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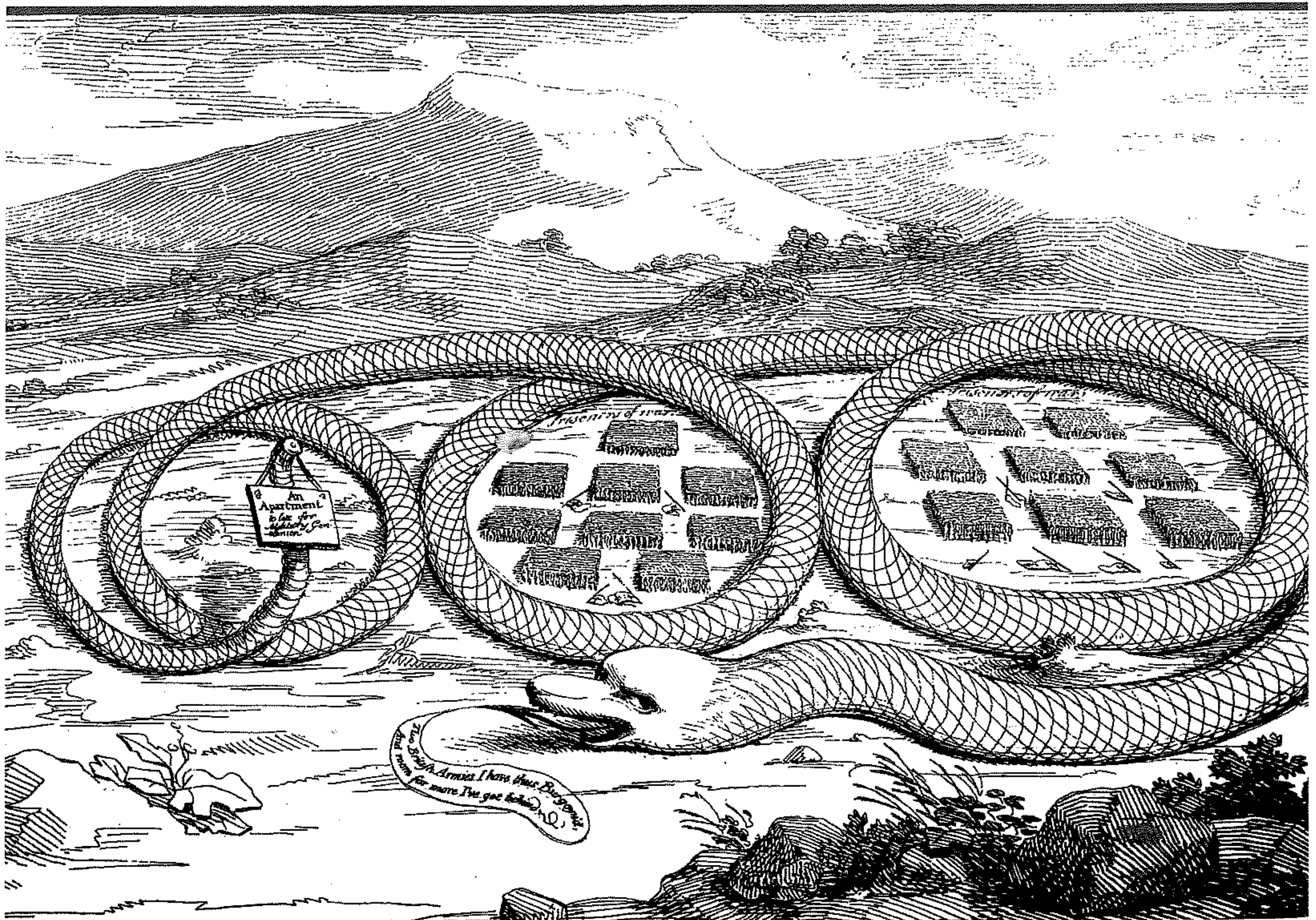
Revolution, Constitution, and the People

1776–1815



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As war erupted between the American colonies and Britain and the colonies declared independence, many working men and women joined the Patriot cause. Six hard years passed between the war's first shots and a decisive American victory in 1781; two more passed before Britain signed the Treaty of Paris, recognizing American independence. For the first time, overseas colonies of a European power had achieved political independence from their mother country and had gained the opportunity to set up their own form of society.

Ordinary people not only helped to achieve the military successes that secured independence, but also questioned older hierarchical assumptions and claimed for themselves a stake in political sovereignty. The Boston shoemaker George Hewes, who served as a seaman aboard Massachusetts warships, recalled an incident that illustrated his new sense of equality. One day in the street, he met an officer from the ship on which he had enlisted, who ordered Hewes to remove his hat to him. Hewes, who "refused to do [this] for any man," signed onto another vessel instead. For Hewes and for many others, the Revolution meant rejecting the deferential habits of colonial days and becoming citizens in the new republic.

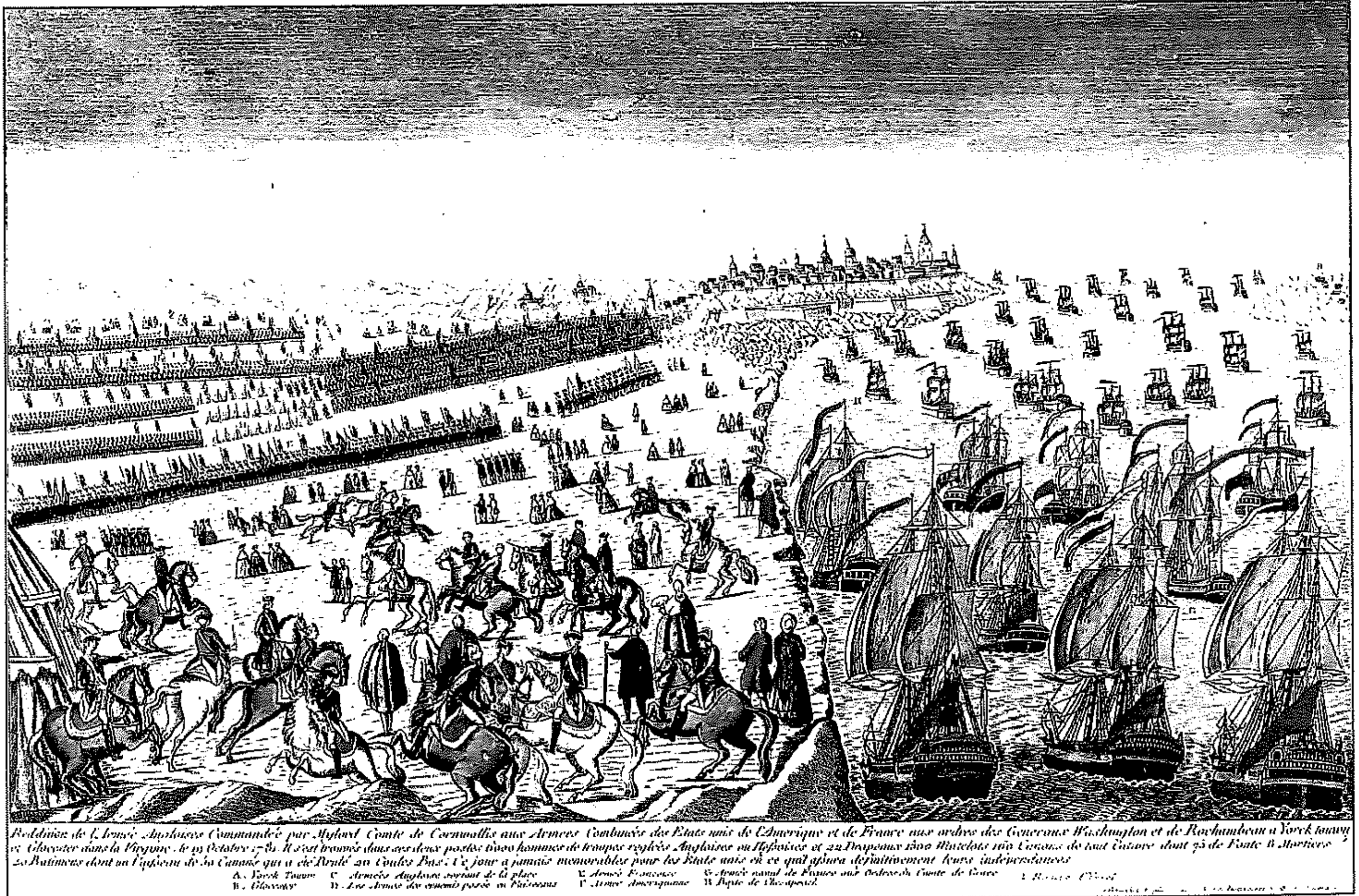
Americans had to decide how to govern themselves, who would get a say in public affairs, and how they should use the vast territory over which they now claimed control. Large groups were excluded from the aspiration for equality. Economic conditions ensured that inequalities would persist. Many among the nation's elites disagreed with popular conceptions of republican society, and their views shaped the U.S. Constitution that would be drafted and ratified in the late 1780s. Yet America was changed by the

The American Rattle Snake
The British political artist James Gillray's 1782 cartoon commented on the military situation the king's delegates faced at the start of peace negotiations with the United States. British forces commanded by Generals Burgoyne and Cornwallis are shown trapped within the snake's coils, while its rattle carries a placard stating, "An Apartment to Lett for Military Gentlemen." James Gillray, etching, London, April 12, 1782 — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Revolution, and new social and political attitudes ensured that the colonial world would not be re-created.

The Course of the War

From the British evacuation of Boston in 1776 to their surrender at Yorktown in 1781, armies campaigned in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and the South, with numerous secondary actions on the coasts and the frontier. Although the war had started in New England, its center shifted southward as the British increased their forces in an effort to recapture the colonies. Americans were able to win a notable victory in 1777 at Saratoga, New York, when they trapped a British army marching down from Canada and captured over 5,000 soldiers. This victory removed the threat of invasion from the north and convinced the French government that American success in the war was possible. France joined the war on the American side and was soon contributing military and naval assistance. Later, Spain and then Holland also declared war on Britain, forcing it to confront three of Europe's most significant powers as well as the American revolutionaries.



Surrender of the British Army
A French print depicted the 1781 victory of American and French armies over the British in Yorktown, Virginia. As shown here, French ships blocked the entrance of Chesapeake Bay, preventing British ships from resupplying their troops on the shore. But having no knowledge of the locale, the French artist rendered Yorktown as a European walled city. Mondhare, *Reddition de l'Armée Angloises Commandée par Mylord Comte de Cornwallis*, etching with watercolor, Paris, 1781 — Chicago Historical Society.

French help would prove critical in bringing the fighting to a close. In 1781, George Washington's Continentals, together with a French army, trapped a British force in the fortress at Yorktown, Virginia. At a crucial juncture, a French fleet evaded a British naval blockade, crossed the Atlantic, and prevented British supply ships from relieving Yorktown. Faced with starvation, the 9,500 British troops surrendered, giving the Americans a decisive victory.

Waging War, North and South Prior to Yorktown, dramatic military gains had been rare for the Americans. An attempt in late 1775 to invade Canada and capture Quebec ended in disaster. American success often depended less on winning battles than on avoiding losing them — on keeping armies intact and scoring minor victories when opportunity arose. Regrouping after their withdrawal from Boston, British forces returned in strength in the summer of 1776, capturing Long Island and then New York City, which remained their main base until 1783. Defeated on Long Island, Washington (aided by East River fishermen) escaped with the remains of his army and retreated, eventually crossing the Hudson River into New Jersey. The people of eastern New York and New Jersey included many Loyalists, and the British used the area to obtain supplies. By late 1776, they had driven Washington's army into Pennsylvania. Yet Washington's men avoided being crushed. After months of dodging defeat, they won small victories at Trenton and Princeton in the winter of 1776–1777, causing the British to withdraw from much of New Jersey. The following summer, however, the British attacked again and, brushing Washington aside, captured Philadelphia, which they held until the following year.

Yet the British found that they could not control New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Although they held New York City and they occupied Philadelphia for a period, they could not conquer the countryside, where the majority of the population lived. Warfare imposed a great burden on the people. As armies moved to and fro, families fled their homes for safer areas. One woman recalled "so much suffering . . . that it has always been painful for me to dwell upon." British depredations and the continued presence of an American army in the Mid-Atlantic states restrained the further growth of support for the Loyalist cause there and helped to keep the region on the revolutionary side.

Accordingly, in the late 1770s, the British embarked on a campaign in the South, aiming to use the support of the many Loyalists in the backcountry to help restore royal authority there. They captured Savannah and Charleston; defeated a Patriot army at Camden, South Carolina; and went some way toward restoring control over Georgia and South Carolina. But British efforts sparked a civil war between Patriots and Loyalists, whose armed militias waged a grim guerrilla-style struggle across the countryside.

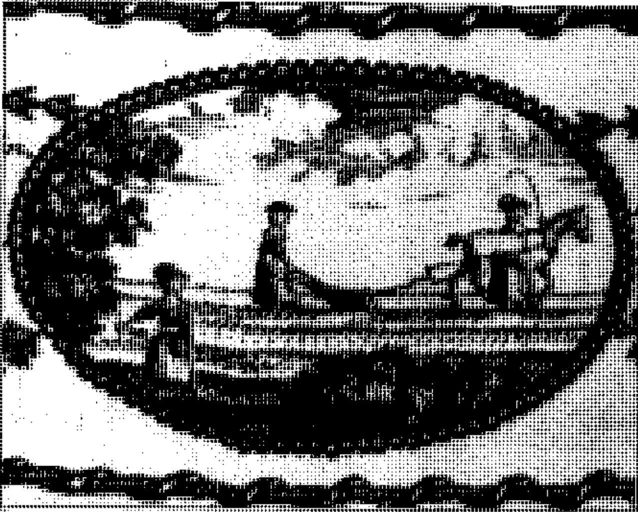
Yankee Doodle, or the American Soton

This print, by an American-born engraver living in London, may have mocked British characterizations of the Patriot enemy by portraying the "evil" archetypal American as a plainly dressed, serious-looking young man. After British soldiers started losing battles, their favorite song deriding colonists, "Yankee Doodle," was proudly appropriated by American forces. Joseph Wright, *Yankee Doodle, or the American Satan*, engraving, c. 1778 — Chicago Historical Society.

In October 1780 at King's Mountain, North Carolina, Patriot fighters won a battle in which almost all the participants on both sides were Americans. The following January, a Patriot force defeated a British detachment at Cowpens, South Carolina. Resentments ran high. More than one Loyalist militia leader, captured by Patriots, was seized by vigilantes and murdered. South Carolina's David Ramsay would remark that few people in his state "did not partake of the general distress."

Fighting Forces The American war effort relied on two distinct kinds of military force. Each province (or, after Independence, state) raised its own militia from among its citizens, often for short enlistments. Congress raised the Continental Army for longer-term service. In all, about 200,000 men served at one time or another.

The militias comprised the majority of soldiers. At first, the kinds of men who had started the fighting in Massachusetts in 1775 filled the militia



The Home Front

A detail from an English printed handkerchief presented the contributions of three American sisters to the struggle for independence: while their husbands fought, they ran the farm — milking, baking, and, shown here, plowing. Concord Museum, Concord, Massachusetts. www.concordmuseum.org.

units. Farmers, artisans, their sons, and apprentices, with a scattering of merchants, lawyers, and clergymen, dropped their work to fight off the invaders of their countryside. Six thousand or so militiamen rallied to help defeat the British at Saratoga. But the early enthusiasm of these units waned. Militiamen became harder to recruit, and they were reluctant to serve for extended periods or far from their homes. In a rural society, particularly outside plantation regions with their slave labor, young and able-bodied men were essential for raising crops. As a North Carolinian noted, "a soldier made is a farmer lost," and without labor available for farming, the country would have starved. Farm labor was scarce, even so. A Connecticut woman recalled that "so many [men] were gone" in the fall of 1776 "that she, her aged Father in Law . . . and such little children as could be had, dug the potatoes and husked the corn."

The Continental Army and militias began to recruit from more marginal segments of society: the young and the poor. Most Continental soldiers were young men. Jeremiah Greenman of Rhode Island was seventeen when he marched to take part in the siege of Boston in 1775. Without a trade or land to inherit, he decided to enlist in the Continental service. Captured twice and wounded three times, he was an officer by the time he left the army in 1783.

Some men, like Greenman, enlisted voluntarily; some were draftees; others served as paid substitutes for richer men. Some African Americans, such as the Connecticut slave Gad Asher, who was wounded and lost his sight at Bunker Hill, fought in place of their masters. Many other slaves, in both North and South, ran away to enlist, expecting to gain their freedom by fighting. After the British surrender at Saratoga, revolutionary leaders even tried to recruit prisoners of war. Thousands of women, too, traveled with the armies. Many were "on the ration" as cooks, nurses, laundresses, orderlies, or gravediggers. Their work was essential to the war effort. They endured all the hardships of soldiers except that of battle itself. A few women, usually disguised as men, did in fact fight.

