winter. Howe set up posts to protect New Jersey, dispatching Hessians to occupy Trenton and putting most of his British forces into winter quarters in New York. Cornwallis prepared to sail home, confident that the rebellion was collapsing and the war would be over by spring.

Howe had set up posts to protect the Loyalists, but the Hessian and British soldiers were not good protectors. Seeing all Americans as rebels, the Hessians and some British treated civilians brutally, raping women and stealing property. Loyalist New Jerseyans turned against the cause the Hessians served.

"Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and repulse it." Thomas Paine wrote this as the dwindling army fled across New Jersey.

“These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered. … Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.”

Paine recalled a tavern keeper in Amboy talking politics, with his small child by his side. The father concluded, “*Well! Give me peace in my day*.” Paine was outraged. The man was hardly a father at all—“a generous parent should have said, “*If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace*.”

Paine brushed off the loss of New York. He reminded the citizens of New Jersey that a British army once ravaging France had been “driven back like men petrified with fear” when a French woman—Joan of Arc—had rallied her countrymen. “Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment!”

Paine’s message was not for the leaders of the army or Congress. It was for the ordinary men and women of America. This was not Washington’s or Congress’s cause, it was theirs. “Say not that thousands are gone, turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but ‘*show your faith by your works*,’ that God may bless you.” This was their crisis—it would be their loss, or their opportunity. Slipping into Philadelphia, Paine had the pamphlet printed under the title *The American Crisis*. Just as he had mustered his men on a summer day in New York to hear the Declaration of Independence, Washington in the Pennsylvania winter mustered them to hear *The Crisis*. He knew his troops were disappearing. Those who remained would go home when their enlistments were up in the first week of January. No more men would join in the spring. If he did not act now, he could never act again.

In a Christmas-night snowstorm, with floes of ice surrounding the boats, Washington led twenty-four hundred men across the Delaware. Just after dawn they struck the Hessian camp in Trenton. In a quick and well-planned action Washington’s men captured more than nine hundred Hessians.

This brilliant military stroke awakened Howe and awakened New Jersey. In

Trenton, Washington's men liberated wagons of loot the Hessians had taken from New Jersey homes, souvenirs they planned to bring home, and returned the property to its rightful owners. The victory at Trenton brought more men into Washington's camp. It also brought out the Pennsylvania and New Jersey militias to set up patrols and ambushes on the roads between Princeton and New Brunswick.

Washington paroled the nine hundred prisoners and sent them to the Potomac and Shenandoah valleys, where they sat out the war. Many stayed after it ended, rather than return to the dominion of the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel. Aware that rich American land, and freedom from being hired out as mercenaries, might tempt other Germans, Congress offered land bounties to deserters, printing the offer in German on cards inserted into tobacco pouches sold in New York.

Cornwallis had been aboard a ship bound for England but came ashore to lead ten thousand men across New Jersey. Late on New Year's Day, 1777, he reached Princeton. With a much larger force than Washington's, he planned to attack Trenton the next day. But American riflemen harassed his march, aiming at officers as the line advanced. The sun was already setting on January 2 when Cornwallis reached Trenton. He drew his men up on the north bank of Assunpink Creek, showing the Americans in defensive positions on the south bank how badly outnumbered they were. The next day they would finally destroy Washington's army. Cornwallis ordered his exhausted men to rest. One officer urged Cornwallis to attack immediately—"If you trust those people tonight you will see nothing of them in the morning." Cornwallis reportedly answered, "We've got the Old Fox safe now. We'll go over and bag him in the morning."

4. German artist Emanuel Leutze began this heroic painting of Washington crossing the Delaware, twelve feet high and twenty-one feet long, in the year of European revolution, 1848. Washington and his diverse group—backwoodsmen and gentlemen, a black sailor from New England, a native American, and one androgynous figure who might be a woman—embark across the difficult river. Leutze hoped to inspire Europeans with the example of Washington and the American cause. Henry James called this copy Leutze sent to America in 1851 an "epoch-making masterpiece"; the original stayed in Germany, where a British bomber destroyed it in 1942.

The Old Fox and his own officers discussed their obvious dilemma—they were about to be overwhelmed by Cornwallis's army. Washington asked advice. Locals had told Arthur St. Clair, an American officer, about a back road to Princeton. The army could get there by dawn, attack the British rear, and control the road back to New Brunswick. Washington ordered five hundred men to stay in Trenton, keep their fires blazing and loudly dig trenches and build fortifications. He led the rest of his army quietly away on the back roads to Princeton.

Just after dawn, as Cornwallis prepared finally to destroy Washington's army at Trenton, the American forces surprised the British at Princeton. Though the stunned British recovered and repulsed the initial American attack, Washington arrived, rallied his men (one soldier reported closing his eyes so he would not see Washington fall), and led the army into Princeton.

In Trenton, Cornwallis heard the distant thunder of guns to the northwest. He turned his men around to march to Princeton. By the time he arrived, Washington and his men had defeated the rear of the British army and were moving east, after the British supply wagons or even the base at New Brunswick. But with his men exhausted from marching, fighting, and marching, and knowing it was essential to preserve his army, Washington turned north to take up winter quarters in Morristown.

Cornwallis did not pursue him. He now was wary of Washington's strength and strategic sense. Defeated at Long Island, Manhattan, White Plains, Harlem, and Fort Lee, and humiliated in their retreat across New Jersey, Washington and his men kept coming back. Cornwallis placed his own men to defend New Brunswick and Amboy, launching foraging expeditions from these New Jersey

posts to feed the forces in New York. Washington's men and the New Jersey militia attacked these foraging parties, killing, wounding, or capturing more than nine hundred men between January and March, weakening the British forces as effectively as Trenton and Princeton had shattered their notion of invincibility.

Howe and Clinton had been sent to achieve a political end—reconciliation—through military means. Washington was securing a military end—victory—through the political means of cultivating support from the men and women the army protected. He knew his army could not hold territory. Only the men and women who lived in the country could hold it.

Chapter 4
War for independence

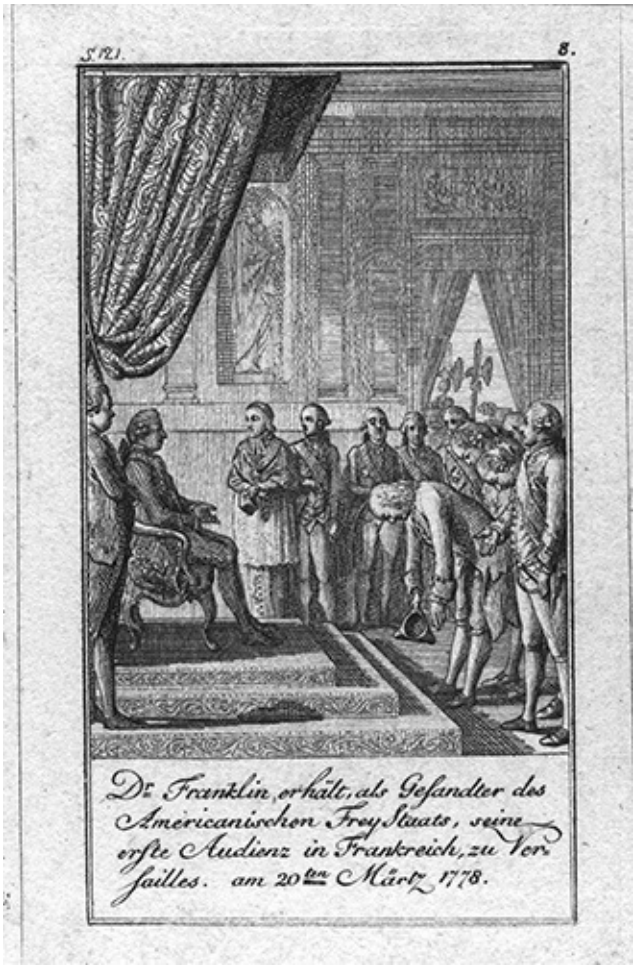
Baltimore publisher Mary Katherine Goddard in January 1777 published a new edition of the Declaration of Independence, for the first time carrying the names of the signers. These men had signed in secrecy, but Mary Katherine Goddard put them on record now. As the war took turns for better or worse, they could not deny their fidelity. The decision had been made.

The war was for American independence. But the Americans would need military help from France. Franklin had sailed for France in October 1776 and had received an enthusiastic tumultuous greeting when he reached in Paris in December. “There was scarcely a peasant or a citizen, a valet, coachman, or footman, a lady’s chamberlain, a scullion in the kitchen,” John Adams wrote, “who did not consider him a friend to humankind.”

The playwright Beaumarchais formed a dummy corporation to ship muskets and gunpowder to the Americans, and King Louis XVI secretly loaned it a million livres ($200,000). Eleven thousand French muskets and one thousand barrels of gunpowder reached America in 1777; by 1783, France would send the Americans £48 million ($1.4 billion today) worth of supplies and weapons.

Weapons were essential; French officers were a problem. Eager for a chance to fight the English and for more excitement than could be found in a West Indian garrison, French officers sought commissions in America. Americans needed engineers, but other officers were nuisances, if not dangers. French artillery officer Phillippe Charles Tronson du Coudray insisted on an appointment as

major general in charge of artillery and engineers. He demanded seniority over all Americans but Washington and salaries for his retinue—a secretary, a designer, three servants, six captains, and twelve lieutenants. Silas Deane, handling American affairs in Paris before Franklin's arrival, agreed because du Coudray assured him that he would bring a hundred more French officers into the American cause.



5. Benjamin Franklin is presented to King Louis XVI of France, who has recognized American independence and declared war on England, March 1778.

The prospect of a hundred more du Coudrays displeased Henry Knox, Nathanael Greene, and John Sullivan, who threatened to resign if du Coudray became their superior. Congress blasted Knox, Greene, and Sullivan for self-interest and for interfering with the people's representatives, but not wanting to lose their services, Congress offered du Coudray the post of inspector general. He angrily refused, insisting he be a major general, the equal of Washington. Du Coudray

refused, insisting he be a major general, the equal of Washington. Du Coudray also angrily refused the suggestion of a Philadelphia ferry operator that he dismount for the boat ride across the Schuylkill. French generals do not take orders from boatmen. Moving boats spook horses, and du Coudray's jumped overboard and drowned him. "Monsieur du Coudray," wrote Johann Kalb, "has just put Congress much at ease by his death."

Kalb, a Bavarian-born French army veteran, had arrived in July 1777 with the wealthy young nobleman Marie Joseph Paul de Lafayette, nephew of France's ambassador to England. Lafayette, not yet twenty, had become enthused with the American cause. His visit to London had been a sensation—"We talk chiefly of the Marquis de la Fayette," historian Edward Gibbon wrote in the spring of 1777. He met with General Henry Clinton, Lord Germaine, the king's war minister, and even King George III, who invited him to inspect naval fortifications. But Lafayette returned to France and purchased and outfitted a ship, eluding his own king's order for his arrest (Louis XVI knew that allowing an important nobleman to go openly to America would bring trouble from England) to slip out of France.

Lafayette and his party landed in South Carolina, then made their way to Philadelphia just as Congress had wearied of French generals seeking ranks and paychecks. Congress did not let him into the building. It sent James Lovell, its only member who spoke French (he had been a teacher at Boston's Latin School), to send him away. Lafayette was persistent. He asked if he could speak directly to Congress. Thinking it would do little harm to give him five minutes the next day, Congress allowed him to come back. He made the most of the opportunity, summarizing in English the difficulties endured and the expenses incurred in coming America, he concluded, "After the sacrifices I have made, I have the right to exact two favors: one is, to serve at my own expense; the other is, to serve at first as a volunteer."

