

Revolutionary America

Change and Transformation, 1764–1783

“Yesterday the greatest question was decided ... and a greater question perhaps never was nor will be decided among men. A resolution was passed without one dissenting colony, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states.”

JOHN ADAMS, 1776

Britain’s decisive victory in the French and Indian War in 1763 removed the French threat to its American empire. But the war had been expensive to wage, and the ongoing costs of administering and protecting North America nearly drained the British economy. To pay these costs Britain adopted a new set of policies for America, including new taxes, more

aggressive ways of collecting them, and more severe methods of enforcing these measures. The colonists viewed these policies as an ominous first step in a plot to deprive them of their liberty.

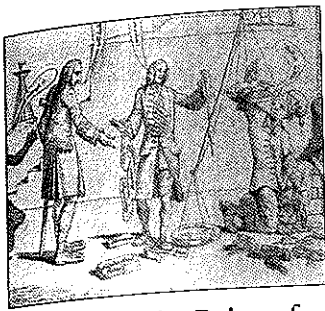
When King George III assumed the British throne in 1760, monarchism was deeply rooted in American culture, and Americans were proud of their British heritage. Opposition to British policy began with respectful pleas to the king for relief from unjust policies. Gradually, over the course of the next decade, Americans became convinced that it was no longer possible to remain within the British Empire and protect their rights. Resistance to British policies stiffened, and the colonists eventually decided to declare independence from Britain.

Tensions between Britain and the American colonies reached a boiling point with the Tea Act, the theme of this cartoon, *The Tea-Tax-Tempest*. In the image “Father Time” displays the events of the American Revolution to four figures who symbolize the four continents. The “magic lantern” shows a tea-pot boiling over, symbolizing revolution, while British and American military forces stand ready to face one another.

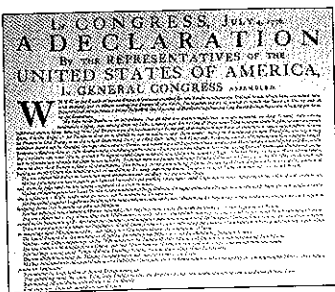
The notions of liberty and equality that Americans invoked in their struggle against British tyranny changed American society. The idea that “all men are created equal” and that every person enjoyed certain “inalienable rights,” as America’s Declaration of Independence asserted, were radical ideas for those who had grown up in a society that was ruled by a king and that enthusiastically embraced the idea of aristocracy.

The Revolution did bring about some radical changes in American society. New England effectively eliminated slavery after the Revolution. The new states of the mid-Atlantic adopted a more gradual approach to abolishing slavery. In the South, however, where slavery was deeply entrenched and men made huge fortunes from crops produced with slave labor, only modest gains were made in promoting the abolition of slavery. Although not yet full political participants, revolutionary notions of equality led women to demand that husbands treat them as partners in their marriage. A new idea of companionate marriage blossomed.





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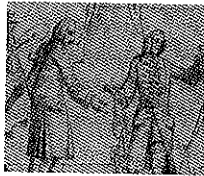
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Tightening the Reins of Empire



The British victory in the French and Indian War in 1763 secured North America against French attack. It also forced the British government to chart a new direction for dealing with America. A cornerstone of the new policy was the Proclamation of 1763, which prohibited settlement in lands west of the Appalachian Mountains (Chapter 3). Having just fought an expensive war against the French, the British were keen to prevent colonists and Indians from starting a new war. Britain also felt a renewed urgency to raise funds to pay off the war debt and cover the costs of administering the colonies.

Taxation without Representation

In 1763 George Grenville, the new prime minister, ordered a detailed investigation of colonial revenues and was unhappy to discover that American customs' duties produced less than £2,000 sterling a year. The lucrative trade in molasses between British North America and the Caribbean islands alone should have yielded something like £200,000 a year, apart from all of the other goods traded between North America and Britain, which should also have generated customs duties. To make the colonies pay their share of taxes, Grenville was determined to enforce existing laws and enact new taxes to bring in additional revenue.

The first step in Grenville's new program was the Revenue Act (1764), popularly known as the