Continentals and militia often faced worse conditions than the British soldiers they were confronting as acute shortages of supplies added to the discomforts and dangers of war. During the winter of 1777–1778, when the British occupied Philadelphia and were well supplied, Washington's army endured severe privations encamped at Valley Forge only twenty miles away. At Morristown, New Jersey, two winters later, on one-eighth rations and with pay five months in arrears, the army faced even worse

"I Heard the Roar of the Artillery": Sarah Osborn Travels with the Continental Army

In 1780, Sarah Matthews Read was a servant in the household of a blacksmith in Albany, New York, when she met and married Aaron Osborn, a blacksmith and Revolutionary War veteran. Without Sarah's knowledge, Aaron reenlisted in the Continental Army and insisted that his wife travel with him. Sarah ultimately agreed to "volunteer" for the duration of the war, working as a washerwoman and cook. This account comes from a deposition she filed in 1837, at the age of eighty-one, as part of a claim under the first pension act for Revolutionary War veterans and their widows.

In about one day, we reached the place of encampment about one mile from Yorktown. I was on foot as were the other females. My attention was arrested by the appearance of a large plain between us and Yorktown and an entrenchment thrown up. I saw a number of dead Negroes lying round, whom I was told the British had driven out of the town and left to starve, or were first starved and then thrown out. I took my stand just back of the American tents, say about a mile from the town, and busied myself washing, mending, and cooking for the soldiers, in which I was assisted by the other females; some men washed their own clothing. I heard the roar of the artillery for a number of days, and the last night the Americans threw up entrenchments; it was a misty, foggy night, rather wet but not rainy. Every soldier [built] for himself, and I afterwards went into the entrenchments. My husband was there throwing up entrenchments, and I cooked and carried in beef, and bread, and coffee (in a gallon pot) to the soldiers in the entrenchment.

Record Group 15, Records of the Veterans Administration, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

conditions. When Jeremiah Greenman's unit was finally issued clothing, he wrote that it "altered their Condition they being almost naked for nigh two Months."

Morale almost broke. A private, Joseph Plumb Martin, wrote in 1780 that soldiers cursed themselves for their "imbecility in staying there and starving . . . for an ungrateful people." At Morristown, two Connecticut regiments "paraded under arms" to demand better conditions, but Pennsylvania troops dispersed them. The next January, the Pennsylvanians themselves mutinied; 1,500 marched off toward Philadelphia to protest to Congress. Even after Yorktown, the agony continued. The Continental Army remained at Newburgh, New York, for nearly two years awaiting payment of its wages,

"We Should Suffer Every Thing for Their Benefit": Winter at Valley Forge

Albigence Waldo, a surgeon serving with the Continental Army, wrote this graphic description of conditions at the encampment at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in his diary entry for December 14, 1777. Winters on campaign meant particular hardships for soldiers.

December 14. Prisoners and deserters are continually coming in. The army, which has been surprisingly healthy hitherto, now begins to grow sickly from the continued fatigues they have suffered this campaign. Yet they still show a spirit of alacrity and contentment not to be expected from so young troops. I am sick—discontented—and out of humour. Poor food—hard lodging—cold weather—fatigue—nasty cloathes—nasty cookery—vomit half my time—smoked out of my senses—the Devil's in't—I can't endure it—Why are we sent here to starve and freeze?—What sweet felicities have I left at home: A charming wife—pretty children—good bed—good food—good cooking—all agreeable—all harmonious! Here all confusion—smoke and cold—hunger and filthyness—a pox on my bad luck! People who live at home in luxury and ease, quietly possessing their habitations, enjoying their wives and families in peace, have but a very faint idea of the unpleasing sensations and continual anxiety the man endures who is in a camp, and is the husband and parent of an agreeable family. These same people are willing we should suffer every thing for their benefit and advantage and yet are the first to condemn us for not doing more!!

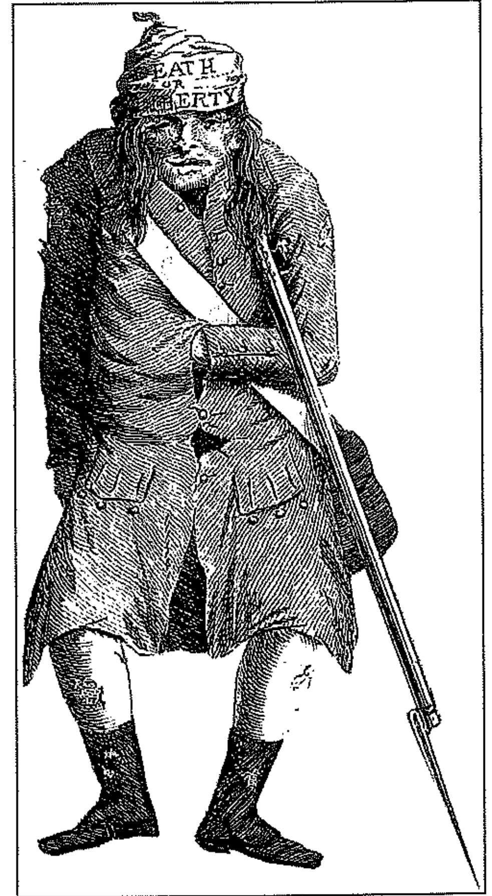
Alden Vaughan, ed., *Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution.*

and soldiers disbanded with only a token settlement of what they were owed.

Throughout the war, Washington knew that his task was to keep the Continental Army together, however much suffering it faced. With the mix of poor whites, slaves, foreigners, and women who composed or supported the army, he achieved this aim. Without them, the British would have triumphed. At its largest, the Continental Army numbered fewer than 20,000. But it was more than a military force; it symbolized the new American nation, and its preservation offered a political guarantee of independence. The state militias also served a vital political role. Particularly in the former Middle Colonies and the South, where many Loyalists entered the action when British armies came nearby, Patriot militias often violently restored American authority once the British had gone again.

The endurance of American forces was sufficient to prevent Britain from reconquering its colonies despite its great military and naval strength. As other European nations joined the war against them, the British had to defend other parts of their empire and guard against a French invasion

of England itself. As these pressures mounted and as serious riots in London in 1780 added the fear of domestic insurrection, the British government lost the will to fight in America. The surrender at Yorktown convinced many British officials that the war was lost and soon led to peace negotiations.



Wishful Thinking

A British caricature portrayed the American soldier as disheveled and maladroit, in contrast to the reputed disciplined and orderly appearance of the British military man. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

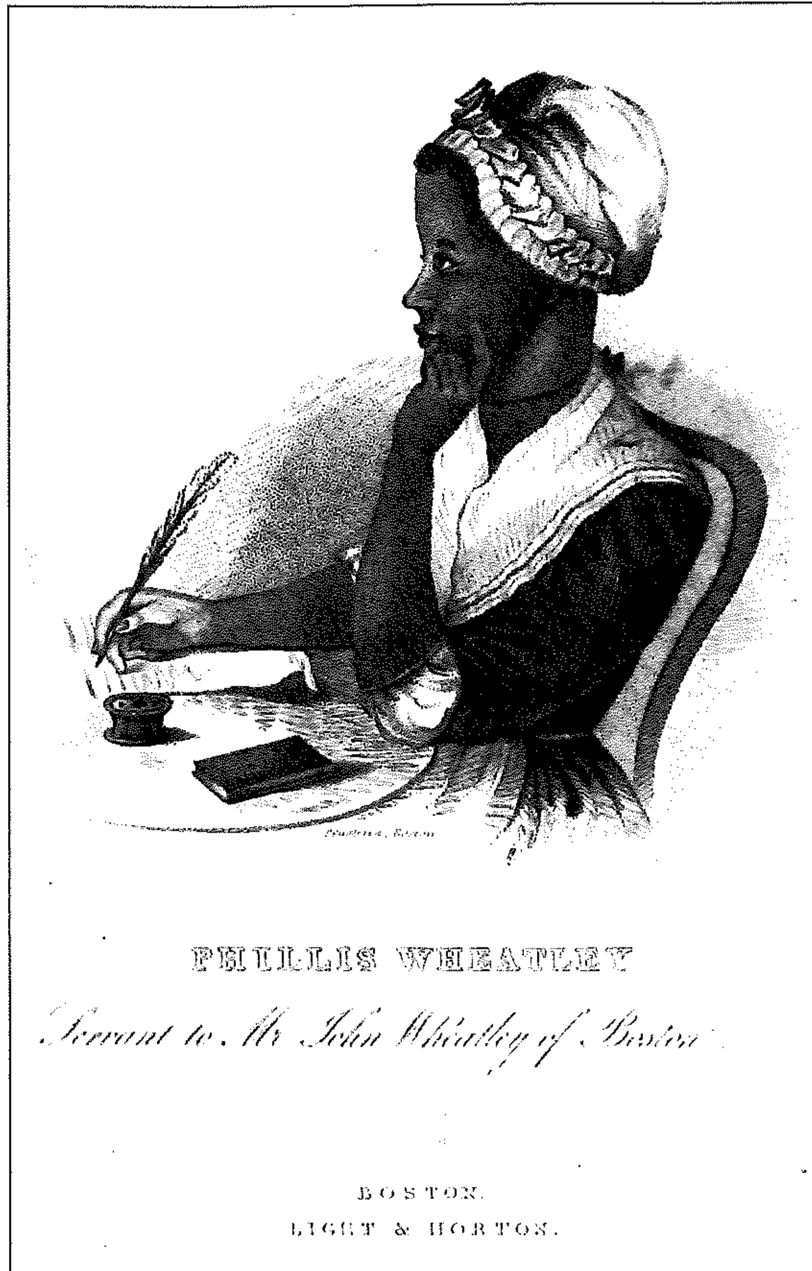
The War and Slavery "In every human Breast," wrote the African-born Boston slave Phillis Wheatley in 1774, "God has planted a principle which we call love of Freedom. It is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance." The inspiration of revolution and the confusion of war led thousands of slaves to seek freedom. To some white Americans, including Quakers and evangelicals, some southerners among them, slavery seemed a travesty of the principles for which Patriots were fighting. To most slaves, it was an abomination.

Many slaves ran away when opportunity arose. Runaways were often young men without family ties, but women also fled, some taking children with them. A considerable number of runaways headed for Philadelphia, where antislavery sentiment was becoming prominent.

Some slaves sought liberty by fighting for the British. In 1775, Lord Dunmore, Virginia's last royal governor, promised freedom to those who rallied to the king, and many—including several of George Washington's own slaves—escaped to serve in British or Loyalist units. A New Jersey slave named Titus became "Colonel Tye," leader of an irregular Black Brigade that harassed Patriots. Between 1779 and 1781, some 12,000 slaves escaped in South Carolina alone. One was a man called Boston, who ran from a plantation at Tranquil Hill to the British lines around Charleston in 1779.

Several thousand other slaves sought freedom by fighting with the American forces. Seeing "liberty poles and the people all engaged for the support of freedom," the New England slave Jehu Grant fled his master and enlisted in the Continental Army. A few states, especially Rhode Island, solved their military recruitment problems by promising freedom to slaves who would enlist. But in the South, slaveholders opposed recruiting slaves even when military necessity seemed to compel it.

Often enough, both British and Americans kept the promises of emancipation made to slaves who enlisted. When the British evacuated New York City in 1783, over 3,000 African Americans sailed with them to resettle in Nova Scotia. Boston from South Carolina was among them; he had married another runaway and renamed himself Boston King after his new sovereign. But some promises were broken. Besieged at Yorktown, the British expelled African Americans from the fort, leaving them to the mercy of the Ameri-



Phillis Wheatley

Born in 1754 in Africa, Wheatley was enslaved and transported to America, where she became the house servant of a Boston tailor. At the age of fourteen, she began to write poetry, and in 1773 she published a collection of her work in England. A year later, she was freed. *Memoir and Poems of Phillis Wheatley, A Native African and a Slave* (Boston 1835) — Chicago Historical Society.

cans camped outside. Recaptured slaves faced violent punishment and the risk of being sold away. George Washington and other planters negotiated the return of their escaped slaves from the British who had harbored them.

Native Americans and War on the Frontier The war was not confined to contests over settled regions. Colonists' desire for frontier land had been one of the underlying sources of antagonism to British policy. Britain's purpose in establishing the unpopular Proclamation Line of 1763 had been to moderate trans-Appalachian settlement and settler-native conflict (see Chapter 4). When war broke out in 1775, fighting rapidly began in the West, as

"A Natural and Inalienable Right to . . . Freedom": Slaves Petition the Massachusetts Legislature

This petition to the Massachusetts legislature was drafted by Prince Hall, a free African American who fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill, on behalf of the state's enslaved people. Throughout the revolutionary era, scores of slaves signed petitions that linked their demands for freedom with the cause of American independence.

To the honorable Counsel and House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts in General Court Assembled, January 13, 1777:

The petition of a great number of blacks detained in a state of slavery in the bowels of a free and Christian country humbly show that your petitioners [state] that they have in common with all other men a natural and inalienable right to that freedom which the Great Parent of the heavens has bestowed equally on all mankind and which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement whatever. They were unjustly dragged by the hand of cruel power from their dearest friends and some of them even torn from the embraces of their tender parents—from a populous, pleasant, and plentiful country, and in violation of laws of nature and of nations, and in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity brought here to be sold like beasts of burden and like them condemned to slavery for life. . . .

Every principle from which America has acted in the course of their unhappy difficulties with Great Britain pleads stronger than a thousand arguments in favor of your petitioners, and they, therefore, humbly request that your honors give this petition its due weight and consideration and cause an act of the Legislature to be passed whereby they may be restored to the enjoyments of that which is the natural right of all men—and their children who were born in this land of liberty—not to be held as slaves.

Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th Series, III (Boston, 1877), 436–37.

Patriots sought to dislodge British frontier garrisons and seize land to which they had been denied access. Armed settlers and militia pushed into fresh territory, and both British and American combatants did what they had done in previous wars: they sought supporting alliances with Indians.

Indians, too, pursued familiar strategies, though under new circumstances. With the removal of the French in the early 1760s, the Iroquois had negotiated with the British to protect their lands from colonial incursions, and in the Revolutionary War, most continued to support Britain as the most likely protector against invasion. A few other tribes chose instead to ally with the revolutionaries in the hope that this could spare them from the worst depredations of white settlers. Still others sought to remain neutral, but the toll of conflict and murder drove them to resistance.

"A Determined Resolution to Get Liberty . . .": Slaves Respond to Lord Dunmore

After Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, promised freedom to slaves who would escape and serve in the British forces, newspapers printed numerous advertisements for runaways whose owners suspected them of responding to Dunmore's proclamation.

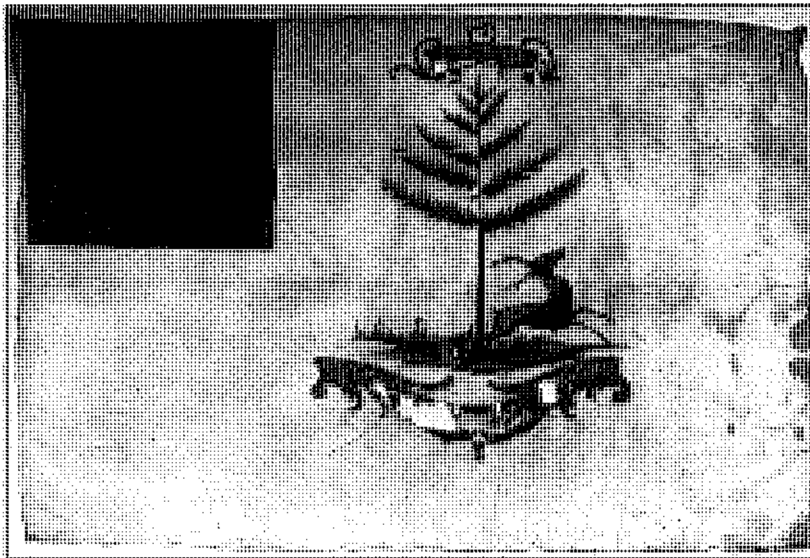
Stafford County, Aquia, Nov 3, 1775.

Run off last night from the subscriber, a negro man named CHARLES, who is a very shrewd sensible fellow, and can both read and write; and as he has always waited upon me, he must be well known through most parts of Virginia and Maryland. He is very black, has a large nose, and is about 5 feet 8 or 10 inches high. He took a variety of clothes, which I cannot well particularise, stole several of my shirts, a pair of new saddle bags, and two mares, one a darkish, the other a light bay, with a blaze and white feet, and about 3 years old. From many circumstances, there is reason to believe he intends an attempt to get to lord Dunmore; and as I have reason to believe his design of going off was long premeditated, and that he has gone off with some accomplice, I am apprehensive he may prove daring and resolute, if endeavoured to be taken. His elopement was from no cause of complaint, or dread of a whipping (for he has always been remarkably indulged, indeed too much so) but from a determined resolution to get liberty, as he conceived, by flying to lord Dunmore. I will give 5l. to any person who secures him, and the mares, so that I get them again.