A French officer wanting to serve, not command, was a novelty. A few days later Lafayette met Washington, and the two formed a professional bond and friendship. By this time Congress had received Franklin's testimonial to Lafayette's political importance and allowed him to stay.

The war now was taking a new turn, with new British strategies. General John Burgoyne had proposed a campaign from Canada, cutting off New England by securing Lake Champlain and the Hudson. He made the case for reviving

Carleton's strategy with such bluster that the British ministry accepted it. Burgoyne "almost promises to cross America in a hop, step, and a jump," wrote British novelist Horace Walpole, who preferred Howe's modesty. "At least if he does nothing," Howe "does not break his word."

Burgoyne reached Canada with four thousand British and three thousand Brunswick soldiers. Governor Carleton resigned when he learned that Burgoyne had come to do what Carleton, with fewer men, had nearly done the previous year. The king refused Carleton's resignation, and the governor enlisted Canadian militia and provisions and helped Burgoyne get his forces to Lake Champlain.

6. General John Burgoyne enlisted the support of the Iroquois for his campaign into New York by way of Canada.

Howe had not been told of the new strategy and did not know he was to send an army up the Hudson to meet Burgoyne. He left for Philadelphia in early summer, loading 266 vessels with men and horses. No one in London, Canada, or in Washington's army knew where he was going. "The Howes are gone the Lord knows whither," Horace Walpole wrote, "and have carried the American war with them."

Late in July the fleet appeared off the Delaware, then vanished again for three weeks. Toward the end of August it was off the Chesapeake and began making

its way up the bay. Washington suspected the Howes were heading to Philadelphia, but he had already sent forces to defend the Hudson valley and New England against Burgoyne.

Burgoyne found the Canadian and New York terrain more difficult than it had appeared on London maps. He had counted on Iroquois support as Colonel Barry St. Leger led a prong of the army from Oswego down to the Mohawk River and through New York. But the League had declared neutrality. St. Leger had invited the Iroquois to “come and see them whip the rebels” at Fort Stanwix. The Mohawk, Seneca, and Cayuga warriors who took him up were “obliged to fight for their lives” against the Americans, and then against one another. Oneida and Tuscarora warriors sided with the Americans. As St. Leger’s forces besieged Fort Stanwix (now Rome, New York), Iroquois warriors found themselves fighting their own countrymen in a British war. The militia in Fort Stanwix (the Americans called it Fort Schuyler) held off the siege, and Benedict Arnold brought a column to relieve the Fort, dispersing St. Leger’s forces in a hasty, chaotic retreat.

Nine hundred Germans foraging in Vermont, who marched in their cavalry boots in anticipation of riding out on New England horses, instead were killed or captured at Bennington by the Vermont and New Hampshire militias. The New England militia moved on to join General Horatio Gates at Bemis Heights, above the Hudson near Saratoga, New York. Burgoyne expected a British, not an American, army to meet him on the Hudson.

Howe’s army, which Burgoyne expected to meet, was now in Pennsylvania. Washington, with eleven thousand ragged troops, tried to defend Philadelphia from Howe’s seventeen thousand men. Cornwallis and Wilhelm von Knyphausen’s Hessians pinned down Washington’s forces along Brandywine Creek, southwest of Philadelphia. Greene kept Cornwallis and Knyphausen at bay long enough for Washington to retreat to Chester, while Congress fled to York, Pennsylvania. Lafayette, still a volunteer, rallied an American unit breaking under the British attack. Shot in the leg, he was one of seven hundred men on the American side wounded, killed, or captured. Two weeks later, the British and Germans occupied Philadelphia.

Burgoyne by this time had tried to attack the Americans at Bemis Heights and had lost six hundred men in doing so. He failed again on October 7 and sent

desperate pleas to Clinton to come up the river. Clinton did, taking the American forts on the lower Hudson, but then received new orders from Howe to send two thousand men to help secure the lower Delaware. Howe had taken the capital. Why did he need reinforcements?

Washington still had his army. Once again he surprised the British. Defeated on the Brandywine and driven from Philadelphia, Washington attacked the superior British force at Germantown. Though the British killed, wounded, or captured more than a thousand of Washington's men, his attack reminded Howe of Washington's tenacity. When Frederick the Great heard the Americans had lost Philadelphia, he thought they had lost the war. When he heard a month later of the attack at Germantown, he said that the Americans, if led by Washington, must win.

On the Hudson, the New England militias and Gates's forces closed in on Burgoyne. He now knew that St. Leger had not reached the Mohawk and that Clinton could send no aid. He had counted on the Hudson Valley's rich farmlands to sustain his troops, but rebels like Catherine Schuyler, wife of General Philip Schuyler, had destroyed their own crops—she had tossed flaming torches into her wheat fields to deprive Burgoyne's men from of the harvest. His supplies would have to come along a route that would soon be frozen. On October 17 he capitulated. Five thousand British and German prisoners, along with two thousand women who accompanied the army, were marched to Boston.

Burgoyne's surrender and Washington's surprise attack at Germantown were evidence to France that the Americans could win. In February 1778, King Louis XVI recognized the independence of the United States. Renouncing any attempt to regain Canada, France pledged to fight until the British recognized American independence. France could send men and arms to America; more ominously for Britain, it could attack the West Indies and even England. Ships currently blockading the American coast were now needed to protect the home islands and the routes to India. French admiral Comte d'Estaing with a fleet of twelve ships of the line and five frigates carrying two infantry brigades sailed from Toulon in April. By the time Britain mustered a force to pursue them, d'Estaing was halfway across the Atlantic. Lord Camden blasted Prime Minister North for starting a war on the premise that Americans were cowards and the French, idiots.

Lord North knew the Americans would fight until their independence was

Lord North knew the Americans would fight until their independence was recognized; he also knew the king would never accept independence. He had Parliament rescind the Declaratory Act, promised not to tax the colonies directly, and also pledged that revenues raised in America would be spent in America. Americans might have accepted this in 1774, but would not in 1778. North sent commissioners—the Earl of Carlisle, an opposition Whig, George Johnstone, former governor of Florida, and William Eden of the government's intelligence services—to negotiate with the Americans.

Occupying Philadelphia gave the British an opportunity at conciliation. The city's Quakers were against all wars, the city's Loyalists blamed their rebellious neighbors for starting this one. Longtime Philadelphia politician Joseph Galloway, a former ally of Franklin and member of the first Continental Congress (but opponent of independence), was put in charge of city government. Howe hoped Galloway would rally the loyal and conciliate the rebellious. But Galloway's opinion of himself and confidence in his importance were too outsized to make him effective either as an administrator or conciliator.

With Howe and the British army occupying Philadelphia, Washington and his ten thousand men, and several hundred women who accompanied them, built a winter camp at Valley Forge, twenty miles from the city. The bitterly cold Valley Forge winter has become part of American folklore, a defining time for Washington and his army. His men faced a persistent lack of food, money, and clothing, but Washington would not allow them to despair or the army to disappear.

Against Nathanael Greene's wishes Washington put the Rhode Island Quaker in charge of the commissary. Greene wanted to fight, as he had at Bunker Hill, New York, Trenton, Princeton, and Brandywine Creek, not attend to the mundane problems of supply. But a skilled administrator, Greene prevented starvation and helped maintain an orderly camp.

Into the camp fortuitously came Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, claiming to be a lieutenant general under Frederick the Great. Steuben had staffed Frederick's headquarters but had never served under him in battle. A small German principality had given Steuben the honorary "von." Like Lafayette, however, Steuben asked only for a chance to volunteer. Washington let him train a hundred men; the results were so impressive after two weeks that Washington let him train a hundred more of these farmers. mechanics. and artisans. He drilled

them, marched them, taught them tactics. He was not drilling them as he would Prussians. He later explained to a Prussian officer, “You say to your soldier, ‘Do this’ and he doeth it; but I am obliged to say ‘This is the reason why you ought to do that,’ and then he does it.” They were already veterans; by winter’s end they were an army.

With one officer feeding and another training his army, Washington still had to fight to lead it. Members of Congress, particularly New Englanders, wondered why Gates, the victor at Saratoga, should not replace Washington, who did little but retreat. Gates and Thomas Conway, an Irish-born French officer, schemed to replace Washington; but Washington had enough allies in Congress, and by this time in the army itself, to hold his position. Congress wanted Washington to drive the British from Philadelphia and also wanted Lafayette to invade Canada, hoping he could rally the French Canadians. Greene saw this “Don Quixote expedition to the northward” as a ploy “to increase the difficulties of the General.”

The British army had its own problems. Clinton arrived in Philadelphia in early May to replace the Howes. He had new orders: give up Philadelphia, hold New York, and send most of his men to Florida and the Caribbean. Philadelphia’s Loyalists were thrown into a state of “Horror & melancholy” by news that the British were leaving. Galloway knew he would be “exposed to the Rage of his bitter Enemies, deprived of a fortune of about £70,000, and now left to wander like Cain upon the Earth without Home, & without Property.” “I now look upon the Contest as at an End,” Lord Howe’s secretary wrote. “No man can be expected to declare for us, when he cannot be assured of a Fortnight’s Protection.” Desperate Loyalists asked Clinton’s permission to negotiate with Washington. He refused, knowing that every Loyalist in the country might abandon the cause; he reluctantly agreed to take the Loyalists with him.

Galloway’s wife, Grace Growden Galloway, daughter of one of Pennsylvania’s leading men, stayed in Philadelphia after the British evacuation. When the patriots evicted her from her home, she maintained her dignity: “I … laughed at the whole wig party. I told them I was the happyest woman in town for I had been stripped and Turned out of Doors yet I was still the same and must be Joseph Galloways Wife and Lawrence Growdons daughter and that it was Not in their power to humble Me.”

Before they left, the Loyalists and British officers honored the Howes with a "meschianza," with fireworks, a parade, and a jousting tournament. British officers dressed as knights, competing for the favor of young Philadelphia women, dressed as Turkish princesses and carried by turbaned slaves through the streets on elaborate sedan chairs. It was a memorable event, but Lord Howe's secretary noted, "It cost a great Sum of Money. Our Enemies will dwell upon the Folly & Extravagance of it with Pleasure."

North's three commissioners arrived and were stunned to find Philadelphia being abandoned. Clinton denied them permission to meet with Congress, so they asked Washington to intercede. He sent Congress their request, but did no more. They realized their mission was one "of ridicule, nullity, and embarrassments."

Sending the Loyalists by sea with the Howes, Clinton left Philadelphia on June 18, with eighteen thousand men and a baggage train twelve miles long. Knowing that Washington might attack, he placed half his army in front of the baggage train, the rest behind. After fourteen hours of rain the weather turned hot, and New Jersey's mosquitoes came out in large numbers. Every third Hessian collapsed from heat stroke; some did not survive. Rebellious New Jerseyans destroyed bridges to slow the march, and New Jersey's people, particularly women, who remembered the raping and plunder on the British and German advance across New Jersey in 1776, now hid from the retreat, making farms and villages seem abandoned.

Divided by twelve miles of luggage, these two slow-moving armies made tempting targets on the hot roads to New Brunswick. Washington and his officers debated what to do. Charles Lee, released from his British captivity, thought the French alliance meant Washington no longer needed to fight but should build a "bridge of gold" across New Jersey. Others—Greene, Steuben, Wayne, and Lafayette—urged an attack. Washington opted to to harass the retreating column; aide Alexander Hamilton said this modest plan would have "done honor to the most honorable body of midwives and to them only."