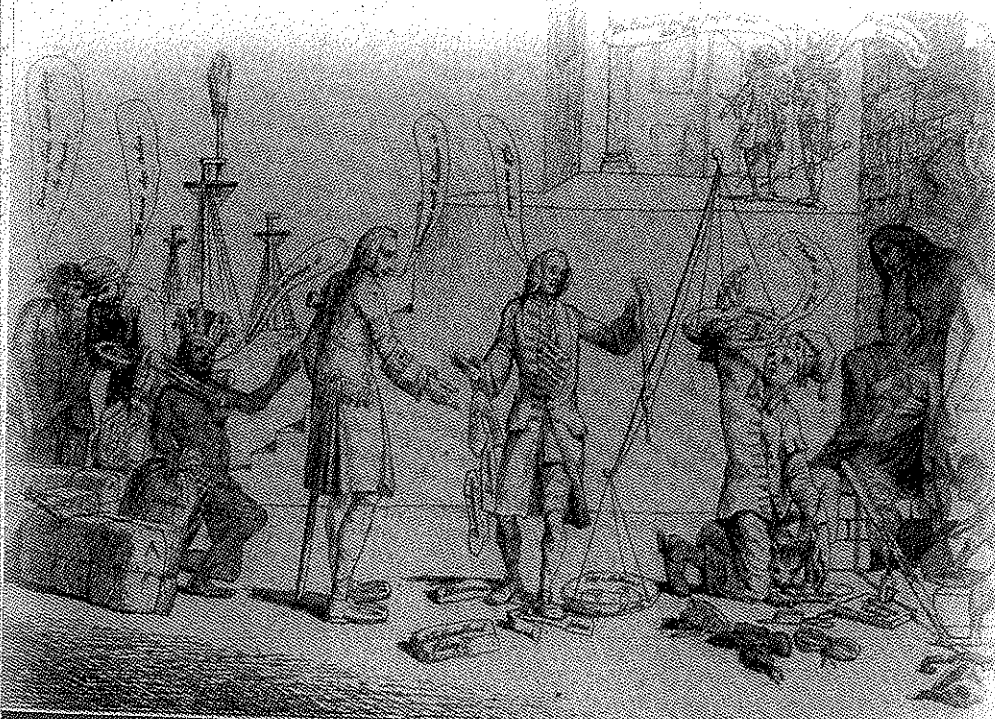
Sugar Act. It lowered the duties colonists had to pay on molasses, but taxed sugar and other goods imported to the colonies and increased penalties for smuggling. It also created new ways for enforcing compliance with these laws. Violators could be prosecuted in British vice-admiralty courts, which operated without jury trials. For some Americans the Sugar Act violated two long-held beliefs: the idea that colonists could not be taxed without their consent and the equally sacred notion that Englishmen were entitled to the right of trial by jury of their peers.

An outspoken critic of the new British policy was the Massachusetts lawyer James Otis, who attacked the Sugar Act as a violation of the rights of Englishmen. Otis had already achieved notoriety for his earlier opposition to the use of writs of assistance by customs officials. Otis insisted that under British law, one could only issue a search warrant for a specific premises where there was probable cause to suspect illegal activity. Rather than require that officials designate where they intended to search, the new general writs allowed customs officials to search any private property without first demonstrating probable cause or seeking the approval of a magistrate. In his pamphlet attacking the Sugar Act, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*, Otis denied that the British had the authority to tax the colonists without their consent. Otis stopped short of recommending active resistance to the Sugar Act. Rather he counseled patience, reminding his readers that we "must and ought to yield obedience to an act of Parliament, though erroneous, till repealed."

While Americans viewed the new tax on sugar and other imports as a burden and a violation of their rights, for the British, the taxes were a modest imposition necessary

4.1 The Great Financier

Prime Minister George Grenville holds a balance in which "Debts" far outweigh "Savings." Britannia, symbol of Great Britain, sits off to the right, forlorn. An Indian "princess," symbol of the American colonies, kneels with a yoke around her neck. The writing on the yoke declares "Taxed without representation."



Why is the scale in the cartoon, *The Great Financier*, out of balance?

“The very act of taxing exercised over those who are not represented appears to me to be depriving them of one of their most essential rights as freemen.”

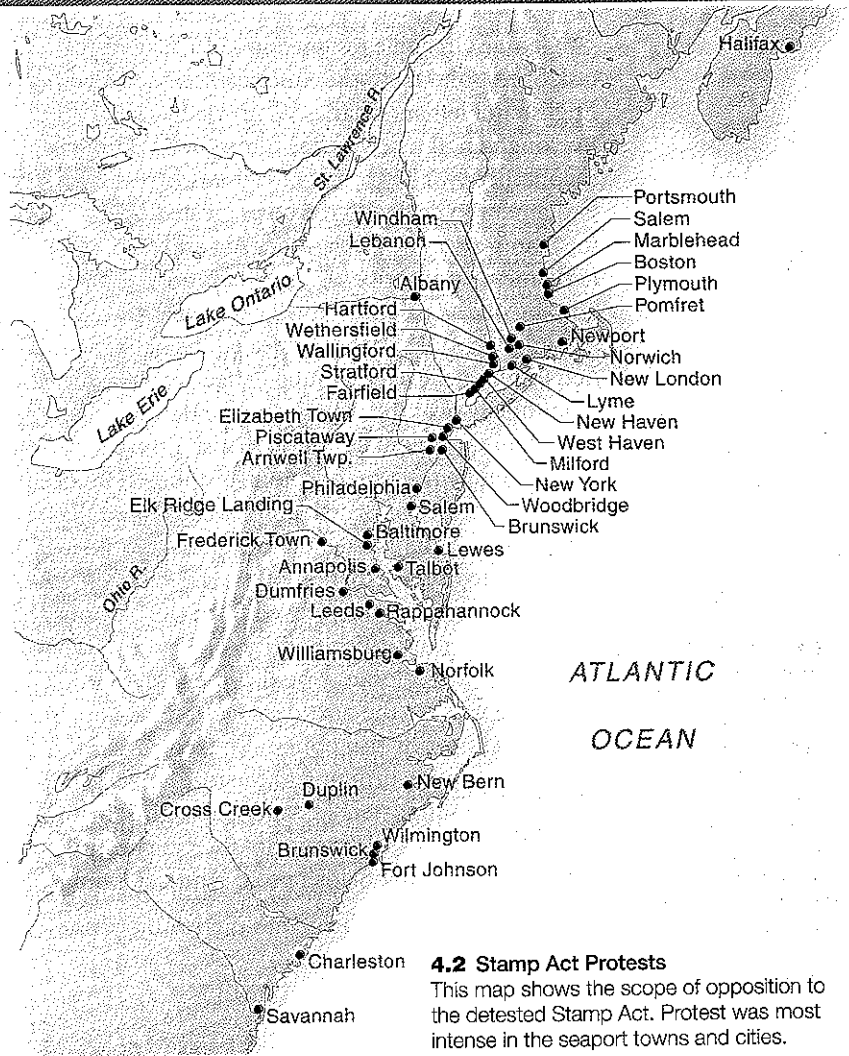
JAMES OTIS, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (1764)