Robert Brent.

Virginia Gazette (Dixon and Hunter), February 3, 1776.

Patriots attacked Indian settlements along the frontier, scattering inhabitants, destroying crops, and spreading disease. William Henry Drayton urged South Carolinians to "cut up every Indian cornfield and burn every Indian town and every Indian taken shall be the slave and property of the taker." Natives retaliated. In Kentucky, Cherokee warriors resisted an illegal land purchase by attacking settlers until white counterattacks dispersed them and destroyed their villages. Southern Patriot militias attacked Cherokees and Creeks to prevent them from assisting the British. After enduring for three centuries, the Iroquois Confederacy broke apart. Many followed the Mohawk leader Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) in supporting the British, but a smaller number allied with the Americans, so at the battle of Oriskany in 1777, there were Iroquois fighters on both sides. Britain's Iroquois allies faced repeated attacks. In 1779, Patriot troops under General John Sullivan burned forty Iroquois settlements in western New York, destroying crops and driving the population away. Starvation and disease ravaged the refugees.



The Bucks of America

This flag was carried by Boston's black militia unit, one of three African American companies that served in the Continental Army. Massachusetts Historical Society.

But Patriots attacked even Indian allies whom they wanted to clear from the land. After occupying Kentucky, American forces pressed on into the Ohio country. In 1781, they raided their Delaware and Shawnee allies near Coshocton on the Muskingum River, and the next year, they attacked

"We Are for Peace": The Oneida Indians Declare Neutrality

Just as colonists had to choose sides between the Patriot cause and loyalty to Britain, so too did Indian groups as military conflict became imminent. In this 1776 address to Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull, the Oneida declare their neutrality and urge New England officials not to seek alliances with other Indian groups. The Oneida later allied with the American colonists against the British.

BROTHERS—We have heard of the unhappy differences and great contention between you and Old England. We wonder greatly, and are troubled in our minds.

BROTHERS—Possess your minds in peace respecting us Indians. We cannot intermeddle in this dispute between two brothers. The quarrel seems to be unnatural. You are two brothers of one blood. We are unwilling to join on either side in such a contest, for we bear an equal affection to both you Old and New England. Should the great King of England apply to us for aid, we shall deny him; if the colonies apply, we shall refuse. The present situation of you two brothers is new and strange to us. We Indians cannot find, nor recollect in the traditions of our ancestors, the like case, or a similar instance.

BROTHERS—For these reasons possess your minds in peace, and take no umbrage that we Indians refuse joining in the contest. We are for peace.

BROTHERS—As we have declared for peace, we desire you will not apply to our Indian brethren in New-England for their assistance. Let us Indians be all of one mind, and live with one another; and you white people settle your own disputes between yourselves.

Three Rivers, http://www.threeriversshms.com/borderwarsch3.htm.

Thayendanegea

Guy Johnson, who succeeded his father-in-law Sir William Johnson as British superintendent of Indian affairs, was the ostensible subject of Benjamin West's painting, but it was the shadowy figure of Thayendanegea, or Joseph Brant, that characterized the picture. This Mohawk chief, educated at New Hampshire's Indian School (later Dartmouth College), saw the war as an opportunity to gain Indian independence; he sided with the British in exchange for specific concessions. After a brief visit to Great Britain in 1775–1776 (where this picture was painted), Thayendanegea returned to the colonies. Throughout the war, he led Iroquois raids on New York frontier settlements.
Benjamin West, *Colonel Guy Johnson*, 1776, oil on canvas, 79 3/4 × 54 1/2 inches — National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

a settlement of Moravian converts at Gnadenhütten, killing 96 and sending many survivors fleeing to Canada. Such attacks prompted natives to form alliances of their own against American incursions as the war drew to a close. The Shawnees and others launched counterattacks and laid the ground for further resistance in subsequent decades.

Building a Republic

Even as fighting flared across eastern North America, Americans were forging a republican ideology of revolution. They were trying not just to free themselves from British rule, but also to build a new political order.

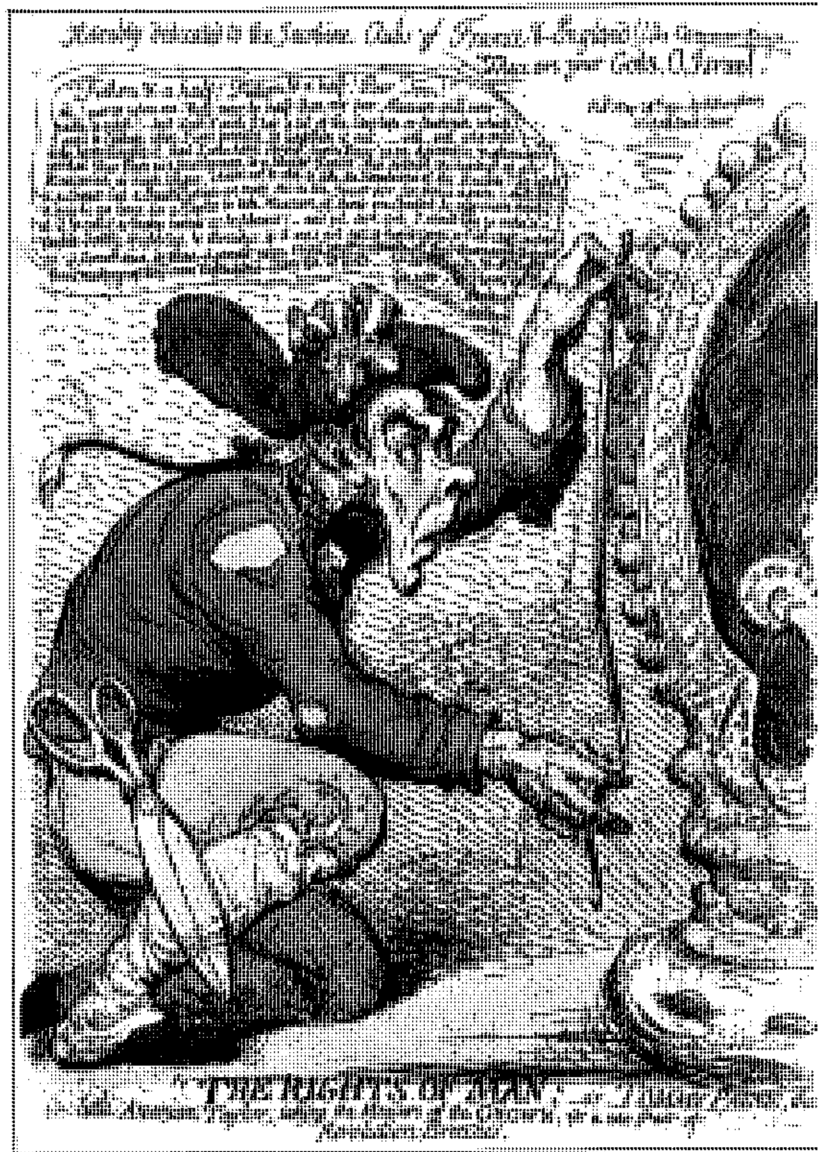
Affirming that "all men" were "created equal" and had "unalienable rights" to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," the Declaration of

Independence suggested that proper government rested on universal truths that were apparent not just to an educated political elite, but to the common sense of all. This was not merely an abstract statement of principle; it was an instrument designed to forge unity across the revolutionary political coalition of farmers, artisans, laborers, slaveholders, merchants, and professional men. It indicated that common folk as well as the wealthy and powerful could claim a role in their own government. Conflict between elite and popular influences had been evident during the protests of the 1760s and in the period from 1774 to 1776, when the Patriot cause was in the hands of extralegal committees (see Chapter 4). These divisions persisted as the new states moved to establish their own permanent governments and constitutions. Debates about price regulation and markets, state finances and taxation, were charged by the inflation, indebtedness, and serious economic hardships many people faced. In Massachusetts these difficulties would provoke armed rebellion in 1786. The formation of new governments both opened and closed democratic possibilities. For many white men political participation offered hopeful prospects, but women and slaves gained little from the revolution's rhetoric of liberty and equality.

The Movement for a People's Government Most supporters of the revolution agreed that new American governments should be republican, resting not on the sovereign authority of a monarch but on "the consent of the governed." But Americans differed over how democratic their republics should be and how broadly or directly ordinary people should participate in political affairs.

In Philadelphia's radical atmosphere early in 1776, Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* sketched a vision of democratic government for the new nation. Confident that people could govern themselves without the artificial distinctions of monarchy or aristocracy, Paine advocated a simple direct democracy. Each state, and the nation as a whole, would be governed by an annually elected assembly and headed by a president. Paine's popularity among the artisans and farmers whom the revolution had aroused ensured that his pamphlet would remain a symbol of this popular democracy. When Jeremiah Greenman's Rhode Island regiment celebrated the Fourth of July in 1783, its thirteen toasts included "the Congress of 1776 and Common Sense." Paine's was the clearest argument that, as another pamphleteer put it, "the people" would make "the best governors."

The men who came to power in Pennsylvania in 1776 fashioned a state constitution that drew on Paine's ideas. They created a state legislature with a single chamber, elected annually by all taxpaying adult males, with no property requirements for officeholders. They lodged executive power not in a "governor"—connoting arbitrary, royal power—but in a president and council who served the legislature. Except on "occasions of special neces-



The Rights of Man: or Tommy Paine, the Little American Taylor, Taking the Measure of the Crown, for a New Pair of Revolution Breeches.

British conservatives had little love for the author of *Common Sense* — especially after he returned to England in 1787 and pressed for radical republican goals in the land of his birth. Caricaturist James Gillray lampooned Paine in this 1791 cartoon, which appeared soon after the publication of Paine's *The Rights of Man.* But the British establishment took Paine more seriously; within the year, he fled to revolutionary France to avoid imprisonment. James Gillray, engraving, 1791, 13 13/16 × 9 3/4 inches — American Philosophical Society Library.

sity," bills that came before the legislature would be "printed for the consideration of the people" before becoming law. Paine helped to inspire Patriots who were radical both in their support for independence and in their desire to form a democratic, egalitarian political system. From 1776 to 1790, Pennsylvanians governed themselves on these principles, designed to keep government under the close scrutiny of the people.

Elsewhere, too, people felt exhilarated by the notion of abandoning old ways. The Green Mountain Boys spearheaded their own local revolution, declaring independence from New York in 1777 and establishing Vermont as a separate republic. Their constitution, inspired by Pennsylvania's, set up a direct democracy that continued to operate after Vermont joined the United States in 1791. Georgia also established a single-chamber legislature, while Delaware, New Hampshire, and South Carolina adopted the democratic

"Common Sense and a Plain Understanding": Drafting Pennsylvania's Constitution

Radical patriot leader James Cannon addressed the following broadside to the members of the Philadelphia militia, setting forth the qualities—including "common Sense and a plain Understanding"—that he thought delegates to Pennsylvania's convention to frame a state constitution should possess.

A government made for the common Good should be framed by Men who can have no Interest besides the common Interest of Mankind. It is the Happiness of America that there is no Rank above that of Freeman existing in it; and much of our future welfare and Tranquillity will depend on its remaining so forever; for this Reason, great and overgrown rich Men will be improper to be trusted, they will be too apt to be framing Distinctions in Society, because they will reap the Benefits of all such Distinctions. . . . Honesty, common Sense, and a plain Understanding, when unbiased by sinister Motives, are fully equal to the Task—Men of like Passions and Interests with ourselves are most likely to frame us a good Constitution. . . . Some who have been very backward in declaring you a free People, will be very forward in offering themselves to frame your Constitution; but trust them not, however well recommended.

Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (1976).

title "president" for their chief executives. Farmers and tradesmen replaced some wealthy men in the legislatures (Figure 5.1). Before 1775, only one-sixth of New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York assemblymen were of modest means; by the 1780s, over three-fifths of them were. Even the Virginia legislature was, according to an observer, "composed of men not quite so well dressed, nor so politely educated, nor so highly born as . . . formerly."

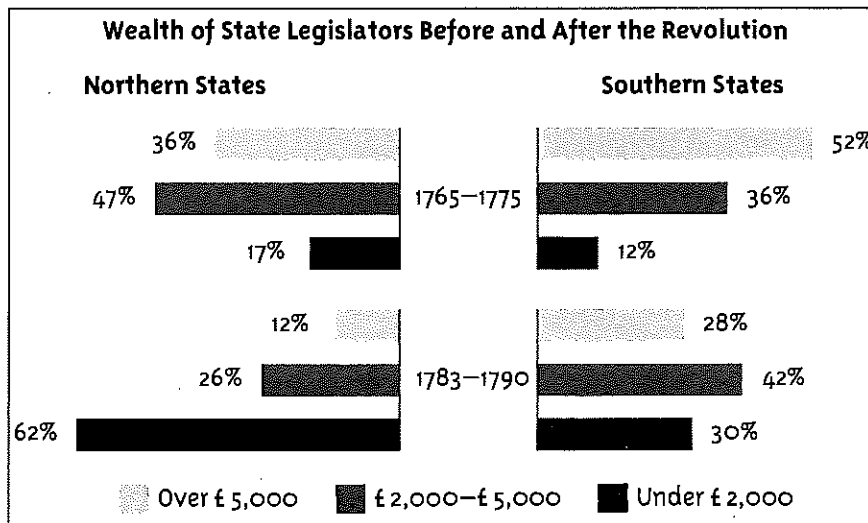


FIGURE 5.1 Legislatures Become More Democratic, 1765–1790
State legislatures after the Revolution were considerably less dominated by men of wealth than the colonial assemblies had been in the decade before war with Britain began. In the North, the rise in the proportion of legislators with less than 2,000 pounds' worth of property was particularly striking. From James A. Henretta et al., *America's History*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Worth Publishers, 1993); adapted from Jackson Turner Main, "Government by the People: The American Revolution and the Democratization of the Legislatures," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., vol. 23 (1966).

The Limits to Democratization But there were limits to this democratic thrust. Some Americans feared the possibilities of democracy. John Adams of Massachusetts was as keen as Paine for independence, but his vision of government was more conservative. Published in 1776 as a counter to Paine's *Common Sense*, Adams's *Thoughts on Government* argued that it was impossible to govern without "balanced" institutions that gave elites a voice alongside that of the people. Legislatures should have two chambers, not one, so that the elite members of the upper house could counter the influence of the citizenry represented in the lower. The issue was social as much as political. Who should rule: the "better sort," who had long held sway, or the artisans, farmers, and small traders for whom Paine had spoken? Adams was a republican, but he envisaged a republican society based on hierarchy and order.

Virginia, Maryland, New York, and Massachusetts formed governments that were closer to Adams's conception than to Paine's. The Virginia gentry adopted a constitution that preserved their political control. Maryland's planter class, frightened by the revolution's democratic implications, fashioned a constitution that put as much distance as possible between ordinary people and their rulers. It prescribed stiff property requirements for voting, stiffer ones for holding office, and long intervals between elections. The New York constitution created a state senate that was intended to represent property, not people, and a strong governor who was independent of the legislature, not its servant. Massachusetts followed suit.

The Articles of Confederation During the war and its aftermath, the states remained substantially independent of one another. Each sent representatives to the Continental Congress, which oversaw the war's conduct and constructed a rudimentary government for the new United States. In 1777, Congress put forward a framework for a national government: the Articles of Confederation. Many states accepted this quickly, but others were skeptical of signing away powers to a distant government. There was disagreement on whether western lands should be assigned to the federal government. Only reluctantly did some states with land claims across the Appalachian Mountains begin to give them up. As a result, it was 1781 before the Articles went into effect.

The Articles preserved the sovereignty of the states and held a tight rein on federal government. The states' annually elected delegations to Congress varied in size, but each state had only a single vote. Congress could create executive departments, but these remained under its direct control. To become law, its decisions required the support of a majority of states, but amendments to the Articles had to be unanimous. Above all, Congress had no independent power to levy taxes. For its expenditures — including financing the war — it had to rely on requisitions from the states, which

might or might not provide them. To many Americans, these provisions gave assurance that no federal government could exercise a tyranny of the sort that they had feared from Britain and that power would lie with the states and their people. To some, however, the Articles of Confederation seemed weak and ineffectual, and advocates of stronger national government soon challenged them.