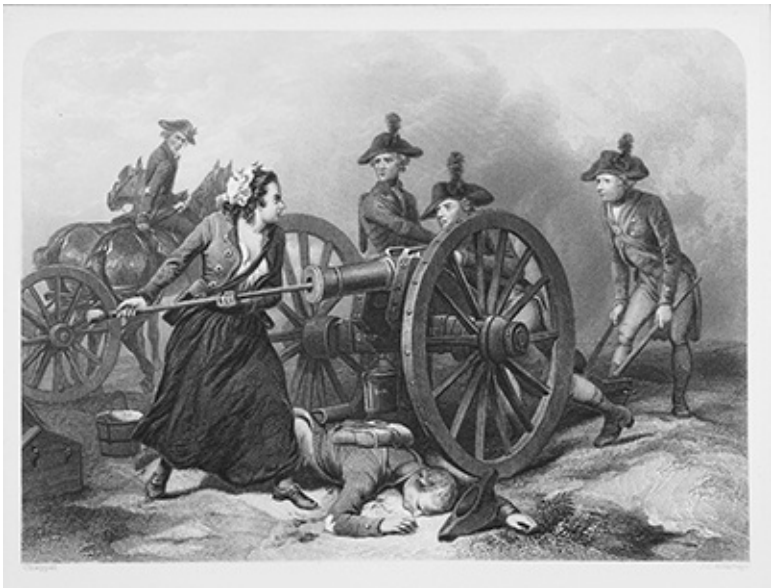
As the forward line and baggage boarded ships at Sandy Hook, Cornwallis, with the rear of the British army, waited in pine barrens near Monmouth Courthouse (now Freehold). Lee, initially opposed to an attack, received permission to surprise the British column. Cornwallis responded quickly and forced Lee to retreat. When Washington arrived on the scene and demanded to know why he

had ordered a retreat, Lee explained that “the attack had been made contrary to his opinion,” and when it did not go well he called it off. Washington denounced Lee as a “damned poltroon” (coward) and rallied the men.

Clinton hoped Washington would bring his whole army to Lee’s aid—he knew in a general engagement he could defeat the Old Fox. But Washington knew enough to avoid this. He organized the forces to hold their ground. Exhausted with the heat, the Americans, having lost more than 200 men, retreated; Clinton’s forces, minus 358 killed, wounded, or dead of heatstroke, continued on to Sandy Hook. The last major battle in the north, it was not a victory for either side, but Washington’s men, trained over the winter at Valley Forge, fought like an army. Washington ordered Lee court-martialed and dismissed.

Comte d’Estaing’s fleet arrived off the Delaware just a week after the British were safe in New York. Though he missed a chance to catch Howe at sea, he now had his fleet bottled up in New York. Admiral Howe expected d’Estaing to attack New York; watching Washington moving forces across the Hudson north of the city, Clinton anticipated an attack on Newport.

Clinton was right. While the British fortified New York, d’Estaing sailed for Narragansett Bay. There John Sullivan and American militia joined the French forces, who landed to besiege Newport. The British sank their own ships in Newport’s harbor to stymie a French assault. But d’Estaing sailed off when another British fleet appeared off Rhode Island. Then a hurricane struck. As the storm battered the French fleet, the American and French besiegers tried to hold their tents and supplies in the storm. D’Estaing’s battered fleet finally returned, but not to continue the siege—they took the drenched French soldiers aboard to dry out in Boston, where the fleet sailed for repairs.



7. In the blistering heat of Monmouth, women—often wives or girlfriends of soldiers, and called "Molly Pitcher" in the heat of battle—carried water to cool both the men and the guns. When gunner William Hays was wounded, his wife, Mary Ludwick Hays, put down her bucket and took his place at the gun. She had been with her husband and the army through Valley Forge; he would receive a land grant, and she would later receive a pension for her service and a place in American history as "Molly Pitcher."

So ended the first joint effort of the Americans and the French, and General Sullivan was furious. He blasted d'Estaing for not supporting the assault on Newport. A mob in Boston attacked French bakers, killing the Chevalier de Saint-Saveur, twenty-eight-year old diplomat and chamberlain to Louis XVI's brother. The alliance was crumbling.

Washington had Sullivan tone down his language, and Massachusetts pledged to build a monument for Saint-Saveur. But the British and French fleets both sailed for the West Indies. Washington, still without a naval force, kept the British garrisons pinned down in New York and Newport.

Spain declared war on England in April 1779, not to help Americans but to retake Gibraltar and weaken Britain in the West Indies and North America. French and Spanish warships patrolled the English Channel and threatened to invade England itself. North's government had "created a war with America, another with France, a third with Spain, and now a fourth with Holland," a London journalist wrote. "The candle they have lighted in America may, and

probably will, make a dreadful fire in Europe."

The fire in Europe came from the sea. Washington had no sea power to transport troops or support military actions; but Americans did not shy from the sea. Privateering proved more lucrative to ship owners, crews, and captains than blockading, transporting, or bombarding. Between 1775 and 1778 American privateers took about a thousand British merchant ships. Annual captures doubled when Spain and France entered the war, opening their ports to American prizes.

John Paul Jones raided English and Scottish coastal towns on the sloop *Ranger* in 1778 and even captured a British warship in Britain's home waters. A former British merchant captain, Jones was the first captain to raise the American flag on a warship, on the *Providence* in August 1776. Now France outfitted Jones with a privateer, naming it *Bonhomme Richard* (Poor Richard) in Franklin's honor. He attacked a British merchant convoy in the North Sea late in the summer of 1779; the British warship *Serapis* engaged *Bonhomme Richard*, setting it on fire. When Captain Pearson saw *Bonhomme Richard*'s officers lowering their sinking vessel's flag, he asked if they surrendered. Jones replied, "I have not yet begun to fight!"

Jones forced Pearson to surrender, crowded his own survivors onto the *Serapis*, and sailed to Holland. "Humanity cannot but recoil from the prospect of such finished horror," he lamented to Franklin "that war should produce such fatal consequences." A famous American victory, it was Jones's last under the American flag.

American attacks so close to England's coast and French, Dutch, and Spanish threats demoralized the British public, who now questioned the war effort. A Parliamentary investigation turned into an argument among politicians—the lord of admiralty, the Earl of Sandwich, and Secretary of State Germaine—and military leaders, such as the Howe brothers. Each side blamed the other for mismanagement and incompetence.

Clinton held New York and Newport; Washington's army remained in the Hudson and New Jersey. The focus of fighting shifted west and south. Americans based at Fort Pitt and the British in Detroit both tried to enlist Native American warriors in the interior. The Iroquois had divided. Seneca, siding with

the British, attacked Oneida, siding with the Americans, and the Oneida destroyed Mohawk towns and corn fields. Neutral Onondaga diplomats traveled to confer with the British in Quebec. Washington learned of this and determined to “carry the war into the Heart of the Country,” sending General John Sullivan to destroy the Onondaga’s ability to wage war, or even survive. Sullivan burned forty Onondaga towns and 160,000 bushels of corn in the fall of 1779, and even cut down their fruit trees. The Onondaga fled to British protection. Fearing retaliation, the Oneida fled to American protection. The Iroquois alliance, founded before Europeans set foot on North America, was broken.

Simultaneous with Sullivan’s campaign, Virginians attacked Shawnee towns in Ohio. George Rogers Clarke with two hundred men captured the British outpost at Vincennes. These actions devastated the Native populations and left the British holding only Detroit in the territory north of the Ohio. In the winter of 1781–82, Wyandot and Shawnee warriors attacked frontier settlements along the Ohio River. Rumors spread that the Christian Delaware, overseen by Moravian missionaries in Pennsylvania, sheltered the attackers. Pennsylvania’s militia in retaliation marched into Ohio and seized and massacred more than one hundred unarmed Delaware, including women and children. Long after the British and Americans made peace, this frontier war continued. The expeditions against the Iroquois, Miami, Shawnee, and Cherokees alerted American soldiers to these territories’ agricultural richness. After the war, western New York State, Ohio, and Kentucky drew white Americans across the mountains; cash-starved states paid soldiers with grants of land grants wrested from the Indians. Conflict over this land continued into the nineteenth century.

From his base in New York, Clinton turned his attention southward. He believed in the loyalty of the Carolinas and Georgia. In December 1778 British forces made their way up the Savannah River on flat boats, encountering only token resistance (barely thirty men manned the strong post on the bluffs downriver from Savannah). The rebels tried to flee as the British took Savannah, capturing forty rebel officers and five hundred men. Most civilians fled, but most quickly returned to pledge their loyalty, regarding as one loyalist officer reported, “Money and Property as Greater Goods than Rebellion and Poverty.” From their base at Savannah, the British restored Georgia’s royal government and threatened Charleston.

General Benjamin Lincoln, joined by French forces from the Caribbean, tried to

retake Savannah in the fall of 1780. But in the disastrous attack eight hundred of his five thousand French and American troops were killed, wounded, or captured. He retreated to Charleston, the French to the Caribbean. On the day after Christmas General Clinton with eight thousand men sailed for Charleston, and in April began his siege. On May 12 Lincoln surrendered his army and the town. With South Carolina and Georgia in British control, Clinton returned to New York, leaving Cornwallis with eight thousand men to continue pacifying the Carolinas.

Clinton's strategy was based on the assumption that most whites in the Carolinas and Georgia were loyal. He required Carolinians to swear allegiance to the Crown, which was problematic. Captured rebels had been released on parole, with the option of simply sitting out the war. Now Clinton forced them to take sides. Some swore loyalty to the king, and the newly restored royal government rewarded them. Carolinians who had always been loyal and had suffered at the hands of the rebels, now felt betrayed as the defeated rebels regained power and fortune.

Guerrilla warfare erupted in South Carolina, loosely following the patriot and Loyalist divisions but also arising out of longstanding local and personal grievances. Loyalist militias attacked the homes of paroled patriots and noncombatants, reawakening rebellion in South Carolina's backcountry. Cornwallis established a ring of forts from Augusta, Georgia, to Georgetown on the Carolina coast. British officers Banastre Tarleton and Patrick Ferguson raised legions of Loyalists to subdue their rebellious neighbors.

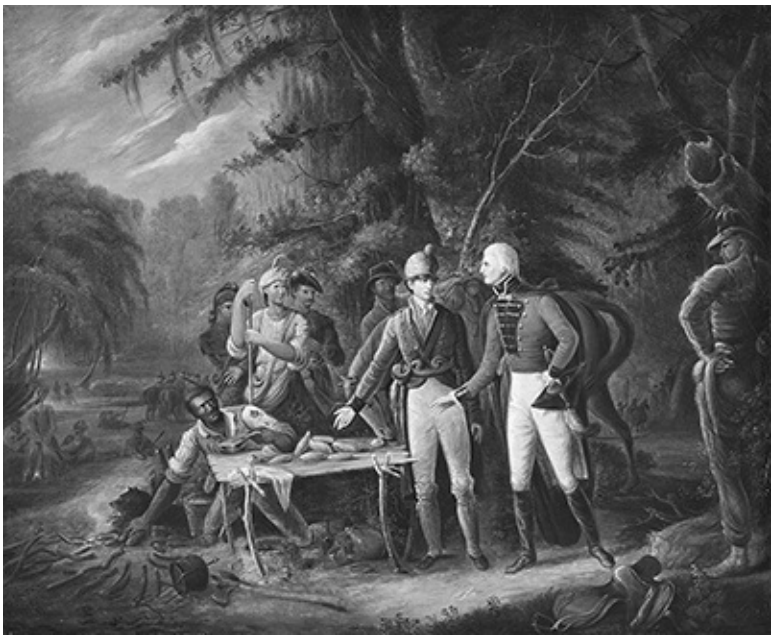
Three notable South Carolina officers broke their paroles to become guerrilla fighters. By 1779 Thomas Sumter, a former Continental army officer, was paroled and living quietly on his plantation at Waxhaws. When Tarleton's Loyalist legion burned his house, Sumter organized neighbors into a guerrilla band that attacked British and Loyalist forces on the Carolina frontier. Andrew Pickens, a Presbyterian elder and Seven Years' War veteran, took the loyalty oath after Charleston fell. But when a band of Loyalists raided his farm, Pickens came back into the field. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Marion evaded capture when Charleston fell; he organized a unit of guerrillas, described by another American officer as "distinguished by small leather caps, and the wretchedness of their attire. Their numbers did not exceed twenty men and boys, some white, some black, and all mounted, but most of them miserably equipped. Their

appearance was, in fact, so burlesque that it was with much difficulty that the diversion of the regular soldiers was restrained by the officers."