to pay for the cost of eliminating the French from North America and administering the colonies. This political cartoon (4.1), which shows Grenville holding a balance in which “debts” clearly outweigh “savings,” shows Britain’s financial predicament. The British cartoonist who drew this obviously sympathized with Americans. He shows a Native American “princess,” the most common symbol of the colonies in British cartoons, carrying a sack of money and bearing a heavy yoke around her neck. Inscribed on the yoke is the colonists’ rallying cry: “No taxation without representation.”

The Stamp Act Crisis

Britain reacted to the colonists’ resistance to the Sugar Act by imposing yet another, much harsher tax. Grenville and Parliament enacted the Stamp Act, which required colonists to purchase special stamps and place them on all legal documents. Stamped paper was required for everything from newspapers to playing cards. A similar tax existed in Britain, and Parliament believed that requiring colonists to pay such a tax at a lower rate than their brethren in Britain was entirely reasonable. A growing number of colonists rejected this notion. For those opposed to the Stamp Act, taxation without consent was illegal.

Opposition was most intense in the seaport towns and cities; the map (4.2) shows how widespread anger against this latest tax was in the colonies. Stamps had to be affixed to virtually all legal transactions and most printed documents, so the new tax act alienated a much larger group of Americans than had any previous parliamentary tax. The British could hardly have picked a worse target for their new scheme of taxation. Among the colonists most burdened by the tax were lawyers and printers, two of the most vocal and influential groups in the colonies. Protests against the Stamp



4.2 Stamp Act Protests

This map shows the scope of opposition to the detested Stamp Act. Protest was most intense in the seaport towns and cities.

Act filled the pages of colonial newspapers and produced a spate of pamphlets defending colonial rights. The Massachusetts House of Representatives called on other colonial assemblies to send delegates to New York to frame a response to the Stamp Act crisis. Nine of the thirteen colonies sent a representative to the Stamp Act congress, and although framed in respectful terms, the “Declaration of the Rights and Grievances of the Colonies” was an important step toward articulating a common response to British policy, forcing representatives from different colonies to work together for a common goal.

Protest against this latest attack on American liberty was not limited to newspapers or legislative chambers. Opposition to the Stamp Act spilled out of doors into the streets of American cities and towns. Crowds of angry colonists attacked tax collectors and government officials. In a few cases crowds attacked the homes of British officials, including the home of the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson.

George Grenville resigned in 1765, leaving the task of responding to the American crisis to a young English nobleman, Charles Wentworth, Marquess of Rockingham, the new prime minister. Rockingham shepherded two key pieces of legislation through Parliament to deal with the crisis created by the Stamp Act. The Declaratory Act affirmed Parliament's authority to "make laws and statutes" binding on the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." The second piece of legislation repealed the hated Stamp Act. Britain believed that it had effectively reasserted its authority over the colonies, while removing the main cause of colonial protest. British officials misjudged the reaction of colonists opposed to recent policy. For critics of British policy, it appeared that Parliament had embarked on a path that would lead inevitably to the destruction of the colonists' liberty.

Colonial politics had moved from the margins to the very center of British politics. The issue of what to do about the colonies would come to define British politics for the next decade. In the colonies the conflict over British policy also transformed American politics, bringing to the fore a new group of aggressive supporters of American rights, including groups such as the Sons of Liberty, a group devoted to opposing British policy and defending American rights.

An Assault on Liberty

The resolution of the Stamp Act crisis did not eliminate Britain's pressing financial need for colonial revenue nor did it reduce colonial determination to resist further efforts to tax Americans. What little good will Britain's repeal of the Stamp Act generated, Britain quickly squandered as it renewed its efforts to impose a new set of taxes on the colonies. The Townshend Duties (1767), named for Charles Townshend, an ambitious government minister, levied new taxes on glass, paint, paper, and tea imported into the colonies. Townshend misinterpreted the Stamp Act protests. He believed that colonists opposed internal tax laws targeted at commerce within the colonies, but that Americans would accept external taxes such as customs duties that affected trade between the colonies and other parts of the British Empire. Again many Americans saw things differently.

The Townshend Duties prompted Americans to clarify their views on the issue of taxation. An important statement of American views came in Pennsylvania lawyer John Dickinson's pamphlet *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1767–1768).