Regulated Prices or Free Markets? In addition to debating how democratic government should be, the revolutionary coalition was also divided over economic problems. Wartime inflation, shortages, property damage, loss of life, and the disruption of farming, trade, and manufacturing created severe difficulties. The war's end brought depression and glut, as goods that people could not afford went unsold. Production declined sharply. It would be a quarter of a century before America's output per head of population regained its pre-Revolutionary level. Circumstances trapped many of the poor and middling in conditions that they could do little to influence.

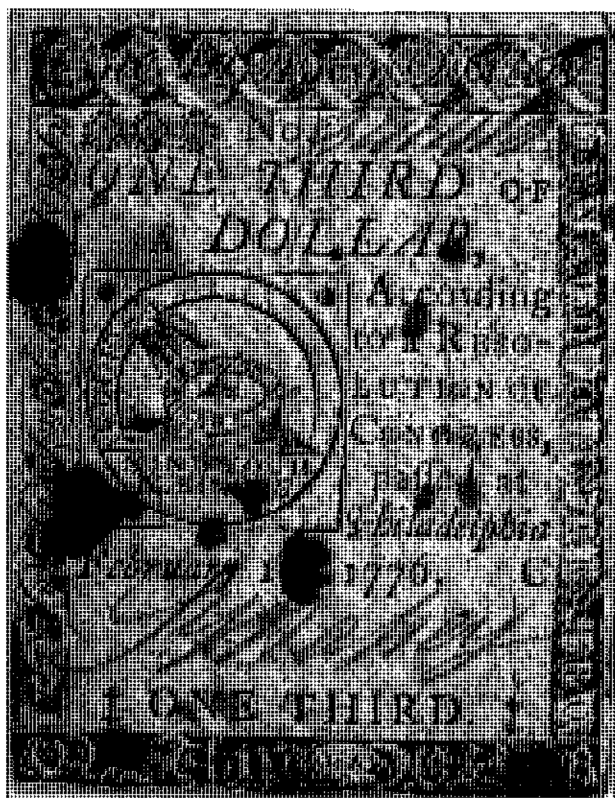
Congress and most state governments had financed their war contributions by printing ever-larger quantities of paper money. The result was the worst inflation America had ever known. Many people turned to traditional concepts of social responsibility and justice, arguing that in a good society, public interest should come before private gain. If supplies were scarce, they suspected "hoarders" of holding them back for profit. If prices rose, they blamed "speculators." Crowds, often made up of women, used the rituals of

"We Cannot Live Without Bread": Revolutionary Food Shortages

In December 1778, a Philadelphia resident, styling himself "Mobility," wrote the following letter to a local newspaper, attacking monopolizers and calling, in no uncertain terms, for strong measures by crowds to guarantee the distribution of bread, "the Staff of Life."

This country has been reduced to the brink of ruin by the infamous practices of Monopolizers and Forestallers. Not satisfied with monopolizing European and West-Indian goods, they have lately monopolized the Staff of Life. Hence, the universal cry of the scarcity and high price of Flour. It has been found in Britain and France, that the People have always done themselves justice when the scarcity of bread has arisen from the avarice of forestallers. They have broken open magazines [warehouses]—appropriated stores to their own use without paying for them—and in some instances have hung up the culprits who have created their distress, without judge or jury. Hear this and tremble, ye enemies to the freedom and happiness of your country. We can live without sugar, molasses, and rum—but we cannot live without bread. Hunger will break through stone walls, and the resentment excited by it may end in your destruction.

Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (1976).



Not Worth a Continental

Taxation to finance the war effort was a limited option for the Continental Congress. Instead, it authorized the printing of paper money in 1775; state governments did so as well. These notes were known as "Continentals" and would be redeemable when the colonies achieved independence. As more money was printed, amounting to $450,000,000 between the state and continental governments, its purchasing power plummeted for consumers. In January 1777, $105 in Continentals equaled $100 in gold and silver; by April 1780, it took $4,000 worth of Continentals to equal the same amount of gold and silver. Faced with this hyperinflation, farmers balked at selling their produce to the army, and women seized overpriced goods from merchants. One-third dollar, 1776 — Smithsonian Institution.

popular price setting to fight wartime inflation. In Fishkill, New York, in August 1776, a group of women formed a committee to confront a prominent merchant who was refusing to sell from his stock of tea. Appointing a "clerk" and a "weigher," the women measured out the tea, announced that they would pay "the continental price" for it, and then gave the money to the local county committee. By the late 1770s, inflation was so severe that people revived their revolutionary committees. When the price of bread rose in Philadelphia during the winter of 1778–1779, an advocate of crowd action to regulate prices warned merchants and bakers that "Hunger will break through stone walls, and the resentment excited by it may end in your destruction."

Not everyone favored price regulation by committee. In 1776, the Scottish political economist Adam Smith had published *The Wealth of Nations*, his famous argument in favor of free markets. By 1779, American critics of regulation, including Thomas Paine himself, suggested that free markets could be liberating and need not lead to the rich trampling the poor. The city's tanners attacked the committee revival and declared that trade ought to be "as free as air, uninterrupted as the tide." At the height of the crisis in Philadelphia, a militia armed by merchants faced down crowds seeking price controls and broke the power of their movement. Knowing that to get what they wanted, they would need to be organized as a political force, Philadelphia merchants and artisans began to gather into a "Republican society" to oppose the state's radical constitution and promote free trade.

At first, advocates of free markets accomplished little, because many states followed policies dictated by popular wishes: issuing paper currency, making it legal tender for the payment of taxes and private debts, and giving debtors relief from lawsuits by their creditors. New York also confiscated the estates of Loyalists and redistributed them. Even Maryland's elite, which virtually monopolized political office, recognized "the wisdom of sacrifice" and gave in to popular demands.

Shays's Rebellion In Massachusetts, however, the advocates of hard currency, free trade, and balanced political institutions held sway, with disastrous results for farmers in the interior who faced heavy debts. It took the state until 1780 to adopt its constitution, and commercial men then dominated the government. They ensured that Massachusetts adopted strict policies on money and debt. Paper currency was not acknowledged as legal tender, and debtors received no protection from their creditors, regardless of whether these were Patriots, Loyalists, or British.

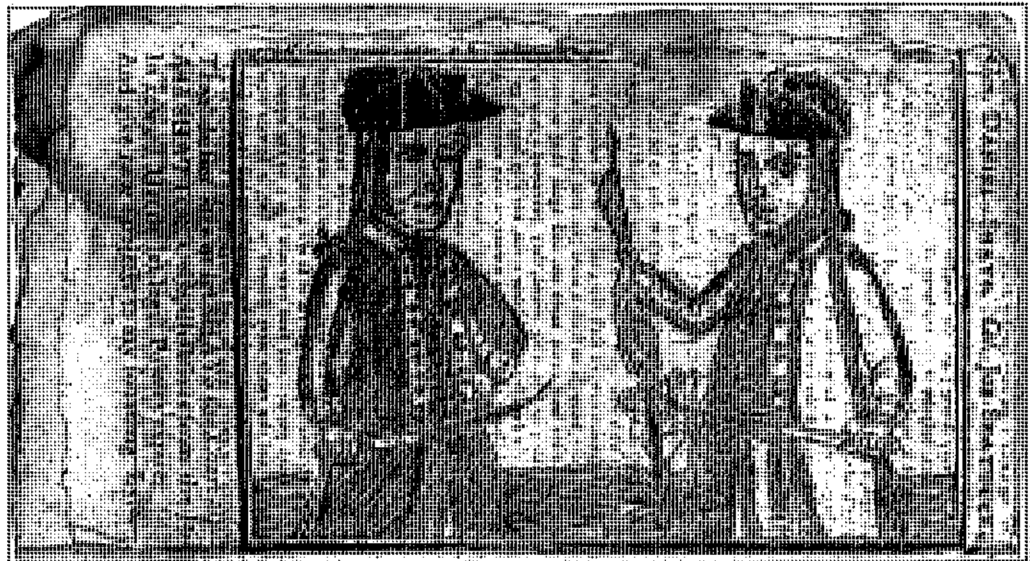
When the former colonies made peace with Britain in 1783, American ports reopened to British commerce, unleashing a burst of consumption as people with money craved goods that had been unavailable during the war. But this boom soon reversed, into a trading slump that lasted for three years. British creditors called in debts from American merchants, who in turn demanded payment from cash-poor rural traders and customers. In most states, the law would have given debtors some protection, but not in Massachusetts. There, farmers, artisans, and small traders were expected to pay both their debts and their taxes in cash, which they did not have. They believed that the public good was being sacrificed to privilege. As the people of Dracut, Massachusetts, protested, "Money . . . seems to have . . . hid itself in the secret confines of those who have a greater love to their own Interest than they have to that of their Neighbours." As in the past, the fear that they would lose their property and be reduced to the status of tenants or hired laborers haunted them. When creditors brought lawsuits and defendants began to crowd the courts and debtors' prisons, popular fears became real.

People again took traditional steps to relieve their burden, producing an uprising in interior Massachusetts in 1786 that became known as Shays's Rebellion, after one of its leaders, Daniel Shays, a former captain in the Continental Army. Having formed committees and conventions to oppose the government's policies, farmers gathered under arms to close the courts and prevent lawsuits being heard. In concert with Boston radicals such as Samuel Adams, they had done the same in 1774 in response to the Coercive Acts. Now they found themselves pitted against some of these same radicals, including Adams, who controlled the state government in alliance with con-

servative merchants. Adams defended the law and the courts as agents of a constitution adopted by the people and as necessary to preserve commerce.

To disperse the rebels and restore the courts, the Boston government sent General Benjamin Lincoln and a well-organized militia force to the west. When Shays and his armed farmers mounted an ill-coordinated assault on the federal armory at Springfield, the local militia scattered them. Lincoln's army then chased the rebels into the hills and captured many in a surprise attack. Shays and others fled into exile in neighboring states. Four rebel leaders were captured, tried, and condemned to death for treason. The government mounted a theatrical display of judicial terror. At the trial, Chief Justice William Cushing berated the rebels for trying "to overturn all government and order, to shake off all restraints, human and divine." Just as they were about to be hanged, the governor reprieved them in a public show of mercy. These methods worked as intended. Individuals and whole towns begged forgiveness for rebelling. "'Tis true that I have been a committee-man," wrote one, but "I am sincerely sorry . . . and hope it will be overlooked and pardoned."

This defeat at the hands of men who had been their revolutionary allies taught Shaysites and their sympathizers a lesson about the politics of the new republic. The old notion that small communities could defend themselves against outsiders no longer applied when the government itself was theoretically of the people. To overturn policies that they resented, people with common interests would have to organize themselves and formally enter the political arena. Almost immediately, Massachusetts farmers did just that. In the 1787 state elections, they unseated the hard-money governor James Bowdoin and replaced him with the popular John Hancock. New men, many from western towns that for years had not bothered to send



Shays's Rebellion

The portraits of Daniel Shays and Job Shattuck, leaders of the Massachusetts Regulators, appeared on the cover of *Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack* in 1787. *Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack of 1787* (c. 1787) — National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

delegates, flooded into the legislature. Symbolically, at least, the elite made concessions to ordinary peoples' demands. Never again would the state's government allow debtors to be hounded with the ruthlessness that had been evident in the mid-1780s.

The Limits and Possibilities of the Revolution The revolution raised more questions about equality and human rights than it answered. Prominent among these was the issue of slavery. White colonists had proudly borne the status of "freeborn Englishmen" that distinguished them from slaves, and the Patriots' chief grievance against Britain was that the crown seemed bent on reducing them to political slavery. To many of them, there was no contradiction between the Patriot cause and ownership of slaves; having other human beings as property was simply a fact of life. But British and Loyalist commentators were quick to condemn American revolutionaries who complained of enslavement but were complicit in slavery itself. For some slave owners, including Washington and Jefferson, slavery was a problem they agonized over but could not resolve. When Jefferson included in an early draft of the Declaration of Independence a clause condemning the king for conducting the slave trade, other members of Congress struck it out as an embarrassing hypocrisy.

Nevertheless, the Revolution did alter American slavery. In the North, an increasing number of people opposed slavery on principle. The Vermont constitution outlawed it. One New Yorker condemned slavery as "cruelty in the extreme" and "the severest reproach" to the new nation. Notables such as Alexander Hamilton manumitted (released) slaves they had acquired and helped to found organizations such as the New York Manumission Society to promote the abandonment of slavery. In Massachusetts, several slaves brought lawsuits, and the case of Quok Walker struck a heavy blow against slavery. Walker had declared his own freedom in 1781 and then sued his master for wages and for damages for the assault and imprisonment he had endured when the man recaptured and beat him. Chief Justice Cushing, the judge who would later condemn the Shays rebels, ruled in 1783 that Walker's enslavement violated the declaration of Massachusetts's new constitution that "all men are born free and equal." This effectively abolished slavery in the state. New Hampshire soon followed suit.

However, abolition was embraced only where economic circumstances permitted. Although declining, slavery did remain important in other northern states and was dismantled only slowly. Starting with Pennsylvania in 1780 and ending with New Jersey in 1804, these states passed abolition laws that bound the children of existing slaves to labor until they were adults. In the resulting "gradual" abolition, New Jersey's last slave was not freed until 1846, and Pennsylvania's was not freed not until 1847. After the

Revolution, the number of slaves throughout the North fell from the 50,000 who had lived there in 1775; but in 1810, there were still 27,000 northern slaves working in craft occupations, as laborers, or as domestic servants (Map 5.1).

In the Upper South, a shift from tobacco to grain cultivation reduced the demand for plantation slave labor, and the number of manumissions rose. In Virginia, about 10,000 slaves obtained freedom in the decade after 1782. Some owners freed their slaves on principle because slavery violated "the inalienable rights of mankind" or was "contrary to the command of

MAP 5.1 Slavery after the American Revolution: Emancipation and Expansion

This map illustrates the emerging contrasts between northern and southern states. Whereas the South continued to permit slavery and carried the system into new territories in the Southwest, northern states took steps to ban slavery or gradually phase it out.
Source: Arwin D. Smallwood, *Atlas of African-American History and Politics* (1998).

Opportunities and Limitations

In the frontispiece from a 1792 Philadelphia publication (left), *The Lady's Magazine and Repository of Entertaining Knowledge*, Columbia was presented with a petition for the "Rights of Woman." In contrast, an engraving published sometime after 1785 (right) offered the homily that "a virtuous woman is a Crown to her Husband" and prescribed the limits beyond which no respectable woman's aspirations should go. *The Lady's Magazine and Repository of Entertaining Knowledge* (December 1, 1792) — Library Company of Philadelphia. *Keep Within Compass*, c. 1785–1805, sepia engraving, 9 5/16 × 7 1/8 inches — Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum.

Christ." But many slaves had to purchase their freedom with their own earnings or those of relatives. Graham Bell of Petersburg, Virginia, obtained his liberty in 1792 and then spent the next thirteen years working to buy the freedom of another nine slaves. Before independence, free blacks were rare in Virginia, but by 1820, their numbers exceeded 200,000. Where plantation agriculture remained strong, however, freedom was hardest to achieve. In the Lower South, only 4 percent of African Americans were free by 1810, compared with 10 percent in the Upper South.

For women, too, the rhetoric of revolution seemed to raise new possibilities for freedom. A Rhode Island woman declared that "The Women of

this State are Animated with the Liveliest Sentiments of Liberty." Women had been heavily involved in the war effort; had run farms, shops, and businesses when men went to fight or were killed; and had undertaken extra manufacturing work that helped America to achieve a degree of economic autonomy. In protest movements and food riots, women carried forward the campaigns for price regulation that dominated wartime politics. For perhaps the first time, women had formed public organizations, to raise funds for soldiers and similar purposes. "America will not wear chains," wrote Abigail Adams, "while her daughters are virtuous."

Revolutionary ideals led some women to question the subordination that their mothers and grandmothers had taken for granted. Elite women discussed politics and called for improved education. In parts of the North, the proportion of women who could read and write rose toward the high level already attained by men. A small number of women used more liberal divorce statutes to free themselves from oppressive marriages. In 1788, Abigail Strong of Connecticut noted in her divorce petition that if "even Kings may forfeit . . . the allegiance of their subjects," husbands could not command unconditional control over their wives.

In practice, however, the Revolution little altered women's social position. Many people regarded women's proper role in the new republic as raising and educating good republican citizens. Abigail Adams could urge her husband and his colleagues to "remember the ladies" in their political deliberations (see p. 201), but men were not prepared to overturn institutions that served their interests. "We know better," John Adams replied to his wife, "than to repeal our masculine systems." In only one state, New Jersey, did any women achieve political rights. Free, propertied women could vote in local elections there in the 1780s, and a 1790 state election law referred to voters as "he or she." These rights would soon be abolished, however.