Marion might have seemed a burlesque diversion to the Americans,, but Cornwallis wrote that "Colonel Marion has so wrought on the minds of the people, partly by the terror of his threats and cruelty of his punishments, and partly by the promise of plunder, that there was scarcely an inhabitant between the Santee and the Pedee that was not in arms against us." Cornwallis attributed Marion's success to his terrorist tactics and the promise of plunder; Marion's men saw themselves as a guerrilla unit liberating South Carolina from British occupation. In either case, Marion, Pickens, and Sumter were more effective than the American regulars.

Over Washington's objections, Congress sent Horatio Gates to command what remained of the Continental Army in the South. Gates organized his four thousand regulars and militia to surprise Cornwallis's base at Camden, South Carolina. With better intelligence, Cornwallis was ready and easily routed Gates's far larger force. By the time Gates reached Hillsborough, 160 miles from the battle scene, he had fewer than seven hundred men in his army. Cornwallis moved into North Carolina, while South Carolina degenerated into bitter civil war between irregular bands of patriots and Loyalists.

This was bad news, but at the same time Washington's forces in the summer of 1780 received a decisive boost. After the disastrous first attempt at co-operation between the Americans and French, Lafayette had returned to France and persuaded Louis XVI to send a general and an army, not to cooperate with the Americans but to serve under Washington's orders. Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, with more than five thousand men arrived in Newport (the British had withdrawn in 1779). Washington and Rochambeau met at Weathersfield, Connecticut, in September 1780 and made plans for joint operations against New York.



8. Mason Locke Weems, who created the story of George Washington cutting down a cherry tree, in his *The Life of General Francis Marion* (1809) has Marion offer a British officer a dinner of sweet potatoes. The officer sees that his side cannot win: "I have seen an American general and his officers, without pay, and almost without clothes, living on roots and drinking water; and all for LIBERTY! What chance have we against such men!" South Carolina artist John Blake White painted the scene in 1810; in 1840 it became a popular print, and during the Civil War it appeared on South Carolina currency.

On his return from Weathersfield, Washington stopped at West Point, now under the command of Benedict Arnold. But on his arrival he discovered that Arnold had made plans to deliver the outpost to the British. Arnold, his plot foiled, was on his way to New York. Though Arnold's treason was shocking, its timely discovery before the plot could be hatched, General Nathanael Greene wrote to his wife, "appears to have been providential, and convinces me that the liberties of America are the object of divine protection."

9. The arrival of French forces, under General Rochambeau, changed the nature of the war.

Signs of divine protection were not always easy to discern. The British held New York, Charleston, and Savannah, and the American army had collapsed in South Carolina. But Cornwallis had been forced to retreat from his planned invasion of North Carolina and Virginia by the rout of Loyalist forces at King's Mountain, South Carolina. Major Patrick Ferguson, leading the Loyalist militia of South Carolina, was surrounded on King's Mountain by Patriot militia from the Carolinas and over the mountains in Tennessee and Kentucky. More than eight hundred Loyalists, out of a force of a thousand, were killed or captured.

Greene arrived at the end of 1780 to take command of what remained of the southern American army. Like Washington, Greene understood that he and his men would lose a full-fledged battle with Cornwallis. But they could exhaust the British army, forcing it to follow after them. Between April 1780 and April 1782, one unit in Greene's army marched more than 5000 miles, in constant

1782, one unit in Greene's army marched more than 3000 miles, in constant motion across the Carolinas "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again," Greene wrote, as his men fought on, wearing down their adversaries and British public opinion.

In January 1781 Daniel Morgan's men beat Tarleton's regiment at Cowpens in South Carolina. Morgan, who as wagon driver had seen Braddock's disastrous defeat in 1755, had learned something of tactics and strategy since. He knew that his militia troops were less reliable than the regulars; because of this, commanders typically placed their more seasoned regulars at the center of the battle, leaving the militia to the rear or flanks. Morgan had his militia at the center, telling them he needed each man to fire two rounds; the veteran regulars were on the flanks and rear. When the militia fired their rounds and retreated, Tarleton's men thought the entire American line was breaking and rushed after it, only to be surrounded by the veteran regulars. Morgan captured more than nine hundred British and Loyalist troops, including the legendary and seemingly unbeatable Tarleton.

Cornwallis believed a strike at Virginia could end the war by eliminating the patriot militia's source of supplies. Against Clinton's wishes, and even without his knowledge, Cornwallis moved toward Virginia. Arnold raided Virginia at the end of 1780, attacking Richmond and driving the state government to Charlottesville. His party nearly captured Governor Jefferson. Washington sent Lafayette to protect Virginia.

At Guilford Courthouse, Greene challenged Cornwallis's army as it moved through North Carolina. "I never saw such fighting since God made me," Cornwallis wrote. "The Americans fought like demons." Cornwallis won the battle but lost a quarter of his army. He was now far inland from his supply lines, and the "idea of our friends rising in numbers, and to any purpose, totally failed." The victory left him no choice but to retreat back to Wilmington, near the coast, abandoning the conquered territory "I assure you," he wrote Clinton, "that I am quite tired of marching about the country in quest of adventures."

In May he turned north again to join Arnold in Virginia. Weary, Cornwallis established a Chesapeake base at Yorktown. Greene now penned up the British in Charleston and with the aid of South Carolina's partisans took their backcountry posts one by one.

With the North American war a stalemate, both the British and French were focusing on the West Indies. The French had taken Tobago, Saint Vincent, Dominica, and Saint Christopher from the British, who had taken Montserrat and Nevis from the French. From New Orleans the Spanish had taken Pensacola and Mobile, British posts garrisoned with regulars, Pennsylvania Loyalists, Indians, and Germans.

Washington and Rochambeau knew that Admiral François-Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse, would sail in March from France for Haiti, and would cooperate with them only on his way to or from the Caribbean. Washington and Rochambeau wanted de Grasse to attack New York, mainly to prevent Clinton from reinforcing Cornwallis.

In midsummer deGrasse, with twenty-eight ships and three thousand French and Haitian soldiers, sailed from the Caribbean for the Chesapeake. Washington called for more New England militia and ordered Rochambeau's army—except for "ten of Soissonais who had gone back to their sweethearts at Newport"—from Rhode Island to White Plains. Washington prepared another ruse—giving the appearance of preparing to besiege New York, fortifying the Palisades and building bakery ovens in New Jersey—while sending his men to Virginia. Meanwhile, when the French left Rhode Island, Clinton had his men retake Newport.

By this time de Grasse had disembarked three thousand men and artillery pieces around Yorktown and ferried Washington's men down the Chesapeake. The British fleet sent to reinforce Cornwallis engaged with de Grasse's fleet and sustained heavy losses before turning back to New York. Washington and Rochambeau dined aboard de Grasses' ship before the French admiral returned to the West Indies, having prevented Clinton from reinforcing Cornwallis.

Cornwallis saw now that he held "a defensive post which cannot have the smallest influence on the war in Carolina, and which only gives us some acres of unhealthy swamp, and is forever liable to become a prey to a foreign enemy with a temporary superiority at sea." Washington and Rochambeau's sixteen thousand men far outnumbered Cornwallis's seven thousand and kept them under heavy artillery bombardment. Cornwallis tried an escape across the York River, but by mid-October realized reinforcements would not come. Like Burgoyne at Saratoga, he had no choice but surrender.

Too ill to attend the surrender ceremony, Cornwallis sent General Charles O'Hara. On horseback, General O'Hara approached the allied officers with great dignity. He first offered his sword to Rochambeau. There were more French than Americans on the field, and it was less humiliating to surrender to a Frenchman than to an American. Rochambeau directed him to Washington. "The American General must receive the orders." O'Hara approached Washington.

For six years Washington had been irked by British refusal to recognize his rank. Letters that British officers addressed to "Mr. Washington" or "Colonel Washington" he returned unopened. He was conscious of his own rank but more conscious of his country's. British officers did not recognize the rank awarded him by Congress. He would refuse to acknowledge them so long as they refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of the United States. Now seeing that O'Hara was not Cornwallis, but his second, Washington directed O'Hara to his own second, Benjamin Lincoln.

O'Hara presented Lincoln his sword; Lincoln returned it. As British soldiers marched through the lines of French and American troops to lay down their own weapons, they turned their faces toward the French, ignoring the Americans. Lafayette, in command of American troops, had his band strike up "Yankee Doodle." Angered at this further insult to their wounded pride, some British soldiers smashed their weapons as they lay them down.

London did not blame Cornwallis. Blame fell on Lord North and the British ministry, which had won re-election in 1780. News of the surrender came with news that de Grasse had won another victory at St. Kitts, and Spain had captured Minorca. In Parliament, opposition-leader Henry Conway, who had introduced the Stamp Act (which, incidentally, Cornwallis as a member of Parliament had voted against), now moved to end the American war. Over the king's opposition the motion passed. North submitted his resignation; he had done so every year, and the King had refused it. This time he did not.

British emissaries now met in France with Franklin, John Adams, and Henry Laurens (captured at sea by the British, he had been exchanged for Cornwallis) to work out a peace treaty. British forces still held New York and Charleston. Clinton suspended military operations; Washington would not disband his army while the British army remained in America.

Washington's greatest feat was keeping the army together. Over the course of the war, 230,000 men served in the Continental Army; another 145,000 served in state militias. Many men served multiple enlistments; perhaps 250,000 men in total bore arms on the American side. It is impossible to know exactly how many served; it is as difficult to determine why they did so. Anecdotes and pension records reveal only part of the story.

Peter Oliver, one of the Revolution's first historians, wrote from a unique vantage point: the former Massachusetts chief justice of Massachusetts was sent into exile when the British evacuated Boston in 1776. On the ship he interviewed an American lieutenant, William Scott of Peterborough, New Hampshire, captured at Bunker Hill. Why was Scott fighting? Scott told Oliver he saw his neighbors getting commissions, and joined in order to better his own life: "As to the Dispute between great Britain & the Colonies, I know nothing of it; neither am I capable of judging whether it is right or wrong."

Scott's self-interested motives, Oliver thought, were typical for the rebels. But Scott escaped from Halifax and later in 1776 was part of Washington's defenses of New York. When Fort Washington fell he escaped by swimming across the Hudson; back in New Hampshire he raised his own company, including two of his sons. The elder died of camp fever after six years in the army. Over the course of the war Scott lost his son, his wife, his farm, and his property.

What made men like Scott serve? In Scott's town, every adult male served at some point in the war. A third of the men, like Scott, stayed on for more than a year. Scott became an officer; most remained privates. Who were they? Studies of Peterborough and other towns reveal that this core of soldiers consisted of men with few other options. A signing bonus on enlistment, or a grant of land after the war, were inducements to join or stay in the service.