Dickinson disputed Parliament's right to tax the colonists at all. Parliament could regulate trade among different parts of the empire, he acknowledged, but only the people's representatives could enact taxes designed primarily to raise revenues. Since Americans had no representation in Parliament, that institution could not tax them.

In response to the Townshend Duties, Americans began a **nonimportation movement**, an organized boycott against the purchase of any imported British goods. Women took an active role in the boycott movement, urging that instead of imported fabrics, women wear only clothes made from domestic homespun fabrics. The nonimportation movement offered American women a chance to contribute actively to the defense of American rights. It also raised women's political consciousness. As thirteen-year-old Anna Green Winslow wrote in her journal regarding the decision to abandon imported fabrics, "I am (as we say) a daughter of liberty, I chuse to wear as much of our manufactory as possible."

Another import, tea, had become the basis of an important social ritual in colonial society. In the context of the growing frustration with British policy, tea drinking took on new political significance. In 1774 Penelope Barker and a group of women in Edenton, North Carolina, organized a tea boycott. Word of the Edenton protest eventually reached England, where a British cartoonist lampooned its support for the American cause (4.3). This satire casts the Edenton women as a motley assortment of hags and harlots, whose unfeminine actions and neglect of their proper duties as women furnish evidence of their lack of virtue. The tea boycott even inspired nine-year-old Susan Boudinot, the daughter of a wealthy Philadelphia family, who demonstrated her solidarity with the colonial cause in her own way. When invited to tea at the home of the royal governor of New Jersey, Susan curtsied respectfully, raised her teacup to her lips, and then tossed the contents out of a nearby window.

The new duties imposed by the British were only one part of a new, more aggressive policy toward the colonies. Between 1765 and 1768 the British transferred the bulk of their military forces in America from the frontier and stationed them in the major seaport cities, sites of the most violent opposition to the Stamp Act. This decision increased the already tense situation in these localities. In 1768 the simmering tensions between colonists and the British government came to a head when British customs officials in Boston seized merchant John Hancock's ship *Liberty*. Customs officials



4.3 Patriotic Ladies of Edenton

This sarcastic British cartoon lampoons the efforts of American women to participate in the movement to boycott British imports. The artist's caricature shows the women as unfeminine and neglectful of their proper subordinate roles as wives and mothers. [Source: 'A Society of Patriotic Ladies at Edenton in North Carolina', Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Charles Allen Munn]

were indicted for murder, Boston's John Adams, a vocal critic of British policy, volunteered to defend the accused soldiers. Adams sought to demonstrate to the British that the Americans were not a lawless mob, but a law-abiding people. A gifted lawyer, Adams secured acquittals for all those accused except for two soldiers, who were convicted of the lesser crime of manslaughter. The evidence presented at the trial revealed that Revere's version of the event, while excellent propaganda, was not an accurate rendering of the circumstances.

4.4 Boston Massacre

Paul Revere's influential engraving of the Boston Massacre takes liberties with the facts to portray British actions in the worst possible light. The orderly arrangement of the troops and the stance of the officer at their side suggests that they acted under orders. Behind the troops, Revere has renamed the shop "Butcher's Hall."

had long suspected Hancock of smuggling and thought that seizing the *Liberty* would give them the proof they needed to prosecute him. The decision proved to be a serious blunder. The symbolic significance of the British assault on a ship named *Liberty* was not lost on Bostonians, who saw this as an assault on the idea of liberty itself. In response to the seizure of the *Liberty*, Bostonians rioted, driving customs officials from the town. To quell unrest in Boston, the British dispatched additional troops and warships to the area. By 1769 the British had stationed almost four thousand armed troops, dubbed redcoats because of their red uniforms, in a city with a population of roughly fifteen thousand.

Relations between residents of Boston and the occupying forces were tense. On March 5, 1770, a group of citizens taunted a group of soldiers and pelted them with snowballs. In the melee that followed, some of the soldiers opened fire on the crowd, killing five civilians. The Boston silversmith and engraver Paul Revere published a popular engraving of the Boston Massacre, as the confrontation came to be called, in which he portrayed the British as having deliberately fired on the unarmed crowd (4.4). Revere aligns the soldiers in a formal military pose, and portrays the commanders as giving an official order to fire. When the soldiers responsible for the shootings

The new taxes and pressure for compliance had stiffened the colonists' resistance. So although the British repealed most of the Townshend Duties in 1770, relations between the colonies and Britain remained strained. Colonists



How does Revere stage the events of the Boston Massacre to evoke sympathy for the colonists' cause?

continued to demand the traditional rights of Englishmen, such as trial by jury, but American protests had moved in a new direction, including the view that taxation without representation was a violation of fundamental rights. Resistance to British policy was also becoming more organized. The Sons of Liberty, created during the Stamp Act crisis, continued their criticism, but now they were joined by local committees that had formed during the protests against the Townshend Duties to coordinate and enforce boycotts.

After the repeal of the Townshend Duties, Americans enjoyed a brief respite from Parliament's attentions, as Britain turned its focus elsewhere in its far-flung empire, especially India. The temporary distraction of the British did not last long, however, and colonists soon faced another effort to tax them.