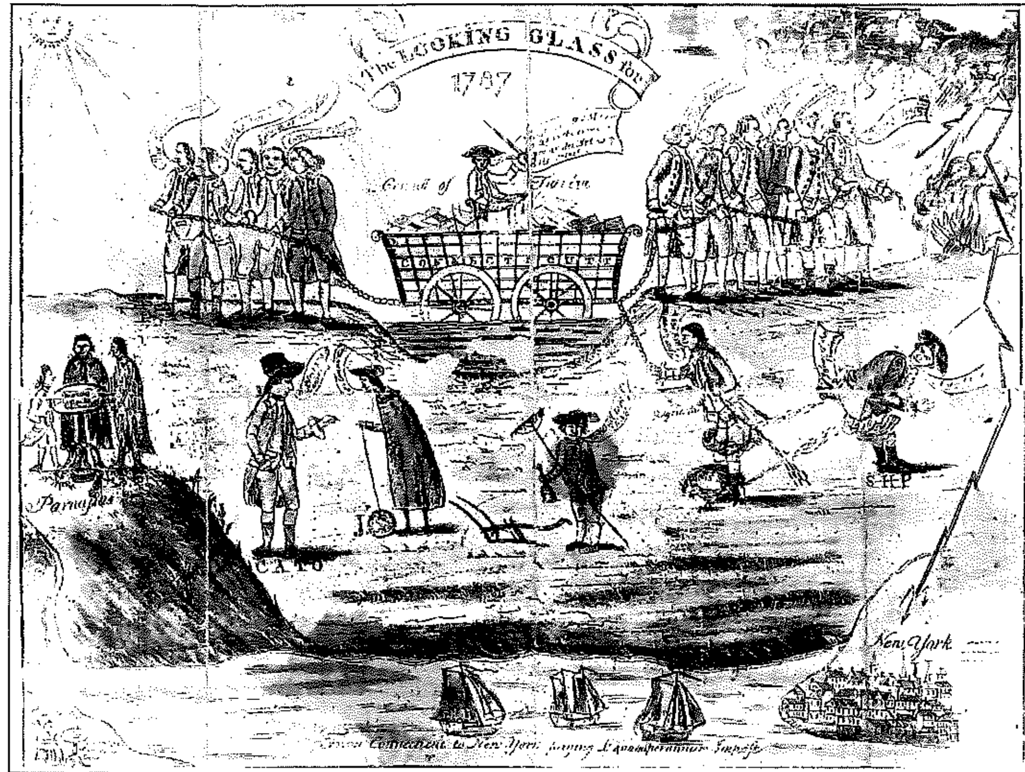
Nevertheless, although the actual opportunities available to them were often restricted, the Revolution encouraged many people—men and

women; rich, middling, and poor; black and white—to think it possible to take greater control of their circumstances. Merchants and some farmers gained greater access to commercial markets. The confiscation of Loyalists' property and the opening of vast new western territories gave more farmers access to land. This vision of taking control further undermined older colonial concepts of deference. In 1788, an elderly New Hampshire congressman complained that now "young and old all mix together, & talk & joke alike so that you cannot discover any distinction made or any respect shewn to one more than to another." Some Americans saw the possibility of taking control of their societies, even at the risk of conflict with those whose interests differed from their own.

Creating a National Government

Members of the elite saw too much democracy as dangerous. In 1787, only months after the suppression of Shays's Rebellion, a group of delegates drawn from the elites of the thirteen states met in a special convention at Philadelphia. Its ostensible purpose was to revise the Articles of Confederation, but it quickly resolved to scrap them altogether and to draw up a new framework for government. After vigorous argument and numerous compromises over such issues as the balance of federal and state power and the nature of representation, the result was the U.S. Constitution, which sought to put a conservative curb on America's political development. The decision to ratify this framework for a new, stronger national government was hotly debated, and in several states ratification was contingent on the addition of amendments that would specify the rights guaranteed to citizens. After special conventions in nine states had ratified it, this Constitution went into effect in 1788, and the remaining four states joined the union within two years. The adoption of the Constitution marked the completion of the political revolution and took a step away from the Revolution's most radical possibilities.

The Constitution's Framers Most members of the Philadelphia convention were merchants, lawyers, landholders, or southern planters. They included Robert Morris of Philadelphia, the "financier" of the Revolution, whose land speculations would soon make him America's richest man; New York's Alexander Hamilton, who had risen from obscurity to be George Washington's aide-de-camp, marry into the New York landed elite, and wield influence as a lawyer, essayist, and politician; and James Madison of Virginia, who had already written a private essay on "The Vices of the Political System of the United States," which outlined many of the changes that the Constitution would make. George Washington himself chaired the convention.



The Looking Glass for 1787
New Haven engraver Amos Doolittle's 1787 print commented on the political situation preceding the Constitutional Convention. While a wagon labeled "Connecticut" sinks in a mud pit, nationalists (left) and localists (right) are too divided to cooperate in its rescue. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Delegates had been at the Revolution's center, as army officers, traders and suppliers, members of Congress, or ambassadors. They had experienced the difficulties of organizing the war, been repeatedly embarrassed by America's inability to deal straightforwardly with foreign nations, and watched states ignore provisions in the peace treaty, such as its promise to end the harassment of Loyalists. They had protested in vain when states passed laws that they saw as heedless of the interests of creditors and damaging to the international reputation of American traders and had been horrified at the threat posed by Shays's Rebellion in the one state that had refused to pass such laws.

The radical democratic possibilities of the Revolution subverted what these men considered to be good government. They were republicans, believing that government must rest on the people's consent, but had little faith that ordinary people could run society well. Most held that government should be conducted by "the best men"—those fitted by birth, education, and sober political principle to govern wisely. Since 1782, Hamilton and others who called themselves "nationalists" had been arguing for a strong central government run by men "whose principles are not of the leveling sort." In New York, Hamilton had forged an alliance of landlords and merchants to end the political dominance of a coalition of farmers and artisans.

The Constitution's Compromises The Constitution that emerged from the Philadelphia convention strengthened national government and the

position of propertied elites. However, it also reflected compromises between conflicting elite interests and between the elite views of government and the popular demands for participation that the revolutionary process had generated.

The convention was seeking a new understanding of republicanism, because in eighteenth-century thinking, the American effort to establish republics seemed unpromising. The examples of classical Greece and Rome suggested that republics could succeed only in special circumstances: when they were small in size and population, were bound by a single economic interest, and were populated by virtuous people who would put the common good above private interests. Most republics had, in fact, collapsed or turned into tyrannies. Now Americans were establishing republican governments in large, varied societies that seemed the very opposite of ideal for the purpose. The rebellion in Massachusetts seemed to confirm to the men who met in Philadelphia that republicanism in America might prove another failure.

But some of them took a new point of departure, which James Madison expressed in the tenth and fifty-first of the *Federalist* papers that he, Hamilton, and the New Yorker John Jay published in 1788, during the campaign to ratify the Constitution. Instead of a small republic, Madison saw the potential of a large one; instead of a single, virtuous public interest, he envisaged the jostling and competing of many private interests. If the arena were large enough, he argued, no single interest would become so powerful as to oppress the others. "Extend the sphere," he wrote, "and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority . . . will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens." This breakthrough in political thought guided the Philadelphia convention to its first solution to the American situation: create a large republic that would dwarf any previous attempt to live without a monarch.

The second solution was to establish a stronger government than had existed under the Articles of Confederation. The Confederation had succeeded in winning the war and negotiating a favorable peace, but it could not pay its debts, enforce the terms of the peace treaty, or resolve disputes between states. Lacking the power to tax, an executive to do its will, or courts to enforce laws and treaties, federal government relied entirely on the will of the states.

Although many Americans regarded these circumstances as acceptable, even essential, in a republic, the delegates at Philadelphia saw them as weaknesses and designed the new Constitution to rectify them. They erected a set of balances and compromises that would enable a new federal government to be built on top of the existing social and political institutions in the various states. One compromise was to leave the states themselves intact. Hamilton and Madison would have gladly reduced states to simple admin-

istrative units, but the system of "dual federalism" that emerged made both federal and state governments the legal creatures of the people, who were the real sovereign power. Resolving what Madison regarded as the greatest difficulty, that of representation, the convention adopted the proposal that Congress's single chamber be replaced by two houses: a Senate, in which all states would be equally represented, and a House of Representatives, in which representation would be based proportionally on population.

But vexing questions remained concerning the relationships between the central government, the separate states, and American society as a whole. These issues arose in several forms at the convention; it resolved, for instance, that entitlement to vote in federal elections would be governed by the laws of individual states rather than by nationwide rules. Nothing was more difficult than the differences that emerged between northern and southern states over slavery. Though some southerners, including Washington, had qualms about slavery, most planters did not question its legitimacy or the concept of human property. Still, the fact that slaves were both people and chattels presented unavoidable problems.

Should slaves be counted as part of the southern states' populations for the purpose of deciding the size of delegations to the House of Representatives? Southern delegates, including Madison, wanted to have it both ways. Slaves would not, of course, be entitled to vote, but counting them into the population would significantly increase southern political influence. Northerners saw through this ploy. Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania pointed out that slavery was just one special interest and that if it won representation, other special interests should as well. Other delegates agreed. The outcome was a compromise, the first of many between North and South. Slaves would be counted for political representation—but not fully; by the "three-fifths clause," five enslaved persons would count as three free persons.

Other compromises followed. While the convention was sitting, the Continental Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, containing a clause that banned slavery from the western territories north of the Ohio River. But the Constitution embodied two further concessions to southerners: a clause that Congress could not consider a ban on the international slave trade before 1808 and a clause that obliged states to return fugitive slaves to their owners. Although it did not use the word *slavery*, the Constitution gave slavery legal standing at a time when many Americans were questioning its legitimacy.

As the Constitution bowed to the requirements of southern planters, it also suited the needs of northern commerce. It created a vast common market, regarding uniform laws and the needs of long-distance trade as more important than local custom or the needs of particular communities. States would be restricted from erecting trade barriers against each others' goods. In addition to certain powers to tax, Congress would be able to regulate

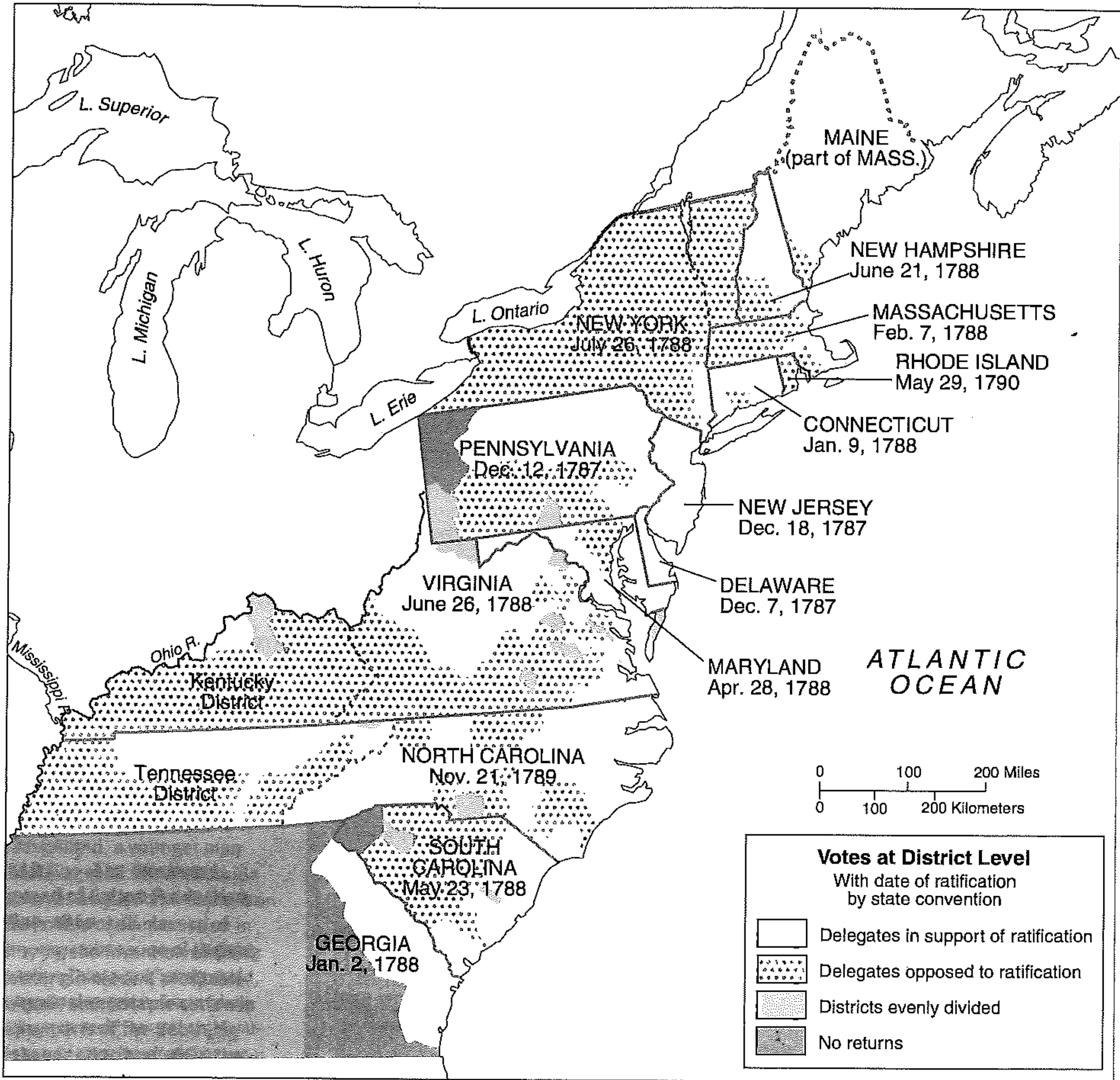
interstate and foreign commerce, establish a uniform bankruptcy law, mint coins, regulate money, "fix the standard of Weights and Measures," register patents and copyrights, and create a postal service. Each state would be obliged to give "full faith and credit" to court decisions made in other states. States were forbidden to "emit Bills of Credit, make anything but Gold or Silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts" or "pass any . . . Law impairing the obligation of Contracts." The framers of the Constitution would not allow the problems of the mid-1780s, when many states protected insolvent debtors against their creditors, to recur.

The Fight for Ratification The Constitution was written by elites to address their own interests, but it also proved to have popular appeal, largely because it was grounded in the sovereignty of the people. Popular support for the Constitution was essential. It would go into effect only when elected conventions in nine states ratified it, so the election of enough delegates who favored it was necessary for its success. There was powerful opposition. Two states refused to ratify the Constitution, and in four others, the contest was extremely close. State politicians who feared loss of influence joined many popular radicals, who distrusted the schemes of those who had met in Philadelphia, in an effort to prevent ratification. As the Constitution's advocates started to call themselves "Federalists," their opponents became known as Anti-Federalists.

The New York Anti-Federalist leader Melancton Smith feared that the Constitution would create a government of "the few and the great" and exclude "those of the middling class of life" whom the revolution had brought into politics. Farmers in the interior, notably from areas with a history of rural unrest, voiced the strongest opposition. In some states, only clever political maneuvering overrode their influence. Pennsylvania leaders called that state's ratification convention at short notice, preventing the backcountry from organizing its opposition. In the New York convention, Anti-Federalists won a massive majority, but strong support from New York City Federalists and their threat that the city would secede and ratify the Constitution on its own persuaded the rest of the state to consent (Map 5.2).

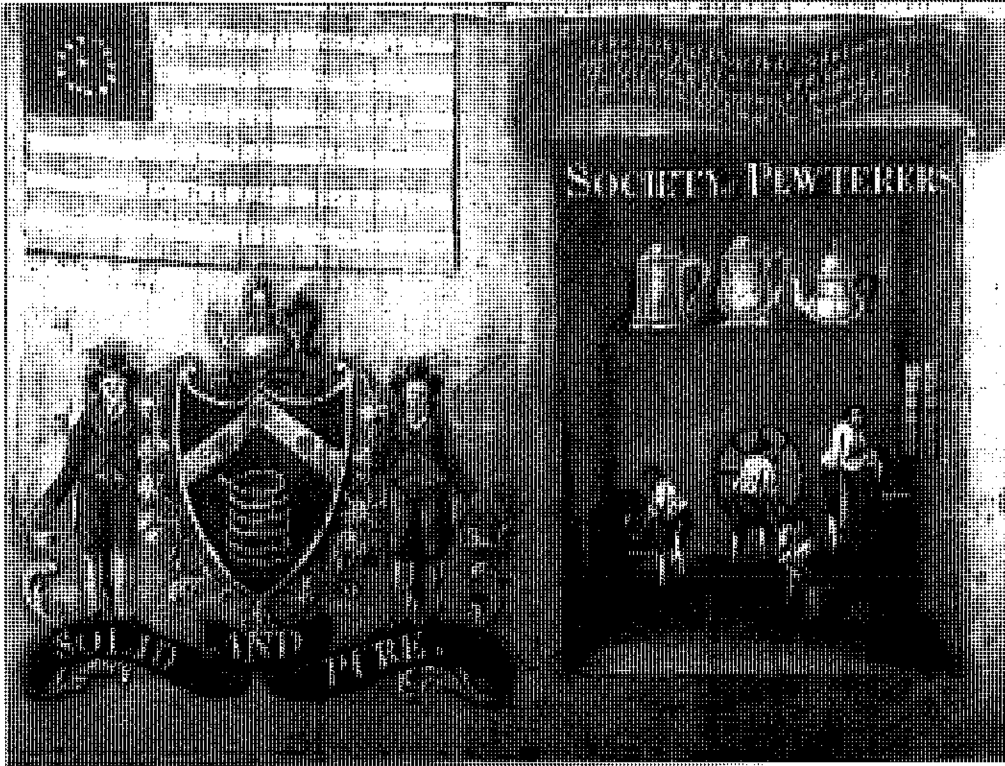
Citizens in the major towns overwhelmingly supported the Constitution. Working people, especially artisans, saw in strong national government their best chance for regular employment and markets for their products. They had little hand in drafting the Constitution, but in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts as well as in New York, they played a key role in getting it ratified.