Soldiers' wives, mothers, or sisters often accompanied the army, serving as nurses, cooks, laundresses, and menders of uniforms. Just as we do not know how many men served, estimates vary on how many women accompanied the troops, from three percent of the camps being women, to twenty thousand women accompanying the army. Washington objected to having so many women with his army and tried to resist women's demands for rations, but he recognized the limits of his authority. His own wife, Martha, was with him during most of the war, so he could hardly object to the wives of enlisted men

staying in camp. Washington objected to women riding in the wagons when the army moved, but he discovered he could not prevent it.

Ann Bates, a Philadelphia schoolteacher, married a British soldier—who repaired artillery--during Philadelphia's occupation. She joined her husband and the British army in New York and regularly visited the Continental Army's White Plains camp. Posing as a peddler of produce, she reported back on the men and munitions in the rebel camp. Another spy, known only to us as "355," had access to the highest echelons of the British command in New York. Her common-law husband, Robert Townsend, wrote society notes for a New York loyalist paper. She was apprehended after Arnold's capture, and died on a British prison ship in New York harbor.

Women at home made uniforms and blankets for the troops. The women of Philadelphia went door to door raising money in 1779, so persistently, one Loyalist woman wrote, that "people were obliged to give them something to get rid of them." They raised more than $300,000. Washington wanted to put their contribution in his general fund; the women wanted to give each soldier two dollars, hard money. Washington refused, fearing the men would buy drinks; the Philadelphia women instead gave each man a shirt.

Deborah Samson of Massachusetts is both representative of the soldier's experience and a complete aberration. Her father abandoned the family—Deborah's mother and seven children—when Deborah was six; bound out to a neighboring farm, Deborah grew tall and strong working in the fields and taught herself to read and write by reviewing her brothers' schoolwork. She taught school when she turned eighteen in 1778, but four years later she enlisted in a Massachusetts regiment under the name Robert Shurtliff. She received a sixty pound enlistment bonus, and was marched to West Point. A British saber cut her head in a skirmish near Tarrytown, and a musket ball hit her thigh. She did not tell the doctor treating her head wound about the musket ball in her leg. She cut it out herself. She became ill when her unit went to Philadelphia. The doctor treating her discovered her gender. She was honorably discharged; Massachusetts awarded her a pension.

Her story as Robert Shurtliff is representative of the soldier's experience in the war; as Deborah Samson, she was unique. While women supported the army, they did not serve; and those women who did as cooks, nurses, or in other roles, did not receive pensions. In 1832, after years of petitioning from widows of

did not receive pensions. In 1832, after years of petitioning from widows of soldiers, Congress awarded pensions to enlisted men's widows, a first. But nearly fifty years after the war ended, few widows were left to collect.

Pensions were far in the future; Washington had the more immediate problem of keeping his men fed, clothed, and together. Three-year enlistments began to expire in 1780; men who had not been paid in months began deserting individually or mutinying collectively. One hundred Massachusetts men marched out of West Point in January 1780; some were brought back and punished, others pardoned. Connecticut troops marched out of Morristown in May. The following month thirty-one New Yorkers deserted Fort Stanwix; their commander, along with Oneida allies, pursued and shot thirteen of them.

Fifteen hundred Pennsylvania troops marched out of Morristown to Princeton in January 1781, occupying the college buildings to demand that Congress let them go home—they had served three years (though they had enlisted for three years or the war's duration); they also wanted their pay. They told their commander, General Anthony Wayne, that their grievance was not with him but with Congress. Congress sent Pennsylvania president Joseph Reed to negotiate. General Henry Clinton also sent emissaries to offer them British protection. They sent the British agents to Wayne as prisoners. Reed and Wayne agreed to release men whose terms were up.

Later that month New Jersey troops mutinied. Washington arrived to put the mutiny down by force; a firing squad of repentant mutineers shot the two ringleaders. Washington knew mutinies had to be suppressed, but he also knew mutinies were an inevitable consequence of "keeping an army without pay, cloathing, and (frequently without provision)."

Congress seemed unable to resolve the problem; debts mounted and continental currency became worthless. Washington would not disband his army until the British army had left; the officers and men would not leave until they had been paid. A delegation of officers demanded that Congress in January 1783 secure their promised pensions (half-pay for life, granted in October 1780 as an inducement to stay in service). Colonel Walter Stewart returned to headquarters at Newburgh, New York, with alarming news: Congress was considering disbanding the army without honoring the pensions. An aide to Horatio Gates drafted a call for the officers to force Congress to pay, or to take action against

Congress. Was this a call for a military coup? Certainly the armed officers had more power than the ineffectual Congress.

Where did Washington stand? He ordered his officers to cancel their planned meeting and called another on March 15, 1783. Washington denounced threats to subvert civil authority, pledged his own efforts to secure his officers' pay, and concluded, "Let me entreat you, gentlemen, on your part, not to take any measures which, viewed in the calm light of reason, will lessen the dignity and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained; let me request you to rely on the plighted faith of your country, and place a full confidence in the purity of the intentions of Congress.

"You will, by the dignity of your conduct, afford occasion for posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to mankind, 'had this day been wanting, the world had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining.'"

He did not think they were convinced. He pulled a letter from his pocket; Congressman Joseph Jones had written Washington to outline the steps Congress was taking to pay the officers. But now Washington could not read Jones's handwriting. Again he reached into his pocket, this time drawing out a pair of glasses. The officers were stunned. None had ever seen Washington wear glasses. He put on the glasses, looking at the assembled silent men. "Gentlemen," he said, "you must pardon me. I have grown gray in your service and now find myself growing blind."

He finished, replaced the letter and spectacles, and left. Henry Knox proposed a resolution in support of Washington, and the officers approved. Washington had prevented a military coup.

But the immediate problem was not solved. Hundreds of Pennsylvania soldiers marched on Philadelphia in June, surrounded the state house, and demanded that the men inside—Congress and the Pennsylvania Assembly—pay them in twenty minutes or face the consequences. Though Congress managed to appease the soldiers, they felt insulted, feared further attacks from the soldiers they could not pay, and resented the Pennsylvania government's unwillingness to protect them (Congress had wanted Pennsylvania to have its militia drive off the Continental soldiers). Congress left Philadelphia. Six years earlier Congress had fled

Philadelphia to escape the British army; now it fled from its own. “The grand Sanhedrin of the Nation,” John Armstrong wrote, “with all their solemnity and emptiness, have removed to Princeton and left a state where their wisdom has been long questioned, their virtue suspected, and their dignity a jest.”

Washington knew a stronger union was essential to sustain independence and pay the debt. He also knew the solution had to be political, not military. He wrote to the state governors urging them to foster a stronger union. When he learned in October that the peace treaty was signed and that Clinton was preparing to evacuate New York, he disbanded his own army and prepared to enter the last remaining British outpost in what was now the independent United States.

He reached the Harlem River on November 20 and, with Governor George Clinton at his side, crossed over into Manhattan, seven years after being driven out by the British army. As the British prepared to sail from Staten Island, Washington and his men marched down Broadway. A New York woman contrasted the two armies:

> We had been accustomed for a long time to military display in all the finish and finery of garrison life; the troops just leaving us were as if equipped for show, and with their scarlet uniforms and burnished arms, made a brilliant display; the troops that marched in, on the contrary, were ill-clad and weather beaten, and made a forlorn appearance; but then they were *our* troops, and as I looked at them and thought upon all they had done and suffered for us, my heart and my eyes were full, and I admired and gloried in them the more, because they were weather beaten and forlorn.

Washington bid his officers farewell on December 4, then made his way to Annapolis, where Congress was in session. He returned his commission, retiring, as he said, from the great theater of action, and continued home to Mount Vernon.

In London, King George III that spring had asked artist Benjamin West what Washington would do now that he and his army had won the war. Would he not use this army to form a government? West thought Washington would now go back home to his farm. “If he does that,” the king replied, “he will be the greatest man in the world.”

Independence had been achieved. But could the new nation create a government that would sustain independence, preserve individual liberty, and repay its debts?

The possibility of doing this seemed as remote in 1783 as the prospect of independence had in 1776.

Chapter 5
Was America different?

Thomas Paine had boldly told the Americans that they had it in their power to start the world anew. Would they? How would their new country be different from every other nation in the world?

Even before the revolution, visitors from Europe commented on the striking differences between the old world and the new, such as America's physical landscape, the population's high rate of literacy, and the institution of slavery. After the Revolution, these features continued to set America apart, but so did two other differences that developed in the years of Revolution: religious diversity and government institutions.

Every American state except Pennsylvania and Rhode Island had an established church, but religious practices differed in each. Tremendous immigration from Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Germany in the mid-eighteenth century brought dissenting Presbyterians, Moravians, Lutherans, and Baptists, but not their clergy. American believers created their own communities of worship and controlled them in ways they could not have in Europe, where every community had an established, tax-supported church, and where priests and bishops were often political appointees. In America, children of one faith met and married children of another. Religious diversity, which did not exist anywhere else, flourished in America.

American Baptists presented the biggest challenge to religious orthodoxy. Reverend Isaac Backus of Massachusetts appeared uninvited at the first

Continental Congress in 1774, bringing copies of his *Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty*. He complained that the Massachusetts assembly taxed his Baptist congregation to support the Congregational clergy—a violation of their "No taxation without representation" principle. Congress pushed the Massachusetts delegates—the Adamses, Hancock, and Robert Treat Paine—to meet with Backus, but the four-hour discussion accomplished little. Robert Treat Paine thought that "there was nothing of conscience in the matter; it was only a contending about paying a little money." This was just what Parliament said about the Stamp and Tea Acts. For the Baptists it was about more than a little money: they denied the state's power to interfere in matters of religious conscience.

Emboldened by Congress's support, Backus petitioned the Massachusetts Provincial Congress for relief. Some Congregationalists suspected the Baptists were in cahoots with Anglicans in support of British rule, and the Provincial Congress would have ignored Backus but for John Adams insisting that they needed to act or risk the support of non-Congregationalists in other states. The Provincial Congress did not exactly take action—it told the Baptists to petition their assembly when it met again.

Baptists in Virginia suffered more than unfair taxation: the established church could have them arrested for not attending Anglican services. The Baptists protested, and though Virginia's 1776 Constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience, state taxes continued to support the Episcopal clergy. The Baptists protested, threatening to withhold support from the Revolutionary cause. They found powerful allies in Thomas Jefferson and young James Madison, an Episcopalian who had studied under Presbyterian elder John Witherspoon at Princeton. When Jefferson revised Virginia's legal code in the 1770s, he proposed a statute for religious freedom, declaring that

> no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

The legislature rejected the measure, but Madison continued to press it. Finally in 1785 he won the passage of this statute, freeing Baptists and others from an Episcopalian establishment and from having to pay taxes to support a church to

which they did not belong. Jefferson wrote that this law guaranteed religious liberty to “the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mahometan, the Hindoo, and infidel of every denomination.”

The fact that Virginia’s government had continued to tax Baptists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and infidels to support the Episcopalians, despite a constitutional guarantee of religious toleration, made Madison wary of “parchment barriers” to defend minorities against majorities. It also showed him a solution to the dilemma of governing the newly independent United States. In each state a majority could form on local issues, with little to check its will. Virginia Episcopalians, or Massachusetts Congregationalists, could tax Baptists and other religious dissenters who would never form a local majority.