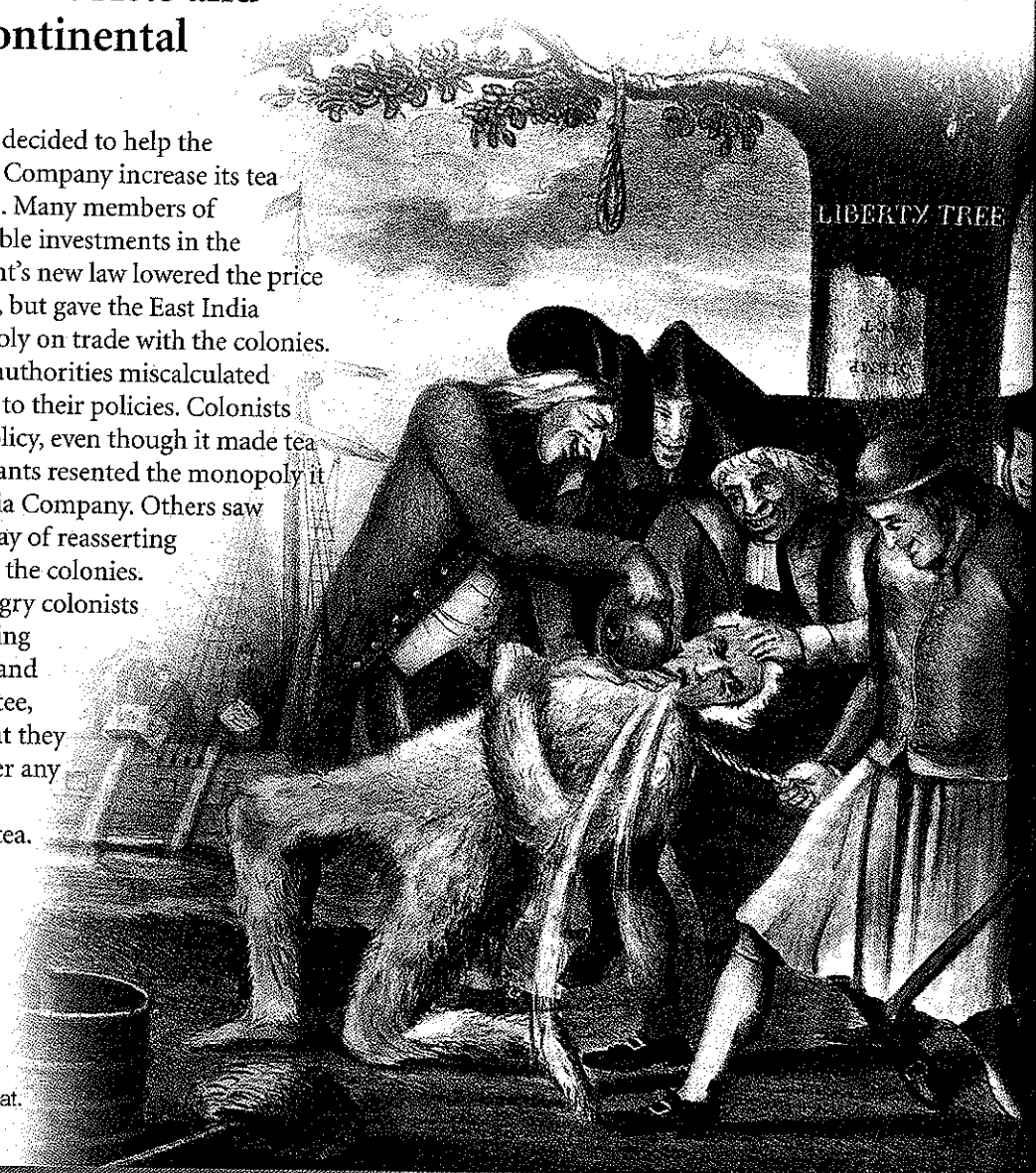
The Intolerable Acts and the First Continental Congress

In 1773 Parliament decided to help the fledgling East India Company increase its tea sales to the colonies. Many members of Parliament had sizable investments in the company. Parliament's new law lowered the price of tea to Americans, but gave the East India Company a monopoly on trade with the colonies. Once again British authorities miscalculated American reactions to their policies. Colonists resented the new policy, even though it made tea cheaper, and merchants resented the monopoly it gave to the East India Company. Others saw the act as a subtle way of reasserting Britain's right to tax the colonies.

One group of angry colonists in Philadelphia, calling themselves The Tar and Feathering Committee, issued a warning that they would tar and feather any ship's captain who landed with British tea.

The British found the colonists' actions thuggish. In this hostile British cartoon, *Bostonians Pay the Excise-Man* (4.5), a cruel-looking bunch of colonists force a British customs official, covered in tar and feathers, to drink British tea until he became sick. A painful form of public humiliation, tarring and feathering involved pouring hot tar onto the victim's skin and then attaching a coat of bird feathers to the molten tar.