In Massachusetts, the fight over ratification was critical, for failure to ratify there might defeat the Constitution altogether. When the ratifying convention met in January 1788, the state was still deeply divided after Shays's Rebellion. Delegates from the Massachusetts interior, aware that the



MAP 5.2 Division over the Constitution

In several of the most important states, there was sharp division between the supporters and opponents of ratifying the U.S. Constitution. This map, which plots votes in state ratifying conventions, reflects the broad support for the Constitution in seaboard regions and strong opposition in the backcountry. Note, for example, the small areas of support in Massachusetts and New York and the split between the coast and the interior in South Carolina — a legacy of the Regulator movement of the 1760s.



Solid and Pure

This flag was carried by master, journeymen, and apprentice pewterers in the July 1788 parade in New York City celebrating ratification of the Constitution. Many artisan groups constructed floats and carried banners in this parade, with slogans and mottos that revealed their reasons for supporting a stronger federal government. New-York Historical Society.

Constitution would threaten the power of community solidarity on which their rebellion had been based, strongly opposed ratification. But Boston artisans wanted the Constitution. Paul Revere presided over a meeting of 400 of them who gathered to persuade the other delegates to vote in favor of ratification, and the convention did so.

In what a newspaper called "an exhibition to which America has never witnessed an equal," Boston artisans celebrated the news with a parade in which forty different groups of tradesmen marched. Similar parades were held in other states as they too voted to ratify. The biggest, in Philadelphia on July 4, 1788, included eighty-six units in its line of march and reflected the coalition of elites and working men that had achieved ratification in Pennsylvania. Elaborate floats carried men and women working at their trades and symbols of what artisans thought the Revolution had achieved. One depicted the "New Roof" or "Grand Federal Edifice" that the Constitution would erect over the states and was followed by members of the city's construction trades. Another, the Federal Ship Union, with a crew of twenty-five, was followed by pilots, boatbuilders, sailmakers, ship carpenters, ropemakers, merchants, and traders. Beneath the motto "By Hammer and Hand All Arts Do Stand," blacksmiths beat swords into sickles and plowshares, symbolically demonstrating that the skills of peace had superseded those of war.

"They Will Swallow Up All Us Little Folks": The Massachusetts Ratifying Convention

In the debates at the convention held in Massachusetts in 1788 to consider how the state should vote on constitutional ratification, Amos Singletary, a farmer from the interior who claimed never to have had a day of schooling in his life, expressed his fears. They were shared by many rural Americans who opposed the ratification of the Constitution, contending that the new federal government would be controlled by "aristocrats" and wealthy men.

Hon. Mr. Singletary: Mr. President, I should not have troubled the Convention again, if some gentlemen had not called on them that were on the stage in the beginning of our troubles, in the year 1775. I was one of them. I have had the honor to be a member of the court all the time, Mr. President, and I say that, if any body had proposed such a Constitution as this in that day, it would have been thrown away at once. It would not have been looked at. We contended with Great Britain, some said for a threepenny duty on tea; but it was not that; it was because they claimed a right to tax us and bind us in all cases whatever. And does not this Constitution do the same? Does it not take away all we have—all our property? Does it not lay all taxes, duties, imposts [import fees], and excises? And what more have we to give? They tell us Congress won't lay dry taxes upon us, but collect all the money they want by impost. . . . They won't be able to raise money enough by impost, and then they will lay it on the land, and take all we have got. These lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men, that talk so finely, and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves; they expect to be the managers of this Constitution, and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and then they will swallow up all us little folks, like the great Leviathan, Mr. President; yes, just as the whale swallowed up Jonah.

Massachusetts Gazette, January 25, 1788.

Securing a Bill of Rights Although urban and elite support ratified the Constitution, the margin of victory was narrow. At the Philadelphia convention, George Mason of Virginia had called for a Bill of Rights as a check against the creation of an excessively powerful federal government, but most of the framers had thought it unnecessary, and delegates from every state voted against him. In state ratifying conventions, however, Anti-Federalists exerted strong pressure for a Bill of Rights, and ratification in five states (including Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia) occurred on the understanding that a Bill of Rights would quickly follow. Federalist leaders acceded to popular demand. Under Madison's leadership, Congress drafted constitutional amendments suggested by the state conventions. Ten of these,

known as the Bill of Rights, were finally ratified and appended to the Constitution late in 1791.

The Bill of Rights addressed issues that had been raised in the 1760s resistance to Britain and in the experience of revolution. The first amendment guaranteed freedom of speech, the press, religion, and assembly. Other amendments guaranteed the right to petition government for redress of grievances, to trial by jury, and to the "due process of law" and protected citizens from unwarranted searches and seizures or "cruel or unusual" punishments. To establish local militias and so avoid the need for a standing army, the Second Amendment guaranteed the right to bear arms. These were weak versions of the protections that Anti-Federalists wanted against strong government. In practice, the Bill of Rights played little part in American politics for decades to come. It did not settle the perpetual issue of the relationship between federal and state governments. Its provisions, moreover, concerned property as well as people. Indeed, the new constitutional arrangements fulfilled a double-edged purpose. They protected individuals, but they also protected privileges—such as the ownership of slaves—that accompanied wealth.

American Society: Competing Visions

The adoption of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights did not end the debates about who should rule and who should benefit from the new social and political order. The tension between elite presumptions and popular pressure that had marked the revolutionary struggle continued to shape the politics of the early American republic.

To northern merchants and traders, the Constitution was a necessary underpinning for commercial wealth and their own class advantage. For southern planters, it became a bulwark for the perpetuation of slavery. For urban artisans, the powers of the new federal government could encourage their crafts to flourish. Even small farmers, initially opposed to the Constitution, soon learned that the federal system made possible a society in which people could organize around their own common interests.

The first federal administration, with George Washington as president, took office in 1789, assuming that consensus over the Constitution could achieve political unity. Washington had been chosen by acclamation, and despite Madison's theoretical endorsement of competition between conflicting interests, most Americans still believed that republican government was best secured by political harmony that factional or party divisions would undermine. But congressmen, like most state legislators, were elected by the people, and senators were appointed by state legislatures. It was inevitable that such choices would come to be contested.

Political Tumult in the Early Republic The 1790s saw increasing factional strife. Washington's administration was divided between men such as Jefferson and Madison, who were suspicious of strong central power, and those such as Hamilton, who favored it. Differences over commercial policy and foreign affairs became focused on France and on the French Revolution that had begun in 1789 and moved in an increasingly radical direction until 1794. Hamilton and commercial elites, who continued to identify themselves as Federalists, rejected France's radical democracy and instead advocated trading agreements with Britain. Jefferson, with support among planters, small farmers, and urban workingmen, stood at the center of a political opposition to the Federalists that had started to organize in "Democratic-Republican" clubs and advocated alliance with France against Britain. Among the Jeffersonians' supporters were many who, as Anti-Federalists, had once opposed the ratification of the Constitution in the first place.

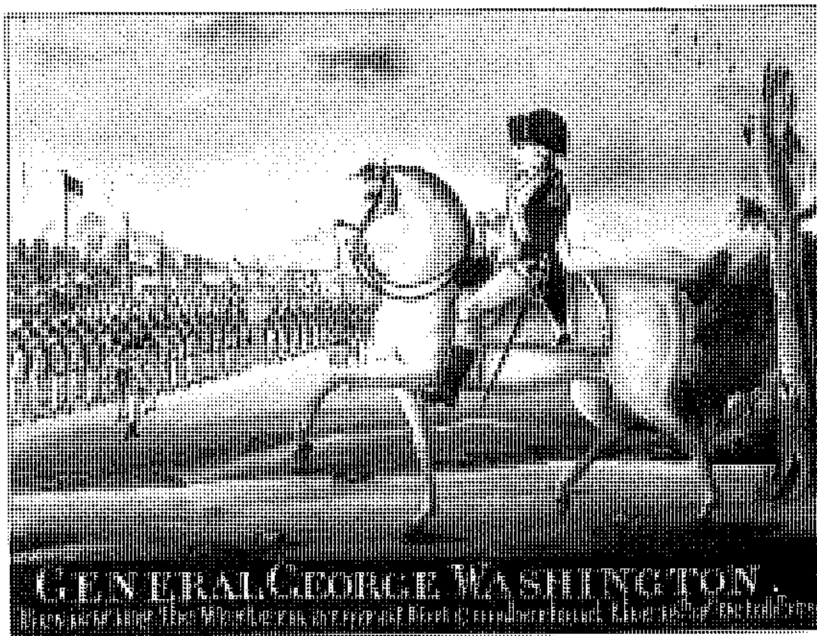
Although the emerging political parties each drew supporters from across society, Federalists argued for rule by the "best men" and Democratic-Republicans for a more popular democracy. This division produced great drama and paranoia after war broke out between Britain and France in 1793. The United States declared its neutrality in the war, and its merchants and ship owners profited greatly by trading with both sides. But America's relative military and naval weakness made it vulnerable to pressure, or even the risk of attack, by one of the European powers. To Federalists in government, the presence of a political opposition seemed a threat to the republic's continued existence.

Divisions over foreign policy accompanied domestic conflict. The parties divided particularly over financial policy. As secretary of the treasury, Hamilton produced plans to resolve the financial problems that remained from the Revolution and tie the nation's wealthy elites more tightly to the new political system. The federal government would assume the debts of the states and would pay its debts at the full face value of the paper notes that had been issued to pay for war supplies or soldiers' wages. The policy would mean levying federal taxes and import duties. However, Hamilton's plan was not to pay off the debts. By retaining a national debt, he would encourage those with means to invest in federal bonds and notes on which interest would be paid. The Federalist administration also organized a Bank of the United States to handle the government's transactions and so help to influence the financial system.

Jeffersonians scorned the "large monied interest" that this funding scheme and the Bank of the United States would create, condemning Hamilton's measures as socially unjust and an excessive extension of federal power. Thousands of Revolutionary soldiers who had been paid in paper money or land certificates had been forced by necessity to sell them at

heavily discounted prices, often to wealthy speculators. Under Hamilton's plan, the government would pay the speculators the full value of the paper, using the tax revenues collected from ordinary Americans.

Disputes over taxation also provoked protest in rural regions. A federal liquor tax provoked riots by armed farmers in western Pennsylvania who had not forgotten their opposition to ratifying the Constitution. Protesters attacked revenue officers, and a crowd of 7,000 people set fire to the then-new town of Pittsburgh. In 1794, Washington dispatched an army of 15,000 men under Hamilton's command to hunt down these "Whiskey Rebels," but they had dispersed and could not be found. Another small uprising in Pennsylvania in 1798, provoked by a direct federal tax on houses and other property, added to a sense of panic in the administration of John Adams, who had served as vice president under Washington and was elected president in 1796. Federalists so feared opposition that when a naval war broke out with France in that year, they used their majority in Congress to pass the Alien and Sedition Acts, severely curtailing free political expression. Critics of the government were prosecuted for seditious speech or writings, but their trials mainly exposed the Federalists themselves to ridicule. The republican congressman Matthew Lyon of Vermont, imprisoned for accusing the administration of incompetence, got the satisfaction of being reelected while he was in jail. The Federalists' attempts at repression hastened the turning of the political tide against them and led to a sound defeat in the 1800 elections that secured Jefferson the presidency.



Washington Suppresses a Rebellion

Faced with a primitive transportation system, western Pennsylvania farmers distilled whiskey from grain as the best means to get their produce to eastern markets. In 1794, after a new federal liquor tax disrupted their livelihood, the farmers rebelled. In this painting, President Washington is shown at Fort Cumberland, Maryland, reviewing the vanguard of the 15,000 troops he dispatched to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion. Frederick Kemmelmeyer, *General Washington, Reviewing the Western Army at Fort Cumberland the 18th of October, 1794*, c. 1794, oil on paper backed with linen, 18 1/8 × 23 1/8 inches — Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum.

A Republic of Citizens The election of 1800 marked another step in the erosion of social deference that had begun in the 1760s during the protests against British rule. Jefferson saw his election as a victory in the battle between "the advocates of republican and those of kingly government." Colonists had been subjects of a monarch who sat at the apex of a social hierarchy. Because of the Revolution, working people could see themselves as equal participants in a social order in which they were sovereign. Americans were increasingly reluctant to view the wealthy or well-born as their social betters or as entitled to power or influence. No man, declared a Massachusetts farmer, deserves "any degree or spark of . . . a right of dominion, government, and jurisdiction over [an]other."

Participating in Fourth of July celebrations every year, farmers, artisans, and other workingmen could mark both their identities as members of a trade and their positions as equal citizens of the republic. In New York, Patriotic contingents paraded behind the banner of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen. Like similar groups in Boston, Albany, Providence, Portsmouth, Charleston, and Savannah, New York's General Society was composed mainly of master craftsmen but sought to promote the common interest of all artisans and to foster "a general harmony . . . throughout the whole manufacturing interest of the country." Masters claimed responsibility for the journeymen and apprentices in their workshops, who, they assumed, could in time become masters themselves. Artisans and others claimed equal rights with the elites who dominated politics. Fourth of July speakers emphasized civic equality. As a Pennsylvanian put it, "no man has greater claim of special privilege for his hundred thousand dollars than I have for my five dollars."

Opportunity for Some, Exclusion for Others Even so, republican theory did not accord full citizenship and access to politics to everyone. It reserved them for those who were deemed personally "independent," capable of acting without reliance on others, and whose "disinterestedness" could guarantee the republic against corrupt manipulation. Most states restricted the right to vote to white men with property or taxable income, so the great majority of people—some 80 percent in the 1780s—were excluded from public life. Most poor laboring men could not vote, because lack of property or status as servants disqualified them. Most women and people of color were excluded because of their gender, race, or status as wives or slaves. All were said to be "dependents," unable to exercise their own judgment. For these groups, the revolutionary era raised possibilities of freedom that were only inadequately fulfilled.

Democratic-Republicans' attacks on Federalist privilege did continue the Revolution's democratizing tendencies into the nineteenth century. The Jefferson administration abolished federal direct taxes and opened up access to western land. After 1800, many states abolished property qualifications for voting, opening the franchise to all adult white men; by 1830, all but three had done so. Participation in elections soared. But including all white men in politics still meant excluding others. The law of 1807 that abolished New Jersey's property qualification also abolished the limited voting rights of the state's women.

For many African Americans, the Revolution produced only limited or temporary hope of liberty. The Constitution represented a major blow to slaves' and many free blacks' hopes of freedom. It did nothing to interfere with state rules that disenfranchised most free blacks on grounds of color or poverty. The three-fifths clause, the guarantee of property rights, and the

"Certain Information of a Conspiracy": Charleston Slave Owners Fear Revolution

News of the revolution in Saint-Domingue was an inspiration for American slaves but a source of severe anxiety for their owners. The arrival of refugees from Saint-Domingue—black, white, and mulatto—in American port cities, including Charleston, increased slave owners' fear that the black revolution would spread to the United States. Slave owners cracked down, nervously interpreting every transgression as an uprising in the making. This article appeared in the Charleston State Gazette *in 1797; it was reprinted in the* Philadelphia Gazette.

On Tuesday, the 14th inst. the Intendant received certain information of a Conspiracy of several French negroes to fire the city, and to act here as they had formerly done at S. Domingo—as the discovery did not implicate more than ten or fifteen persons, and as the information first given was not so complete as to charge all the ringleaders, the Intendant delayed taking any measures for their apprehension until the plan should be more matured, and their guilt more closely ascertained; but the plot having been communicated to persons, on whose secrecy the city magistrates could not depend, they found themselves obliged on Saturday last to apprehend a number of negroes, and among others the following, charged (together with another not yet taken) as the ring-leaders, viz.—Figaro, the property of Mr. Robinett; Jean Louis, the property of Mr. Langstaff; Figaro the younger, the property of Mr. Delaire; and Capelle. . . .