But, Madison realized, while one religious sect could wield power in a single state, the United States encompassed so many different religious sects that it would be impossible for one to dominate nationally. This very diversity of religious practices secured religious liberty across the United States. With so many different churches, there could be no single established church. Madison saw that religious diversity, or pluralism, would prevent a national religious establishment. He also saw this as a model for preventing other forms—economic or political—of majority tyranny. The nation as a whole encompassed so many people with different interests—cultural, political, and economic—that no single interest was likely to form a majority to tyrannize over minority interests.

It was apparent that the loosely constructed confederation of thirteen autonomous states was not working. The United States could not pay its debts—it defaulted on its loan from France in 1785; it could not protect its frontiers—the British kept their forts in the Ohio territory, arming the Native Americans to attack frontier settlements, while Spain refused to allow Americans to use the Mississippi River; and it could not protect its merchants—Algiers in 1785 captured two American ships and held the sailors hostage.

But how to reform the system? James Madison realized the confederation had to give way to a government resting directly on the people. He prepared a memorandum listing the confederation’s problems. All centered on one point: the states had too much power. Their governments could change laws capriciously, making laws complicated and confusing. Any one state could block reform in Congress, making it unable to pay debts or enforce treaties. But

reform in Congress, making it unable to pay debts or enforce treaties. But because the states' legislatures, not the people, elected Congress, it could not tax citizens or use military force against them.

In the summer of 1787, the states (all but Rhode Island, which saw no reason to change the system) sent delegates to a convention in Philadelphia. Madison and the Virginia delegates took the lead, arriving at the convention first. Along with Madison, Virginia sent Washington; Governor Edmund Randolph; George Mason, author of the state constitution; and George Wythe, the leading law teacher in the United States (he had trained Jefferson and John Marshall). From Pennsylvania came James Wilson, a Scotland-trained lawyer, and two unrelated Morrises: Robert, minister of finance, and Gouverneur, the younger son of a New York aristocrat. Former governor John Rutledge; General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, wartime aide to Washington; and Charles Pinckney, an opinionated young lawyer, came from South Carolina. Other delegates included John Dickinson, author of the series of essays known as *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* and drafter of the Articles of Confederation; the chief justices of New York and New Jersey; the president of Columbia College; Maryland lawyer Luther Martin; and Elbridge Gerry and Rufus King from Massachusetts.

Jefferson called it an assembly of "demigods," but he was not there, nor were other important Americans. Patrick Henry stayed away, as did Governor George Clinton of New York; Governor John Hancock and Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, Minister of Foreign Affairs John Jay, and Jefferson's fellow diplomat John Adams were absent. Nor were there any representatives from west of the Appalachians; all the delegates were men, all were white, and only three had what might be considered "common origins": Franklin, the son of a soap maker, now one of the wealthiest men in the country; Alexander Hamilton, born to an unwed mother in the West Indies; and former cobbler Roger Sherman.

Virginia's governor, Randolph, proposed a plan Madison had drafted to create a national government with a national legislature, executive, and judiciary. The two-house legislature, elected by the people, would be able to veto state laws and tax people in the states. Representation in both legislative houses would be based on population; Virginia wanted to end the system that gave Delaware or Rhode Island as much power as Virginia or Pennsylvania.

Leaders from the smaller states would not give their power to larger states, and

knew the American people would not either. Dickinson pointedly told the nationalists they had pushed the matter too far—though the delegates might prefer a national government, the people would never ratify it. The small-state leaders drafted their own plan to strengthen the confederation by giving the existing Congress power to tax citizens, and by making the new Constitution "the supreme law of the land," binding all state officials—including judges—to follow federal, not state law. But the nationalists would not budge. They wanted population to count in both legislative houses.

With the convention threatening to dissolve, Sherman and William Samuel Johnson, both from Connecticut, proposed a compromise: one house of the legislature would represent states in proportion to their population, and in the other each state would have an equal vote. The nationalists opposed the compromise, but the Convention adopted it, saving the Constitution and opening the way to discuss other issues.

Gouverneur Morris proposed restricting the right to vote to freeholders—individuals who owned property. In response to the objection that this might lead to an aristocracy, Morris said that he "had long learned not to be the dupe of words" such as aristocracy. "Give the votes to people who have no property, and they will sell them to the rich who will be able to buy them." He warned that one day "this country will abound with mechanics & manufacturers who will receive their bread from their employers." Would these hirelings be "secure & faithful Guardians of liberty? Will they be the impregnable barrier against aristocracy?" Most people in 1787 were freeholders; they would not object. If they had "the wealth and value the right" to vote, urban merchants could buy property. "If not they don't deserve it."

John Dickinson agreed that restricting the vote to freeholders, "the best guardians of liberty," would guard against the "dangerous influence of those multitudes without property & without principle" who would one day abound. Men who owned their own land were independent; their employees were not. "The great mass of our Citizens is composed at this time of freeholders, and will be pleased with it."

Madison worried about "the probable reception" Morris's change "would meet with in the States" where non-freeholders could vote. Passing the Constitution would be difficult enough without creating unnecessary obstacles. On the other

hand, freeholders were the safest guardians of liberty, and in the future the "great majority of the people will not only be without landed, but any other sort of, property." If the propertyless joined together neither liberty nor property would be safe; more likely they would simply "become the tools of opulence & ambition."

Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut warned that "the right of suffrage was a tender point," and people would not support a constitution that took it away. Pierce Butler agreed. George Mason, author of Virginia's constitution, owner of much land and several hundred slaves, rose to defend the propertyless. Every "man having evidence of attachment to & permanent common interest with the Society ought to share in all its rights & privileges." Merchants and capitalists had an attachment, but Mason went further. "Ought the merchant, the monied man, the parent of a number of children whose fortunes are to be pursued in his own Country, to be viewed as suspicious characters, and unworthy to be trusted with the common right of their fellow Citizen"? Mason looked to the future and saw large propertyless families not as threats to liberty and property but instead as full of children who would pursue their fortunes in their own country.

Benjamin Franklin knew what Mason meant. His parents owned no property but raised thirteen children and seven grandchildren respectably. Usually quiet in legislative bodies, Franklin had only spoken a dozen times thus far, asking a question or making a comment to illuminate the discussion. Twice he had given long speeches, written out in advance and then delivered by another delegate as he sat, sagelike, listening to his own words. This time he did not need to write down his speech.

"It is of great consequence that we should not depress the virtue & public spirit of our common people," Franklin began. The son of a Boston soap maker reminded the delegates that the common people had "displayed a great deal" of virtue and public spirit "during the war," and they had "contributed principally to the favorable issue of it." American sailors, on the lowest rung of the economic ladder, when captured at sea preferred captivity in horrible British prisons to service on British warships. How to account for "their patriotism," which contrasted with the British sailors who eagerly joined the American fleet? America and Britain treated the common people differently. Franklin had been a poor man in both countries, and knew the difference. He recalled a time when Parliament suppressed dangerous "tumultuous meetings" by restricting the vote

to freeholders; the next year Parliament subjected “the people who had no votes to peculiar labors and hardships.” The convention decided not to go down the path of England.

The method of choosing the executive proved only slightly less difficult. Should he be chosen by the Congress? By the state legislatures? By the people as a whole? Would citizens of Georgia know of possible candidates in Massachusetts, and vice versa? Could foreign nations influence the election through bribery? Morris created an elaborate system for choosing a president, taking into account the country’s size and regional differences. Each state would choose electors—who did not hold any other office—having the same number as its representatives in Congress, including senators. These electors would gather on the same day in every state capital and vote for two people—only one of whom could be from their own state. They would send their sealed ballots to Congress, which would count them. Morris and the delegates assumed that no one would receive a majority, but that some candidates would have support in different regions. The House of Representatives would choose from the top five candidates, with each state having one vote.The candidate receiving the most votes would be president. The runner-up would become vice president, taking office in case of the president’s incapacity, but his main role would be to preside over the Senate.

This elaborate system assumed the electors would be a nominating board; this gave the states an important role in choosing the candidates, and the House of Representatives, elected by the people, would make the final choice. Only once, in 1824, did the system work as the framers imagined it would. That year four candidates split the electoral vote, and Congress elected John Quincy Adams. Before then, in the 1790s, national political parties developed that arranged the electors’ votes in advance.

The convention voted to give Congress the power to regulate interstate and international commerce. But should Congress have the power to tax imports? This power in Parliament’s hands had caused the Revolution. George Mason recognized that Virginia depended on international markets for its tobacco. He would not want Europeans to close their tobacco markets in retaliation for American tariffs on European goods. He proposed requiring a two-thirds vote of Congress to impose tariffs. The manufacturing states—Pennsylvania and New England—would support higher protective tariffs and would probably come to have majorities in Congress, but the two-thirds vote would protect the

have majorities in Congress, but the two-thirds vote would protect the agricultural states.

Mason also joined Luther Martin of Maryland in calling for an end to the slave trade. A campaign against the horrors of the slave trade had arisen in England, and it is not surprising that Americans took up the cause, though it may be surprising that slave-owners Mason and Martin were making the case. “Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant,” Mason warned, and slavery would “bring the judgment of heaven on a Country.” Slavery itself weakened a society and depressed the value of free labor. Looking westward, he noted that the settlers in the new territories across the mountains were “already calling out for slaves for their new lands.”

Connecticut’s Oliver Ellsworth “had never owned a slave” and so “could not judge the effects of slavery on character,” but he advised against raising so divisive an issue. If slavery were as evil as Mason said, then Ellsworth thought they should “go farther and free those already in the Country,” but if they would not do that, restricting the slave trade would be unfair to South Carolina and Georgia, which still needed slaves to work in their massive agricultural industry. South Carolina’s Pinckneys, and Baldwin of Georgia, warned that their states would reject the Constitution if it barred importing slaves. The Virginians and Marylanders were not humanitarians, but hypocrites. Their exhausted tobacco fields could no longer employ all the slaves they owned; they wanted to sell their surplus slaves to Georgia and South Carolina. By barring imports from Africa, they were not advancing the cause of humanity but only the value of their surplus slave population.

The convention sent both issues—tariff and slave trade—to a committee. New Englanders, neutral on the slave trade but against the two-thirds vote on tariffs, made a bargain with Georgians and South Carolinians, who wanted the two-thirds tariff vote and to continue the slave trade. Georgia and South Carolina would support a simple majority vote on tariffs, and in return New England would allow them to continue importing slaves for twenty years.

Outraged at this bargain, George Mason said he would sooner cut off his right hand than use it to sign the Constitution. Still, in an effort to save the Constitution, Mason and Elbridge Gerry proposed a bill of rights. Mason said most state constitutions began with bills of rights, listing rights the government

could not violate. The people would expect this constitution to have one. When the other delegates pleaded weariness and rejected the call to draft a bill of rights, Mason and Gerry refused to sign the Constitution. Gerry warned of a civil war brewing in Massachusetts between proponents of democracy, which he called “the worst of all political evils,” and their equally violent adversaries, and he feared this constitution would further agitate the political waters. Mason, according to Madison, “left Philadelphia in a very ill humor indeed.”

Nine states would have to ratify the Constitution for it to take effect. Quickly supporters mobilized. Philadelphia writer Pelatiah Webster endorsed the Constitution as a “federal,” rather than “national” system. Supporters of the Constitution thus became Federalists.

In Philadelphia James Wilson addressed the lack of a bill of rights, arguing that one would be dangerous and unnecessary. The new government had limited powers, and any powers not specifically granted were reserved to the people or to the states. Wilson argued that if the Constitution included a bill of rights, it would imply the federal government had powers in these areas—press, religion, speech, rights of the accused—when in fact only the states did, and the state bills of rights would continue to protect citizens in the states. Where in this Constitution did the federal government have power over the press, religion, or speech? Where did it say anything about jury trials, or about the rights of the accused, or the right to keep and bear arms?