The most dramatic response to the tea act occurred in December of 1773, when a group of Bostonians, dressed as Indians, boarded an English ship and tossed 90,000 pounds of tea into the harbor. To punish the colonists responsible for the Boston Tea Party, as the event was called, the British Parliament passed the Coercive Acts, known to colonists as the Intolerable Acts. This legislation closed the Port of Boston, annulled the Massachusetts colonial charter, dissolved or severely



4.5 *Bostonians Paying the Excise-Man*

In this pro-British cartoon, Bostonians appear as cruel thugs who have tarred and feathered the custom's official and are forcing tea down his throat.

Why did the Intolerable Acts seem to strike at the essence of colonists' liberty?



4.6 The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught

Paul Revere's engraving presents America as a partially clad Indian princess. Chief Judge Mansfield, a symbol of British law, holds America down. The Prime Minister, Lord North, shown with a copy of the Boston Port Bill, one of the Intolerable Acts, protruding from his pocket, forces tea down her throat.

restricted that colony's political institutions, and allowed the British to quarter (house) troops in private homes. (A generation later Americans adopted the Third Amendment to the Bill of Rights, which forbade quartering troops in civilian homes, a direct response to this detested British practice.) The acts also allowed British officials charged with capital crimes to be tried outside the colonies. Some colonists called the last provision the "Murder Act," since they feared it would allow soldiers charged with murder to avoid prosecution.

Americans were divided over how to respond to the Intolerable Acts. Some saw the Bostonians who dumped tea into the harbor as radicals whose actions besmirched Americans' reputation as law-abiding subjects of the king. Others expressed outrage at the British policy that had forced Bostonians to resort to such a dramatic protest. This cartoon, *The Able Doctor, Or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught* (4.6), casts Bostonians differently from the lawless ruffians depicted in *Bostonians Paying the Excise-Man* (4.5). Here the British prime minister brutally accosts America, a half-clad Indian princess, forcing tea down her throat, while Chief Justice Lord Mansfield, the symbol of British law, pins her arms down.

The most important consequence of the Intolerable Acts was the decision by the colonies

to convene a Continental Congress in Philadelphia during the fall of 1774. All the colonies except Georgia sent representatives. Among the colonial leaders who attended were Patrick Henry, John Adams, and George Washington. Congress endorsed the Resolves of Suffolk County, Massachusetts, which denounced the Intolerable Acts and asserted the intention of colonists to nullify such a manifest violation of their "rights and liberties." The Congress also adopted a resolution that recommended that every town, county, and city create a committee to enforce the boycott of British goods. The informal network of committees that had previously opposed British policy now acquired a quasi-legal status from Congress.

Although many Americans hoped that a peaceful solution to the deepening crisis was possible, in March of 1774, the brilliant Virginia orator Patrick Henry addressed his fellow delegates in the Virginia Assembly and urged them to prepare for the inevitable conflict that loomed between the colonies and Britain. Although no contemporaneous copy of this dramatic speech exists, Henry's words were recounted many years later, assuming almost legendary status in American culture. In response to British assaults on America liberty, Henry boldly declared, "Give Me Liberty—or give me death!"

“If we view the whole of the conduct of the [British] ministry and parliament, I do not see how any one can doubt but that there is a settled fix’d plan for enslaving the colonies, or bringing them under arbitrary government.”

Connecticut Minister, the Reverend EBENEZER BALDWIN, 1774

In the period between the passage of the Stamp Act in 1764 and the meeting of the First Continental Congress in 1774, relations between Britain and America had steadily deteriorated. As the chart (4.7) shows, Britain had tried a variety of types of revenue measures designed to raise funds from the colonies. Americans, however, remained resolutely opposed to taxation without representation. Rather than subdue the colonies, British policy only served to strengthen the resolve of Americans to defend their rights.

Lexington, Concord, and Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation

Living on the edge of the British Empire, colonists had come to depend on their own militias as their primary means of public defense. The laws of the individual colonies regulated these organizations of citizen soldiers. During the colonial period the militia was more than just a force available to protect the colonists from hostile Indians or protect them from possible attacks from French or Spanish forces. In an era before police forces, the militia also helped enforce public order, serving to put down riots, rebellions, and other civil disturbances. In January of 1775 Virginia’s George Mason foresaw the importance of the militia to the colonists’ struggle with Britain and called on the colonists to put their militia in good order. Mason declared that “a well regulated Militia, composed of gentlemen freeholders, and other free-man, is the natural strength and only stable security of a free Government.”

The British, too, understood the importance of the militia to colonial resistance. Not only did they pose a military threat, but they were also indispensable to helping mobilize Americans and organizing their opposition to British policy. Disarming the militias became a high priority for the British. Their first target was Massachusetts, which had become a hotbed of resistance; the British dispatched troops to Concord in April of 1775 to seize gunpowder and

other military supplies. Paul Revere, an outspoken member of the Sons of Liberty, was charged with riding from Boston to Lexington and Concord to warn citizens that British troops were on the march. Revere got as far as Lexington before a British patrol captured him. Fortunately for Revere he had already encountered another member of the Sons of Liberty that night, Dr. Samuel Prescott, who was returning from the home of his fiancée. Prescott agreed to carry word that British troops were on the march from Boston. The alarm spread throughout the countryside. When the seven hundred British regulars finally arrived at Lexington’s town green, they faced a determined force of sixty to seventy colonial militiamen. Although the militia agreed to disperse, someone, it is not clear who, fired a shot, and the two sides exchanged fire. The Battle of Lexington marked the first military conflict between Britain and America, and the colonists had demonstrated their mettle.