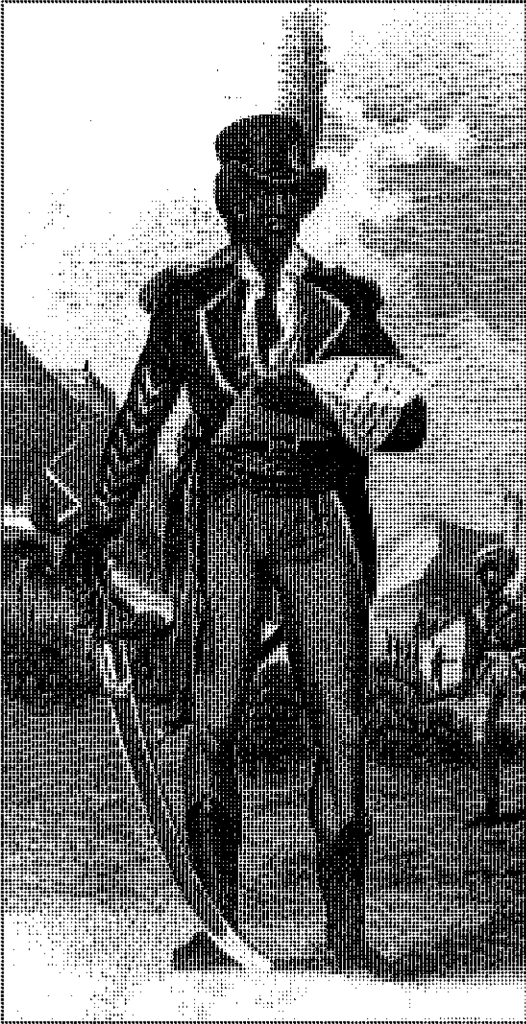
On examination they all at first positively denied their knowledge or concern in the plot; but the younger Figaro, after some time, made a partial confession, and was admitted in evidence on the part of the state. The others were on Monday brought to trial, in the City Hall, before as respectable a court and jury as we ever remember to have been convened. A number of witnesses were examined, and fully proved the guilt of the prisoners; and the court, on mature consideration, unanimously condemned Figaro, Sen. and Jean Louis, to be hung, and Capelle and Figaro the younger to be transported. The rest who were apprehended are under confinement, for further examination.

After the condemnation of Jean Louis, he turned to the two Figaros and said, "I do not blame the whites, though I suffer, they have done right, but it is you who have brought me to this trouble."

Figaro and Jean Louis were yesterday executed in pursuance of their sentence.

The Pennsylvania Gazette, December 13, 1797.

fugitive-slave law lent renewed legitimacy to slavery. The protections of the Bill of Rights offered nothing to slaves, who were not regarded as citizens in the first place. Although the Revolution enabled some to emancipate themselves, it also paved the way for economic developments that would enslave many more.



Toussaint L'Ouverture
This portrait of the leader of the Saint-Domingue revolution was published in a contemporary British history book. Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hoyti* (1805) — New-York Historical Society.

Nevertheless, the revolutionary period provided ideological markers for African Americans and their supporters as they struggled for emancipation. The possibility of revolution, itself a new ingredient, was especially charged by events in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) in 1791, when slaves rebelled, toppled the French colonial government, seized power, and defended their new republic against repeated efforts to destroy it. The insurrection in Saint-Domingue struck fear into the hearts of slaveholders across the New World and may have emboldened some American slaves to attempt rebellion. In 1800, a slave and blacksmith named Gabriel organized an insurrection in an attempt to seize the city. Gabriel and his followers, who were reported to number nearly one thousand, were apparently prepared to kill all whites in their path except those few who were deemed friendly: Quakers, Methodists, and Frenchmen. The insurrectionists planned to march under a banner proclaiming "Death or Liberty," a slogan that fellow Virginian, and slave owner, Patrick Henry would surely have recognized. Two African Americans, however, revealed the plot to white authorities. The Virginia militia put down the revolt before it began, and Gabriel was executed, along with thirty-five others. At his trial, Gabriel was alleged to have declared that "we have as good a right to be free from your oppression, as you had to be free from the tyranny of the King of England."

A renewed evangelical movement that would become known as the Second Great Awakening emphasized the equal brotherhood of believers. Yet this was tempered by growing white racism. Churches that, in the late colonial period, had included white and black members, began in the 1790s to erect racial barriers. Black Methodists in Philadelphia, for example, withdrew from a church they had just helped to rebuild in 1792 when the elders insisted that they occupy segregated seating. Such episodes reinforced the efforts of African Americans, both slave and free, to organize institutions of their own. In northern towns, freedpeople built families and neighborhoods, created their own styles of dress and deportment, founded their own churches and schools, and formed voluntary associations such as the African Union Society of Newport, Rhode Island, and the Free African Society of Philadelphia.

Even for whites who had the benefits of citizenship, the Revolution's legacy was mixed. Inequalities of wealth widened during the Revolution, and even the economic revival of the 1790s distributed the benefits of prosperity unevenly. Of Philadelphia's journeymen shoemakers, only about half

were able to set up as masters with shops of their own during the decade; among tailors, the proportion was just one in ten. A young woman, Polly Nugent, had been a servant of the city's wealthy Drinker family before she married a blacksmith. By 1796, her husband was facing hard times, and Polly had to turn to her old employers for financial assistance. Revolution may have unleashed opportunity for many, but it also meant disappointment for others.

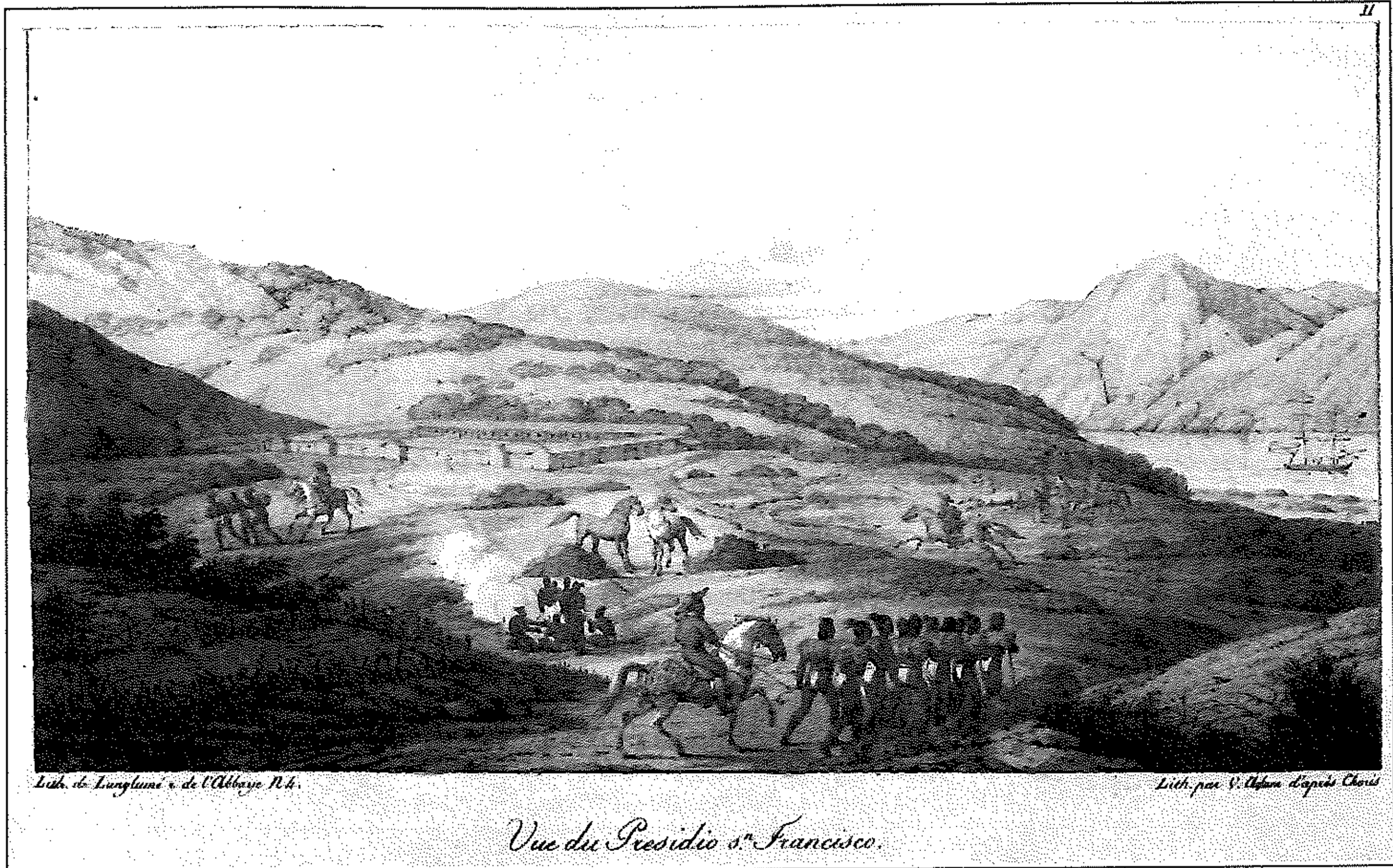
Post-Revolutionary America in the World

Yet creating an independent United States out of a disparate group of British colonies and erecting a federal system of republican governments based on popular sovereignty were in themselves massive changes. The Revolution also altered the balance of power on the North American continent, profoundly affecting the peoples in the territory to the west of the United States and in the Americas in general. An independent United States had, furthermore, to negotiate its standing as a trading nation and diplomatic entity among the European powers, which continued their struggles with one another and their efforts to exercise influence over the new American republic. American governments turned their attention both to the west—where the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 nearly doubled the territory under U.S. control, and where ever greater tracts of land were wrested from Native Americans, often in the face of sharp resistance—and to the Atlantic and international trade. Wars in Europe and tensions over maritime policies would eventually provoke a further conflict with Britain in the War of 1812.

Crisis in the Spanish Empire The Revolutionary War and creation of the United States brought more sweeping and permanent change to North America than any previous war had done. American independence curbed British power on the continent but did not extinguish it. Now, however, a people with material interest in the remainder of America were rooted in the continent itself, so U.S. influence over the continent would be stronger than that of any previous power.

Spanish lands still girdled North America's southern and western margins after 1763, from Louisiana to Texas and New Mexico, and Florida would return to Spanish control twenty years later. Political reforms in Spain produced new efforts to regulate its New World colonies; one consequence was the decision in 1768 to occupy present-day California, partly to counter Russian activity on the Pacific coast.

Spanish California, formed by the building of missions as well as military and civil institutions, developed characteristics similar to those of earlier conquests. California's natives, who lived mainly in small, decentralized



The Presidio of San Francisco
In 1776, the Spanish government used Indian labor to build a *presidio*, or military post, on a high cliff overlooking the mouth of San Francisco Bay to defend its colony from Russian and other foreign rivals. When artist Louis Choris visited California in 1816 as part of a Russian military expedition, he depicted Spanish soldiers leading captured Indians for forced agricultural labor toward the Presidio. Victor Adam (after Louis Choris), Vue de Presidio Sn. Francisco, *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde* (1822): 71, hand-colored acquatint — I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

groups that were unused to war, were in a poor position to resist Spanish encroachments. But the invaders' efforts to extract labor, punishments for infractions, and the rape of Indian women sparked retaliation. In 1775, local Ipais attacked and burned the mission at San Diego, killing its priest. Other rebellions followed. Even the Spanish governor declared the condition of Indians at the missions to be "worse than that of slaves." Like previous peoples subject to invasion, California's Indians fell victim to European diseases. The coastal region's population of about 60,000 in 1769 had been reduced to 35,000 by 1800. Meanwhile, there had been no great rush of Hispanic settlers to California, with fewer than 1,000 in 1790 and about 1,800 ten years later.

The uneasy balance between Hispanic and Indian societies in New Mexico, established after the conflicts of the seventeenth century, continued. Florida settlements remained small and interfered little with native groups in the interior. Altogether, Spanish society in North America's borderlands remained marginal to the larger interests of Spain and its empire. This was evident after 1800, when it became known that Spain had secretly traded back to France the territory of Louisiana and its vast land holdings in the Mississippi valley. Control of the great river could have made Louisiana the

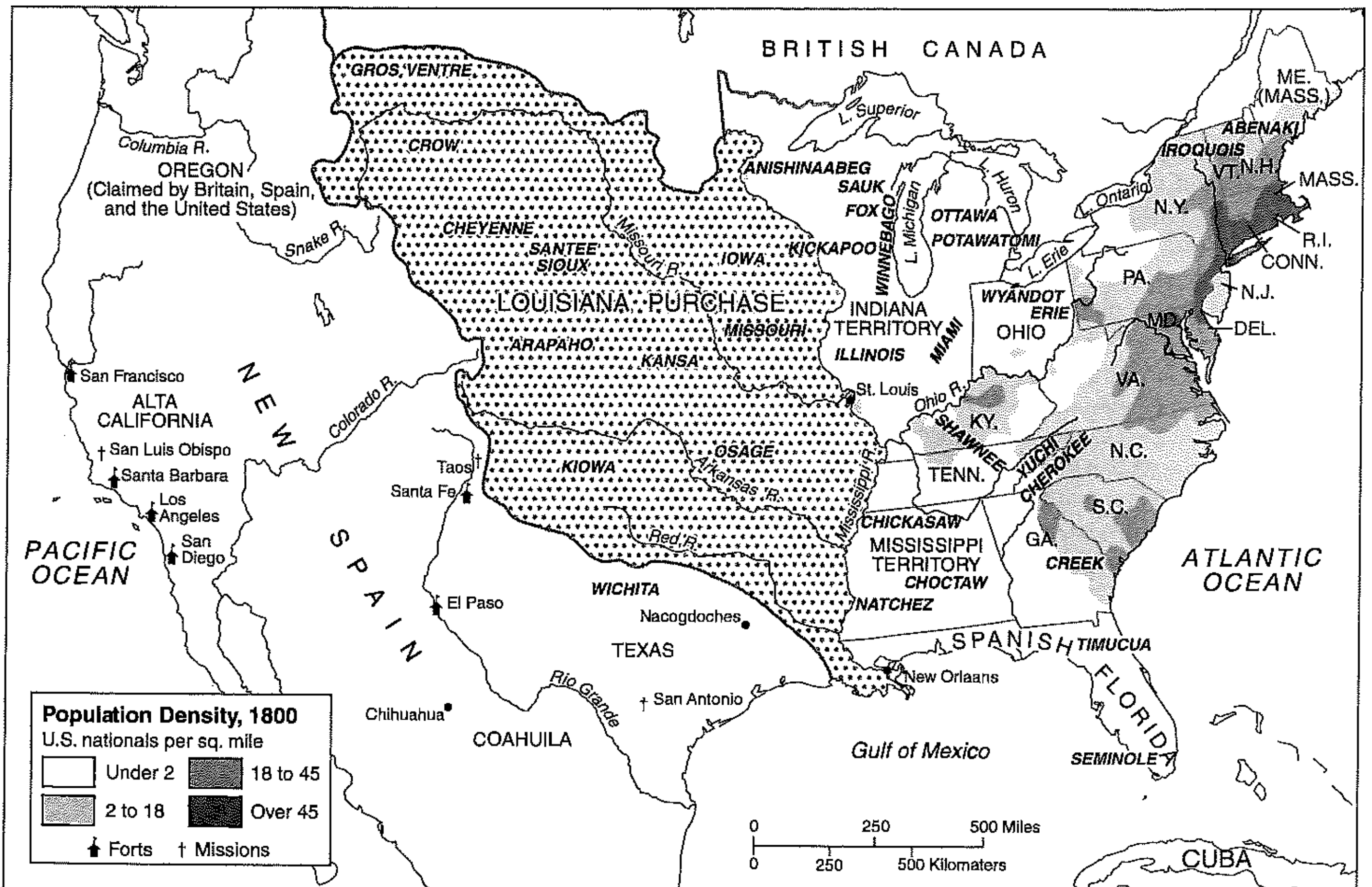
nucleus of a North American commercial empire; instead, Spain found the region an encumbrance.

The United States soon benefited from Spain's decision to relinquish Louisiana. France was now in no position to exploit the territory. The revolution in Saint-Domingue had shaken France's hold on the Caribbean, and disease had ravaged a large army sent to reconquer the island. The French ruler Napoleon, fighting wars in Europe and the Middle East, no longer had use for Louisiana, and in 1803, he sold the whole territory to the American government for fifteen million dollars. With the Louisiana Purchase, the United States in a single stroke acquired a claim to land from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, roughly doubling its land area (Map 5.3).