Opponents emerged just as quickly, objecting that the new government had too much power, that it would overwhelm the state governments, and that the Constitution lacked a bill of rights. “I confess, as I enter the building I stumble at the threshold,” Samuel Adams wrote to Richard Henry Lee. “I meet with a national government, instead of a confederation of states.” The very preamble —“We, the People of the United States” asserted that this government rested on the people of the nation, obliterating state boundaries. Article VI, Section 2, says that the Constitution and the laws Congress made are the “supreme Law of the Land,” and state judges were bound to follow federal precedent, “any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.” Did this not make state bills of rights irrelevant?

As for Wilson’s argument that the federal government had no power over things bills of rights protected, opponents pointed to Article I, Section 9, which says

that the right of habeas corpus cannot be suspended. If this right—against being held without being formally charged—could not be suspended, did that mean other rights could? Did the federal government have other power over judicial proceedings? And while Article I, Section 8 specifically listed Congress's powers, it began and ended with two ominous clauses: Congress would have the power to "pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and … general Welfare of the United States," and Congress would have power to "make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers." Patrick Henry called this the "sweeping clause," which would sweep away all state powers.

Delaware and New Jersey quickly and unanimously ratified the Constitution. Georgia also supported the Constitution, needing the new government's help in its war against the Creeks. Pennsylvania's ratifying convention met in December, and though the opposition had mobilized, protesting the lack of a bill of rights and the new government's powers, they were outvoted. In the first month of 1788, conventions met in Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. The first two states were expected to ratify easily. Connecticut did, but New Hampshire's Federalists adjourned their convention when they realized that their opponents outnumbered them.

Massachusetts would be difficult. Samuel Adams opposed the Constitution; John Hancock was keeping quiet; and the convention included about eighteen or twenty delegates who had been in arms at the beginning of the year opposing the powers of the state government. This convention was unlikely to support a more powerful federal government. The Massachusetts Federalists prepared a compromise. They would support amendments—a bill of rights—once the new government went into effect. But first Massachusetts should ratify the Constitution. Though Federalists elsewhere still insisted amendments were unnecessary, in Massachusetts the supporters saw them as the price of ratification. By a vote of 187 to 168 Massachusetts ratified, pledging to propose amendments once the new government formed.

Subsequently, South Carolina and Maryland ratified, each proposing amendments. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney had addressed the demand for a bill of rights in the South Carolina convention, pointing out that bills of rights generally began by declaring that "all men are born free and equal." "We should make such an assertion with a very ill grace," he said, "since most of our people are actually born slaves."

are actually born slaves.

By now eight states had ratified. Rhode Island rejected the Constitution by a popular vote, and North Carolina's convention was also certain to reject it. New Hampshire, New York, and Virginia were all in doubt—though New York leaned against ratifying—when their conventions met in June. Madison faced off in Virginia against Patrick Henry, a formidable power in state government. Henry charged that the Constitution would sacrifice religious liberty; Madison reminded the delegates that the Virginia Constitution promised religious liberty, but until the state passed the statute for religious freedom, Baptists and other dissenters were taxed to support the Episcopal Church. He did not need to remind them that Virginia statute's prime mover; Henry had been its chief opponent. And while George Mason blasted the Constitution for allowing the slave trade to continue, Henry attacked it for threatening to abolish slavery.

Madison also agreed that amendments could be added after ratification. Virginia offered forty amendments to be added later, and by a vote of eighty-nine to seventy-nine, Virginia ratified. By this time New Hampshire had become the ninth state to ratify. When the New York convention learned that the Constitution would take effect, it ratified as well.

The new government elected under the Constitution met in New York in the spring of 1789. Most states sent supporters of the Constitution to the Senate. In House elections there were a few surprises. Fisher Ames defeated Samuel Adams in Boston; in Virginia, Madison defeated James Monroe, the ratification opponent. The electors unanimously chose Washington to be the first president of the United States. John Adams, with thirty-four votes, was elected vice president. After creating a Department of State, a Treasury, a Department of War, the office of attorney general, a five-member Supreme Court, and district courts in each state, Congress turned its attention to drafting a bill of rights. Madison now saw amendments as the price of ratification. He took the proposals submitted by the states, as well as the state declarations of rights, and from this multitude of proposals drafted twelve articles of amendment for submission to the states.

Washington appointed able men to the new positions in the federal government. John Jay, the minister for foreign affairs, became chief justice, but also acted as secretary of state until Thomas Jefferson accepted the position. Alexander Hamilton became secretary of the treasury, Henry Knox, minister of war,

Hamilton became secretary of the treasury. Henry Knox, minister of war, became secretary of war, and Virginia governor Edmund Randolph became attorney general. Washington anticipated harmony, but political divisions soon emerged, over both domestic policy and international affairs.

The clearest division emerged in reaction to the revolution in France. The French people in 1789 overthrew the monarchy, which could not cope with the great divide between rich and poor or find an equitable way to pay France's tremendous debt. Americans welcomed the spread of the cause of liberty—Jefferson, the American minister to France, watched with approval as the French assembly demanded more power; Lafayette called for a constitutional monarchy, and Thomas Paine, elected to the French assembly, wrote its manifesto, *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*. But the revolution devolved into anarchy, with more radical factions calling for the elimination of aristocracy, the church, and all vestiges of the old order.

Vice President John Adams warned that France was headed for trouble. No country could simply toss out its old government without risking chaos. A Philadelphia mob stormed the newspaper that printed Adams's musings, charging that Adams admired aristocracy and monarchy. Across the country, citizens supporting France formed "Democratic Republican Societies," modeled on France's Jacobin clubs, celebrating the French Revolution as an aftereffect of the American Revolution and embracing the cause of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

As Americans divided over France, treasury secretary Hamilton proposed that the United States pay the states' Revolutionary War debts, impose an excise tax on whiskey to help pay this debt, and create a national bank to help the government borrow money. Madison opposed these policies, arguing first that Virginia and other states had already paid their debts and that their citizens should not have to pay the debts of others; that paying the debt in this way would not help the soldiers who had served but only those speculators who had bought up the debt; that an excise tax was politically unwise; and that a national bank violated the Constitution, since Congress did not have the power to charter corporations.

Hamilton argued that the war debt had been incurred for the nation's benefit. He believed that it was essential to secure the support of capitalists and speculators; that an excise tax on whiskey, though politically unpopular, was necessary and

would bring revenues from the frontier; and that while the Constitution did not give Congress power to charter a bank, it did not forbid it to do so. This and other powers not specifically granted were implied by the “necessary and proper” clause.

Political parties developed along these fault lines. The Democratic-Republicans, led by Madison and Jefferson, generally opposed the Washington administration’s policies, while the Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, supported them. Washington remained enough of a national icon to be above party politics, and the Federalists did not think of themselves as a party but as the government of the United States. Their strength was in New England and among the merchants of Philadelphia, the Virginia tidewater gentry, and the South Carolina rice planters. The Republicans, as the opposition came to be called, drew strength from the frontier, from urban artisans and smaller traders, from New York farmers and the supporters of Pennsylvania’s radical constitution, and from the piedmont and backcountry of Virginia and the Carolinas. These political divisions played out against the backdrop of the French Revolution. The Republicans charged that Federalists were trying to impose monarchy or aristocracy, while the Federalists charged that Republican efforts to limit power were aimed at destabilizing all authority.

The whiskey tax spurred frontier protests reminiscent of the 1760s. Farmers in western Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and North Carolina, who turned their corn into whiskey so it could be more easily shipped and sold, raised liberty poles and argued that the excise tax unfairly burdened their cash-poor region with a tax they could not pay. Not content with tarring and feathering the tax collectors, some radicals threatened to burn Pittsburgh.

Frontier farmers argued that the government demanded their support but did nothing for them. The Washington administration had difficulty protecting citizens on the frontier, vulnerable to attacks by Indians supported by the British. General Arthur St. Clair had been sent in November 1791 to pacify the Miami Indians of Ohio; the Miamis and their allies overwhelmed St. Clair’s forces, killing or wounding nine hundred of his fourteen hundred men. Meanwhile, Spanish control of the Mississippi blocked the farmers of Pennsylvania, Ohio, western Virginia, and Kentucky from access to the sea.

When western Pennsylvania protestors threatened to overwhelm the local

government, President Washington in 1794 sent more than ten thousand troops to put down the Whiskey Rebellion. Frontiersmen pointed out that the government sent ten times as many soldiers to fight them as it had sent to protect them from the Miamis, and that the rebellion had died down by the time the federal army arrived. But that same summer, an army under Anthony Wayne fought the Miami at Fallen Timbers (now Maumee, Ohio). It was a victory, though not decisive, for the Americans; the Shawnee retreated to the British post at Fort Miami but were turned away. The following year the Shawnee and Miami agreed to move out of southern Ohio.

Washington demonstrated the ability of American authorities to secure the frontier from both Indians and frontiersmen. In his annual message to Congress in the wake of the turmoil, Washington congratulated the American people for living under a government that could keep them both safe and free. But he blamed “certain self-created societies”—the Democratic-Republicans—for stirring up political trouble on the frontier and hindering the government’s ability to govern. As in the 1760s, two different ideas of government were emerging—Washington’s, that the elected government should do its job without interference from the governed; and the opposition’s, that the governed have a fundamental right—and a power—to govern their governors. The tension this time would not overthrow the system but would be resolved within it.

When John Adams became president in 1797, the nation’s chief problem was with France, which had gone to war against England. The Washington administration declared the United States neutral but sent Chief Justice John Jay to negotiate a new commercial treaty with England. The French turned their warships against American merchant vessels.

Knowing Vice President Jefferson’s popularity in France and his diplomatic skill, Adams proposed sending him to negotiate in Paris. But Jefferson thought it improper for the vice president to negotiate a treaty, and the Federalists opposed sending him. Adams sent a delegation—Marshall, Pinckney, and Gerry—though French bureaucrats refused to talk unless the Americans bribed them. When news of their hostility reached Philadelphia, Congress established a navy to protect American commerce, authorized Adams to raise an army (Washington came out of retirement to command), and passed the Alien and Sedition acts.

The Sedition law made it a federal offense to write, publish, or utter anything

that might bring the president or Congress into contempt, hatred, or ridicule. Fourteen newspaper editors and one Congressman were jailed for sedition. The law would expire in 1801, meaning the country would have two Congressional elections and one Presidential election while it was a federal offense to criticize Congressmen or the President. The Alien Friends Act allowed the deportation of aliens from countries friendly to the United States, if they were threats to American peace and safety. This primarily targeted Irish immigrants, many of whom were active Republicans. The Alien Enemies Act allowed the president to deport any alien, dangerous or not, from a country at war with the United States. The Naturalization Act made it more difficult for immigrants to become citizens.

Jefferson called this “the reign of the witches,” and he and Madison secretly drafted resolutions that the Virginia and Kentucky legislatures adopted, calling the Alien and Sedition laws unconstitutional extensions of federal power. No other states joined in opposition. It seemed the Federalists would secure power using the apparatus of the elected government.

Two things prevented this. One was that a new French government sincerely wanted to negotiate with the Americans; another was that Republicans mobilized for the election of 1800. As Massachusetts Federalist Fisher Ames complained, the Republicans turned every husking bee, every barn raising, and every funeral into a political rally, which swept the Federalists from control of the House, the Senate, and the executive branch. This was a new phenomenon--a government in office being replaced by another through a popular election. The ousted government went home.