The British then marched on to Concord, where they confronted a larger and better organized detachment of colonial militia at the North Bridge in Concord. The militia stood their ground and exchanged fire with the British regulars, who were forced to retreat. While the British retreated back to Boston, colonial reinforcements poured into Concord and the surrounding countryside. The organized column of British troops marching back to Boston was an easy target for colonial militiamen, who took up positions along the roadside and in the adjacent woods. Before the end of the day, 273 British redcoats were dead and 95 members of the Massachusetts militia had been killed. A Rhode Island newspaper captured the views of those won over to the Patriot cause when it commented that British aggression marked the start of a “War which shall hereafter fill an important page in history.”

Although the British had mounted a direct assault on the Massachusetts militia, they opted for a stealthier plan for disarming the Virginia militia. Under cover of darkness a detachment of Royal

Marines entered Virginia's capital of Williamsburg, seized the gun powder, and destroyed the firing mechanisms on the muskets stored in the militia's magazine. When citizens of Williamsburg learned of the assault, they marched on the governor's mansion to protest. As word of the British raid spread throughout the colony, a group of militia led by Patrick Henry planned to march on Williamsburg. Lord Dunmore, the royal governor, warned that if the militia entered Williamsburg he would "declare freedom to slaves and reduce the city of Williamsburg to ashes." At the last moment a compromise was worked out, and the governor made restitution for the stolen powder and damaged guns. Still Dunmore's threat to free Virginia's slaves had sent a shockwave through the colony.

Two weeks later colonists learned of Lord Dunmore's Proclamation. Dunmore offered freedom

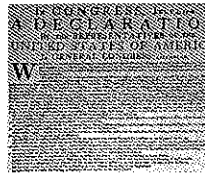
to any slave who joined the British forces in putting down the American rebellion. Within a month three hundred slaves had joined "Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment," whose ranks would swell to some eight hundred or more. The uniforms of this unit included a sash emblazoned with the motto "Liberty To Slaves." Virginians complained that the British were "using every Art to seduce the Negroes," while others viewed Dunmore's decision as "diabolical." Many Virginians who were wavering on the issue of American independence now concluded that a break with Britain was inevitable, even desirable. Some Virginians recognized that Virginia's slaves were seeking the very same liberty that colonists claimed. For example Lund Washington, who managed his cousin George's Mount Vernon estate, including his slaves, observed that "there is not a man of them but would leave us, if they could make their escape."

Date	Act	Policy	Consequences
1763	Proclamation of 1763	Prohibits colonists from moving westward	Intensifies problem of land scarcity in colonies
1764	Sugar Act	Reduces duty on molasses, but provides for more vigorous methods of enforcement	Colonials articulate theory that taxation without representation is a violation of "their most essential rights as freemen."
1765	Stamp Act	Documents and printed materials, including legal documents, newspapers, and playing cards must use special stamped paper	Riots in major urban areas, harassment of revenue officers, colonial representatives meet for Stamp Act Congress
1765	Quartering Act	Colonists must supply British troops with housing and firewood	Colonial Assemblies protest, New York punished for failure to comply with law
1766	Declaratory Act/Repeal of Stamp Act	Britain asserts its right to legislate for colonies in all cases/ Stamp Act repealed	Britain reasserts its authority, while removing the obnoxious provisions of the Stamp Act
1767	Townshend Acts	New duties placed on glass, lead, paper, paint	Non-importation movement gains ground
1773	Tea Act	Parliament gives East India Company monopoly, but duties on tea are reduced	90,000 pounds of tea tossed into Boston harbor
1774	Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts)	Port of Boston closed, town meetings restricted	First Continental Congress meets and other colonies express support for Bostonians
1775	Prohibitory Act	Britain declares intention to coerce Americans into submission	Continental Congress adopts a Declaration of Rights asserting American rights

4.7 British Policies and Colonial Response

Why did British regulars choose Concord as their military objective?

Patriots versus Loyalists



By 1775 the rift between Britain and the colonies had grown precipitously large. Indeed it was not just colonists who believed that if Britain continued on its present course it would end in disaster. A satirical British cartoon, *The Political Cartoon for the Year 1775* (4.8), published in London, vividly captured this view. It depicts King George III riding in a coach heading straight over a cliff. Chief Justice Lord Mansfield, a symbol of British law, holds the reins of the carriage of state, which rides roughshod over the Magna Carta—a text closely linked with the Rights of Englishmen—and the British Constitution, another symbol of liberty. The cartoonist's symbolism suggested a view that was becoming increasingly popular in the colonies: Americans could no longer expect the political and legal system of Britain to protect their liberty. Although some Americans were persuaded that England was intent on trampling on Americans' liberty, other colonists remained loyal to the crown. For Patriots it was becoming increasingly clear that they could no longer count on the legal protections that had safeguarded their liberty for generations. Loyalists, by contrast, disputed this claim. For those loyal to George III, liberty could only be maintained by upholding English law. Loyalists viewed Patriots' actions as examples of lawlessness, not affirmations of liberty.