External events and internal rebellions soon crippled Spain's American empire. Many factors fed aspirations for Latin American political independence: long-standing tensions between colonial-born *criollos* and Spanish-born *peninsulares*, administrative reforms, tax revolts, warfare, and the example of a successful rebellion in North America. In 1808, Napoleon sent French armies to conquer Spain itself. As the empire's center tottered, uprisings erupted from Mexico to Argentina, setting off protracted revolutionary

MAP 5.3 The United States After 1803

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 doubled U.S. land territory and helped to confirm that the new nation's orientation in the nineteenth century would be westward, across the continent. Within a few years, revolutions across the Spanish empire would weaken Spain's grip on the American South and West.



struggles between nationalists and royalists. In consequence, most of mainland Spanish America seized independence from Spain in the years around 1820, forming a chain of new postcolonial republics.

North Americans welcomed this advance of republicanism against monarchy. But their intentions were not wholly benign. In 1819, after American settlers and fighters had entered Florida, the United States took advantage of the chaos in the Spanish empire to annex it. When Mexico gained its independence in 1821, assuming control of Spanish territories in California, Texas, and the Southwest, some Americans saw this as another opportunity to gain more land for themselves. Struggles over Mexico's North American territories would dominate American politics in the 1830s and 1840s.

Westward Expansion and Indian Resistance Meanwhile, between the Appalachians and the Mississippi, the American Revolution had begun to make Indians strangers in their own land. Native Americans were largely missing from the new constitutional provisions, state or federal, in the United States. Unlike most indigenous peoples in Central and South America, who were regarded as subjects of Spain and then citizens of newly independent republics, native North Americans were excluded from U.S. citizenship, and their tribes were treated as separate foreign nations.

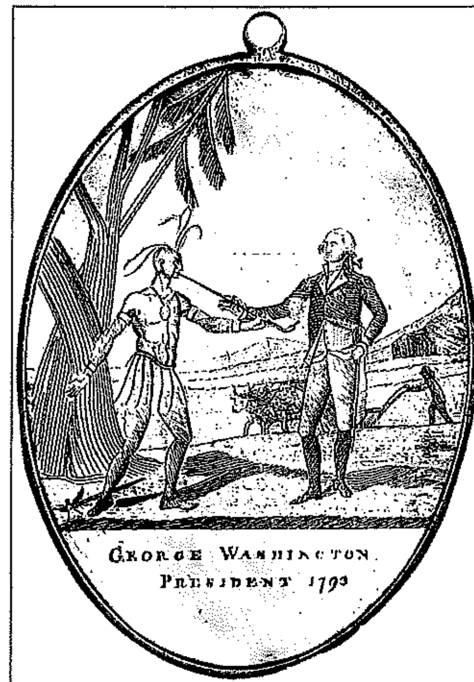
The 1783 peace with Britain opened up access to lands across the Appalachians that settlers had been seeking for decades. The American government quickly assumed control of land distribution in the West. Congressional negotiations with states that claimed western land under their original colonial charters led to these claims being surrendered to federal control. In 1785 and 1787, land ordinances laid the basis for the creation of new states and the surveying of land for settlement. Providing for newly settled regions to be admitted to the United States on an equal basis with existing states, the ordinances encouraged white settlement and underlined the exclusion of Indians from the new arrangements. The Louisiana Purchase brought yet more territory in line for similar treatment.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 stated that Indians' land should not be taken without consent, but treaties and legal procedures frequently veiled fraud, extortion, and theft. Implicit, too, was a notion that would frame more than a century of western expansion: although individuals and groups of pioneers carried out the settlement process, federal and state governments assisted it.

Wartime destruction, population growth, contempt for Indians and their ways of life, and European concepts of absolute property ownership all meant that Indians were the immediate losers in post-Revolutionary

America. The alliances and understandings of previous decades collapsed under pressure from a white invasion of the West. Indians were either divided and demoralized by this new onslaught or driven to attempt a concerted resistance.

The Iroquois's location and their wartime alliance with the British both contributed to the fragmentation of their society. War and white settlement shattered their confederation and its strategy for resisting European incursion. Some Mohawks, led by Joseph Brant, moved to Canada. Other Iroquois retreated westward to preserve their way of life. Those who remained, largely in upstate New York, exchanged most of their land for guaranteed settlements in reservations. This averted their removal but did not prevent social collapse. At the end of the 1790s, however, among Seneca Iroquois settled in new reservations, there arose a spiritual revival led by a former warrior, Sganyadai:yo, or Handsome Lake, to whom visions had appeared calling for a strict moral reform of Seneca society. Preaching the rejection of white notions of individualism, Handsome Lake sought to restore Iroquois society's communal traditions and persuaded many Indians to give up whiskey, gambling, and other evils associated with whites. Yet he also encouraged accommodation to "American" customs, welcoming Christian missionaries and seeking the transformation of Iroquois hunters into farmers and female farmers into housewives. He was particularly critical of women who rejected demands to give up their traditional power and authority.



Medals for Peace and War
Like the British, the new Americans bestowed medals on cooperating Indian leaders. Made by Philadelphia silversmith Joseph Richardson, Jr., this medal was decorated with images that heralded peaceful relations between the new nation's leaders and Native Americans. President George Washington holds out his hand in peace while an Indian leader extends a peace pipe and casts off a tomahawk. But the medal also sent a warning: Washington was shown in his military uniform, a reminder to Indians of American military power, and in the background, America's vision of the future was indicated by a "civilized" Indian farmer plowing a field. Joseph Richardson, Jr., Peace Medal, 1793 — American Numismatic Society, ANS 1915.138.4.

Indians farther west resisted white settlers more vigorously. American migrants in southern Ohio encountered resistance from the Algonquian-speaking Shawnees, who forged a confederacy of tribes to block American settlement and turn back U.S. military efforts to dislodge them. In 1791, members of nine tribes killed, wounded, or captured 900 soldiers out of an American force of 1,500 sent against them. But at length, the Shawnees were outnumbered. In 1794, 3,000 U.S. soldiers defeated them at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, and by treaty the next year, the Shawnees ceded most of their land east of the Mississippi. What was left was soon invaded by whites, and the Shawnees were driven close to starvation. Officials solemnly advised the Shawnees to take up agriculture instead of hunting and to sell more land for cash.

From Ohio westward, the federal government wrested land cessions from tribes, often with the help of pliant "government chiefs" whose conduct drove young warriors into rebellion. Among the Shawnees, social disintegration, growing dependence on trade with whites, and mounting frustration drove many to alcohol. Again demoralization sparked a spiritual awakening, which, spreading from the Shawnees to other northwestern

tribes between 1805 and 1808, galvanized them to resist once more. Inspired by a prophet known as Tenskwatawa, or the Open Door, who promised to show his people the entrance to a paradise where spirits could follow the life they were once used to, the movement demanded self-discipline, the renunciation of liquor, and avoidance of goods or techniques acquired from whites. In 1808, Tenskwatawa declared an intention to disconnect Indian and white societies entirely and to forge the unity among tribes that could defend Indians' separation.

Leadership shifted from Tenskwatawa toward his warrior brother Tecumseh. To stop the whites' invasion of their lands, Tecumseh announced, "all the red men [should] unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land . . . ; for it never was divided, but belongs to all, for the use of each." But the northwestern Indians' success turned out to require more advanced military technology and greater political unity than were compatible with the traditions they were striving to defend. The United States again threw heavy military force against them. In November 1811, territorial governor William Henry Harrison advanced with a thousand troops on the Shawnee headquarters at Prophetstown (in what later became Indiana). Several hundred warriors attacked Harrison's encampment on the Tippecanoe River but were beaten back. The setback weakened Tenskwatawa's efforts at tribal unification. A further defeat in 1813 at the Thames River in Canada caused Tecumseh's death and ended Shawnee armed resistance to white settlement.

This collapse paved the way for the cession by the 1830s of most Indian land in Ohio, southern Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois. Farther south, Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and other tribes also used various strategies to avoid being overrun. They, too, mounted armed resistance or voluntarily withdrew westward. However, many Cherokees and others became agriculturalists, turning their societies into miniature republics that claimed equal standing with whites on whites' own terms. But they still faced defeat and forced removal in the 1830s. Land-hungry settlers and planters brushed them aside with little compunction. Even sympathetic whites came to regard Indian cultures as doomed and their decline and removal as inevitable. Indian leaders rejected the white view that they were "savages" obstructing "civilization." A Chickasaw chief, Shullushoma, wrote in 1824, "it has been a great many years since our white brothers came across the big waters and a great many of them has not got civilized yet."

American Societies and the Atlantic World Americans' conquest of territory in the West intersected with the commercial competition and international rivalries of the Atlantic and the implications these had for the

Sale of the Deserts of Scioto by the Anglo-Americans
As this 1799 French engraving demonstrates, Americans were selling land to the French as well as purchasing it. The Scioto Company was one of many land companies that bought property from the federal government to resell at great profit to speculators and prospective settlers in the United States and abroad. Often the value of the land was not what the companies claimed. "Better to ensnare dupes," this print's caption commented, "they draw up geographical maps, convert the rocky wastes into fertile plains, show roads cut through impassable cliffs, and offer shares in lands which do not belong to them." The Scioto Company went bankrupt, but not before it had relieved many French investors of their francs. Chicago Historical Society.

future development of the United States. Trade, agricultural exports, and the coastal port cities had boomed in the 1790s when the United States could trade as a neutral with warring European nations. But the renewal of war between Britain and France after 1803 jeopardized American shipping and seamen, as each of the combatant nations tried to stop neutrals from dealing with the other. Britain seized ships and cargoes that it suspected of involvement in trade with France, and when the French followed suit, President Jefferson tried to put pressure on both sides by declaring an embargo in 1807, preventing trade with either power. For two years, until the embargo was lifted, men and women working in American ports suffered much hardship as ships lay idle and available work diminished.

The resumption of trade during the administration of Jefferson's successor, his ally James Madison, not only renewed tension with Europe, but also provoked fierce political divisions between Americans. American sailors fell foul of the British navy's practice of searching neutral vessels for alleged deserters and forcibly impressing them into service aboard their warships. Farmers and planters in the South and West were angered by the depressing effect of a British naval blockade on agricultural prices and by Britain's support for Indians hostile to white settlers. Pressure from these groups persuaded Madison to declare war on Britain in 1812, but merchants and traders from New England and the Mid-Atlantic coast vigorously disputed the decision, fearing the destruction of maritime trade. The divisions

over the war accentuated regional differences that would shape U.S. society and politics in the decades to come. At an 1814 convention in Hartford, Connecticut, some Federalists proposed that New England should secede from the Union.

Advocates of the war badly underestimated America's vulnerability to superior British military and naval forces, which staved off an American invasion of Canada and sustained a naval blockade of the East Coast. Britain mounted an invasion of its own that culminated in the capture and burning of Washington, D.C., before its troops were repulsed. The United States was rescued largely by the defeat of Napoleon's armies in Europe and Britain's desire to end two decades of warfare with peace on all fronts. The United States signed a peace treaty at Ghent in 1814, but before word of this arrived in America, an army commanded by General Andrew Jackson, a Tennessee slave owner, crushed a British effort to capture the port of New Orleans. Although Jackson's force consisted mainly of regular troops and a contingent of French-speaking black soldiers, the success at New Orleans became celebrated as a symbol of the determination of frontier fighters. It also marked the ability of the United States to sustain its political independence.

Conclusion: Legacies of the Revolution

Achieving independence and new forms of republican government, the Revolution created fresh arenas in which Americans would seek to realize their aspirations and also come into conflict with each other. It unleashed a long period of economic expansion, which entailed both the invasion and settlement of the trans-Appalachian West and the growth and development of established rural and urban societies in the seaboard states, processes that were assisted by the renewed growth of Atlantic commerce after 1815 and by the collapse of Spanish influence in North America. But formal political equality for white men did not translate into economic equality. Development would lead to sharper conflict between rich and poor, master and journeyman, planter and small farmer. Barriers of gender and race also became firmer in the early nineteenth century, but the visions of emancipation conjured up by the Revolution continued to shape events.

Above all, the different regional patterns that had been established in colonial America continued to influence the development of the United States. Distinctions widened between northern societies based on family and wage labor and southern societies shaped by slavery. The growth of plantation slavery and its territorial expansion came into conflict with the development of wage labor in the North and the emergence there of an industrial society.

The Years in Review

1775

- Ipai Indians attack and burn the mission at San Diego in response to Spanish expansion in California.

1776

- British troops evacuate Boston but then capture New York City and Long Island, which they hold until 1783.
- Radicals come to power in Philadelphia and establish a democratic, egalitarian form of government that is inspired by the ideas of Thomas Paine.
- Seeking to counter Paine's *Common Sense*, John Adams publishes *Thoughts on Government*, which offers a more conservative vision of republican government.

1777

- George Washington and his 11,000 troops spend the winter in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.
- British troops capture Philadelphia.
- The Continental Congress adopts the Articles of Confederation, which go into effect in 1781.
- The American victory at Saratoga, New York, convinces the French government to join the war against the British.

1779

- Patriot forces attack and burn forty Iroquois settlements in western New York.
- In response to rising bread prices, working people in Philadelphia revive their revolution committees to seek price controls; merchants arm a militia, which faces down protesting crowds and breaks their movement.

1780

- Pennsylvania passes law providing for gradual abolition of slavery, as do Rhode Island and Connecticut in 1784; a court decision ends slavery in Massachusetts in 1783.

1781

- The British surrender at Yorktown, Virginia.

1783

- The Revolutionary War is officially ended by Treaty of Paris, by which Britain recognizes American independence.

1786

- In Shays's Rebellion, indebted farmers from central and western Massachusetts close the local courts to prevent lawsuits being heard and attempt to seize the U.S. armory at Springfield, Massachusetts.

1787

- The Constitutional Convention meets in Philadelphia, adopting the U.S. Constitution on September 17.
- The Northwest Ordinance lays the basis for the creation of new states, encourages white settlement, and excludes American Indians from the new political arrangements.

1788

- James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay write and publish eighty-five essays, known as the *Federalist Papers,* arguing for the ideas embodied in the new Constitution adopted in Philadelphia.
- New Hampshire becomes the ninth state to ratify Constitution and, by doing so, officially puts it in effect as of March 4, 1789.

1789

- The first federal administration, with George Washington as president, takes office.

1791

- The Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution) is ratified.
- Toussaint L'Ouverture leads a slave revolt to secure Saint-Domingue's (Haiti's) independence from France and strikes fear into the hearts of slave owners in the New World.
- The Federalist administration of President George Washington establishes the Bank of the United States (devised by Alexander Hamilton) to handle the government's transactions and influence the nation's financial system.
- Members of a confederation of Shawnee tribes kill, wound, or capture 900 soldiers out of an American force of 1,500 sent to dislodge them from southern Ohio.

1792

- Washington wins reelection for second term as president in a unanimous vote of the Electoral College; the only contest is for the office of vice president, which John Adams wins.
- Construction of the White House and Capitol begins.

- Black Methodists in Philadelphia withdraw from a church when the elders insist on segregated seating, part of a trend toward separate black churches.

1793

- War breaks out between Britain and France; the United States declares its neutrality, and American merchants and ship owners profit greatly by trading with both sides.

1794

- Federal liquor tax leads to the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania.
- English writer Mary Wollstonecraft publishes *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which attacks the oppression of women and proves influential in the United States.

1795

- Having been defeated by U.S. troops at the Battle of Fallen Timbers the previous year, the Shawnees sign the Treaty of Grenville and cede most of their land east of the Mississippi River to the U.S. government.

1796

- Federalist John Adams defeats Democratic-Republican Thomas Jefferson in first contested presidential race.

1798

- Congress passes the Alien and Sedition Acts, severely curtailing rights to free political expression.

1800

- Thomas Jefferson defeats Federalist John Adams in a bitter campaign for the presidency. Federalists whisper that Jefferson had fathered a child with his slave Sally Hemings. The results of DNA tests in 1998 suggest that this was indeed the case.

1803

- The United States makes the Louisiana Purchase (of territory between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains) from France and roughly doubles its land area.

1805

- Tenskwatawa leads a religious awakening among Northwest Indian tribes.

1807

- New Jersey abolishes the property qualification for voting, one of many states to do so in this period, but also ends the limited voting rights of women.

- The Jefferson administration imposes a trade embargo on the warring Britain and France.

1811

- William Henry Harrison, governor of the Northwest Territories, defeats Shawnee troops at their headquarters at Prophetstown, helping to end Shawnee armed resistance to white settlement. By the 1830s, Indians will have reluctantly ceded most of their land in Ohio, southern Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois.

1812

- The United States declares war on Britain.

1814

- U.S. troops, commanded by General Andrew Jackson, defeat British troops in the Battle of New Orleans; both sides are unaware that the United States and Britain had already signed the Treaty of Ghent, ending their war.

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