Thomas Jefferson referred to his election in 1800 as a “revolution,” not in the sense of overthrowing a government, but in the sense of revolving and returning to earlier principles. In his first weeks in office, Jefferson wrote to colleagues who had secured the Revolution of 1776. To John Dickinson he wrote that his administration would “put our ship of state on her republican tack, so she would show by the grace of her movements the skill of her builders.” He did not write to John Adams, who left Washington before Jefferson took the oath. But he wrote to Samuel Adams that his inaugural address was a letter to that “patriarch,” and he wondered with every line “if this is the spirit” of Samuel Adams.

In his inaugural address Jefferson reflected on the “contest of opinion” through which the nation had just passed, saying the intensity of public discussions might

which the nation had just passed, saying the intensity of public discussions might alarm “strangers unused to saying what they think.” But now that the matter was decided in accordance with the Constitution, all would peacefully go about their business. As for the political divisions of the 1790s, he noted that “every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principles. We are all republicans, we are all federalists.”

Would Jefferson use the government’s power to punish his political opponents, who had tried to silence the opposition? He would not. The Federalists had mistaken the nature of American power. The government’s strength rested on an informed citizenry, not on a standing army or a sedition act. This government, which he called “the world’s best hope,” was the “only one where every man, at the call of the law, will fly to the standard of the law, and will meet violations of the public order as his own personal concern.” This was a new idea—that the public order was the personal concern of every citizen.

Jefferson knew that some honest men feared human nature. “Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself.” But then he asked, “Can he then be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels, in the form of kings, to govern him? Let history answer this question.”

Jefferson briefly set out the principles that would shape his administration. The government should prevent men from injuring one another, but otherwise leave them free to regulate their own affairs. If any men wanted to dissolve the union, as the Federalists had accused the Republicans, or alter its republican nature, as the Republicans had charged the Federalists, “let them stand undisturbed as monuments to the freedom with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.” These principles, Jefferson said, had guided the nation through an age of revolution and reformation. Until the Civil War this notion of limited government, the touchstone of Jefferson’s political faith and, as he said, the faith of the American Revolution, would remain the operating principle of the federal system.

James Monroe, the last Revolutionary War veteran to serve as president (he had crossed the Delaware with Washington in 1776), in 1824 invited Lafayette, the war’s last surviving major general, to return to America as the nation’s guest. Lafayette had lost his fortune and nearly his life during the French Revolution. He had been imprisoned in Austria; his wife had nearly gone to the guillotine.

He had a cool relationship with Napoleon and with the restored French monarchy, refusing to serve under a non-elected government. The French government suppressed public demonstrations to bid him farewell. As he had in 1777, Lafayette slipped out of France, this time accompanied only by his son, his secretary, and his valet.

America had changed since Lafayette's first visit. So had Europe. Monarchies then dominated the world, and the British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch claimed all the Americas. By 1824, the people of Haiti, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, Peru, and Brazil, as well as the United States, were independent. Their revolutions had shaken Europe itself.

There were fewer than three million Americans—white and black, not counting Native Americans—all living along the Atlantic coast, when Lafayette first arrived in 1777; now there were twelve million (not counting Indians), and their territory stretched to the Pacific. They were digging canals across their land and building steamboats to ship their goods across the Atlantic. The American navy patrolled the continent's coasts—Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific—and President Monroe announced that the United States would not tolerate any European intrusion in the new world. At a Paris celebration of Washington's Birthday in 1824, Lafayette toasted Monroe's doctrine as another part of "the great contest between the rights of mankind and the pretensions of European despotism and aristocracy."

In Washington, Lafayette met an envoy sent by Simon Bolivar, the liberator of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Panama, presenting him with a gold medal, a portrait of Washington, and the "personal congratulations of a veteran of the common cause." On Lafayette's birthday, September 6, President John Quincy Adams hosted a White House dinner. After Adams toasted February 22, the birthday of Washington, Lafayette toasted July 4, the "birthday of liberty in the two hemispheres."

Lafayette visited all twenty-four states, and it seemed all twelve million Americans turned out to meet him. He stayed with presidents and political leaders, with free black families and native Americans, with frontier farmers and city merchants. He remembered the names of veterans who had served with him, and laid the cornerstone for the Bunker Hill Monument and brought dirt from the battlefield home so that when he died he could be buried in it.

10. Lafayette visited every state on his triumphal return in 1824–1825; in in June 1825 he laid the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill Monument; he returned to France with enough dirt from Bunker Hill so, on his own death in 1834, he could be buried in it.

Still unabashed in his enthusiasm for the cause of liberty, Lafayette saw its limits in America. He had urged Washington to take a stand against slavery even during the Revolution. Washington's thoughts on slavery had changed during the war: on his arrival at Cambridge he had tried to bar black men from serving in the Continental Army. But he had rescinded this order at the end of 1775, and before the war ended he would vow never to buy or sell another human being (a vow he did not keep). By the war's end he also encouraged Henry Laurens, son of a South Carolina planter, in his attempt to enlist black troops from among the enslaved people of South Carolina, who would be given their freedom in return for fighting for the freedom of their owners.

It might have seemed in the 1780s that slavery was being limited. Black men and women in Massachusetts petitioned in the early 1770s for their liberty. When the new state constitution in 1780 stated that all men were free and equal, slaves in Massachusetts went to court. In the cases of Quock Walker, a slave in Worcester County, and Elizabeth Freeman, a slave in Berkshire County, juries found that

under this constitution one person could not own another. In the first census in 1790, Massachusetts was the only state without slaves.

The Pennsylvania assembly passed a gradual emancipation law in 1780, freeing children born into slavery when they reached the age of twenty-eight. The leaders of Pennsylvania had practical as well as humanitarian reasons for opposing slavery. First, Philadelphia's enslaved people, hoping for a British victory that would bring emancipation, had aided the British occupation. Many went over to the British side, and they and others left with the Loyalists in 1778. Skilled whites moved in after the occupation, taking positions previously held by enslaved people. During and after the war, a move to emancipate slaves coincided with a decline in the black population of the northern states. But even in Virginia, Methodists petitioned for an end to slavery.

In addition to lobbying Washington, Lafayette had also urged Jefferson and Madison to make public their private views of slavery. Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1782) had called the slavery "the most unremitting despotism," permitting "one half the citizens to trample on the rights of the other," transforming the first into despots, the others into enemies. "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever," and that "the Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest."

But Jefferson would say no more. Virginia considered but rejected a gradual emancipation bill in the 1790s; it would not revive the subject again until 1831, after Nat Turner's insurrection in Southampton County. Virginians had supported the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, banning slavery in the territory north of the Ohio River, and President Jefferson urged Congress in 1807 to make good on its constitutional power to end the slave trade. But neither he nor Madison would publicly attack slavery, nor would either free his slaves, as their private secretary Edward Coles had done in 1819, settling the freed people on land he purchased in Illinois. As governor in the 1820s, Coles blocked an attempt to allow slavery into Illinois.

Jefferson and Madison, and even Lafayette, might have believed that by barring slavery north of the Ohio and prohibiting the international slave trade they had put slavery on the road to extinction. But by the 1820s the institution was spreading. Slavery had exhausted Virginia's soil, and the Carolina rice

plantations had reached their own saturation point. Eli Whitney, a clever Yankee, in the 1790s visited the plantation a grateful Georgia had given Nathanael Greene. Learning of a state competition to develop a faster way to clean and card cotton, he entered and won with his “cotton engine,” or “gin,” which performed the tedious work of cleaning seeds from cotton boles and straightening the fibers. Cotton became the leading American export, grown by slave labor in a fertile belt stretching from Georgia westward, shipped either to England’s manufacturing centers or to the newly built textile mills of New England. Henry Adams, great-grandson of John, wrote that after 1815 Americans thought more about the price of cotton and less about the rights of man. Cotton became the leading American export, and the United States the world’s leading cotton producer by 1820, and in 1860 a South Carolina senator proclaimed that “Cotton is King.”

Cotton’s expansion increased the demand for slaves and the values of land in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The impediment to settlement here had been the Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Cherokees. Living in large towns and practicing settled agriculture, these “Civilized Tribes” had made treaties with the United States, but the states of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi were determined to push them out and open their territory for sale and development as cotton plantations. In 1830 Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, calling for treaties to move all these nations—American allies or enemies—into what became Oklahoma.

This plan had been in place long before. Lafayette was called away from a formal ball held in his honor in Kaskaskia, Illinois, to meet with an Indian woman named Mary. She had come to Illinois in 1800, leaving her shattered Iroquois homeland and the steady white encroachment westward. Her father, the Iroquois warrior Panisciowa, had given her a small leather pouch which held “the most powerful Manitou” to be used with the encroaching whites; all who saw it had shown him marked affection. She brought this talisman to show Lafayette. She took from the pouch a fragile paper, a letter of recommendation he had written for Panisciowa in 1778, now preserved by his daughter as a sacred relic of her father’s service in “the good American cause.”

In Buffalo, a town which had come into being when Panisciowa and other Iroquois were pushed west, Lafayette entered the new Erie Canal, connecting the great interior to New York and the east coast. The sounds of saws and hammers

constantly filled the air, as trees fell and buildings rose on their site. First an inn for travelers and newcomers, then printing shops to turn out newspapers, and homes, and schools in this world Americans were transforming.

In Buffalo, Lafayette met an old warrior, Red Jacket, who remembered meeting the French general forty years earlier, when the Americans and Indians made peace at Fort Stanwix. After a pleasant series of reminiscences, Lafayette asked Red Jacket what had become of the "Young Indian who had opposed the burying of the tomahawk with such eloquence?"

"He is standing in front of you," Red Jacket replied.

"Time has changed us much," Lafayette replied. "We were young and agile then." Now both were old men in a young country transforming itself, for good or ill, thanks to the war they had fought half a century earlier.

Lafayette's tour stirred American plans to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of that struggle, on July 4, 1826. Three men survived who had signed the Declaration—Adams, Jefferson, and Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland. All were too ill to attend. Jefferson and Adams, in fact, would both breathe their last on July 4, but all sent messages looking forward to the world their countrymen would continue to create anew.

Jefferson hoped July 4 would "be to the world … the signal of arousing men to burst the chains … , and to assume the blessings and security of self-government," which must be based on the "free right" of unbounded reason. "All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science," Jefferson said, "has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others."

In Quincy, Massachusetts, citizens asked John Adams to attend their own celebrations on July 4. He declined. They asked if he would propose a toast to be given in his name. He would gladly do that.

"Independence forever!"

Would he add more?

“Not a word.”

Further reading

Has the history of the Revolution been, as Adams predicted, one continuous lie? Historians have given it more depth and detail than the story Adams expected, that Franklin smote the earth and brought forth Washington. The Revolution spawned an interest in history at the very beginning—the Massachusetts Historical Society (http://www.masshist.org/) was formed in 1791to preserve documents and materials related to the Revolution; it now houses all the papers of John and Abigail Adams, as well as many papers of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Lincoln, and other figures, many of which have now been digitized and are available on the Internet; Isaiah Thomas, printer of the *Massachusetts Spy*, founded in 1812 the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, which houses collections of newspapers, books, and manuscripts; the Historical Society of Pennsylvania began its collections in 1824; the Virginia Historical Society began in 1831, with John Marshall as its first president and James Madison its first honorary member.

The books listed below will help navigate the Revolution in all its intriguing complexity. Virtually every figure mentioned in this book has been the subject of scholarly research, and the papers of many—Adams, Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison—have been published in annotated editions.

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