The Battle of Bunker Hill

Two months after Lexington and Concord, the two sides clashed again in Charlestown, across the Charles River from Boston. American forces had dug in at Bunker Hill and nearby Breeds Hill, prepared to hold off the British forces in Boston. The main fighting actually took place at Breeds Hill, which was closer to the harbor. The British underestimated the colonists' resolve to hold their ground. Although the British took Bunker Hill, they had purchased their

casualties: 226 dead and more than 800 wounded. Americans suffered 140 dead and 271 wounded. Even more important, Americans had shown the British that they were not the “untrained rabble” the British had portrayed them as and that they could become a formidable fighting force. The painter John Trumbull immortalized the battle in his painting *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill*. For a discussion of this painting and how it reflected the realities of a battle in which neither side won a clear victory, see *Images as*

4.8 The Political Cartoon for the Year 1775

George III rides next to Chief Judge Lord Mansfield in a carriage heading toward the edge of a cliff. The carriage crushes the Magna Carta and the British Constitution, symbols of the rule of law, while flames engulf Boston in the background.



What does *The Political Cartoon for the Year 1775* reveal about the nature of relations between the colonies and Britain?

Despite the armed confrontations at Lexington, Concord, and then Bunker Hill, the Continental Congress had not abandoned hope of reconciliation with King George III. In July of 1775 Congress drafted the "Olive Branch" petition, asking George III to intervene on their behalf. The king rejected the American appeal. With that rejection the time for reconciliation had now passed, and the supporters of American independence in the Continental Congress gained momentum. The push for independence in turn opened up a division within colonial society between colonists who supported independence and those who remained loyal to the British.

Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence

In January of 1776 a recent immigrant to America from England wrote a pamphlet that argued forcefully for American independence. In *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine not only attacked recent British policy, he framed a stinging indictment of monarchy, and defended a democratic theory of representative government. After stating the "simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense" of the matter, Paine concluded that separation from Britain was the only course of action that made any sense for America. Paine's work was printed in a cheap format that allowed artisans, farmers, and others with little money to purchase a copy. He wrote in plain, forceful prose, avoiding literary and classical allusions that would have required knowledge of Latin. The book was a phenomenal publishing success. Paine boasted that as many as 150,000 copies of *Common Sense* were printed, but recent scholarship puts the figure closer to half that number. Still, given that few books sold more than 50,000, Paine's pamphlet popularity was impressive.

Common Sense did more than simply fuel Americans' desire for independence; it helped change the framework in which Americans thought about politics itself. Before Paine's pamphlet most Americans, even those who believed that reconciliation with Britain was impossible, still maintained a respectful attitude toward George III. Most Americans had grown up in a culture that venerated constitutional monarchy, but Paine's savage critique of this institution had a liberating impact. Paine ridiculed monarchy as "ridiculous." After demonstrating that history proved that monarchy was incompatible with liberty, Paine turned to the current British monarch George III,

whom he equated with savagery itself. He denounced the king for his repeated assaults on American liberty, noting that "even brutes do not devour their young." Those who supported reconciliation with Britain found Paine's scathing attacks on George III simply appalling. Paine also gave a voice to many who wished to radically transform American political life. He was unabashedly democratic at a time when many, including

**"There is something absurd
in supposing a Continent
to be perpetually
governed by an island."**

THOMAS PAINE,
Common Sense 1776

those most eager to separate from Britain, viewed simple democracy as a danger to be avoided at all cost. *Common Sense* became a blueprint for those who wished to experiment with democratic forms of government, although not everyone who ardently supported American independence appreciated Paine's democratic ideas.

In July of 1775, a month after Congress drafted the "Olive Branch Petition," pleading with George III to abandon the "cruel" policies of his ministers and "such statutes" as "immediately distress" the colonists, the king declared that the American colonists were "in open and avowed rebellion." The Prohibitory Act, which the British Parliament enacted into law at the very end of December 1775, imposed a complete ban on all trade with the thirteen colonies. Word of the ban, Parliament's most recent effort to subdue the colonists, arrived in America in February 1776. Coming on the heels of Paine's indictment of British tyranny, the policy further inflamed American resentments against Britain.

In the months after the adoption of the Prohibitory Act, support for independence gained ground. In May Congress instructed the individual colonies "to adopt such Government as shall, in the Opinion of the Representatives of the People, best conduce to the Happiness and Safety of their Constituents." Congress added a preamble five days later that affirmed "the exercise of every kind of authority under the said crown should be totally suppressed." Although Congress had not formally

Images as History

TRUMBULL'S *THE DEATH OF GENERAL WARREN AT THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL*

American John Trumbull's painting *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill* (1786), painted eleven years after the battle, captured an important moment in the American war for independence. Like Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* (see page 90), Trumbull's painting depicts the heroic death of a military figure, but the two paintings differ in a number of fascinating ways. While *The Death of General Wolfe* portrayed a clear victory for the British, *The Death of General Warren* showed a more complex event in which neither side was completely victorious. While the Americans lost the battle, they proved themselves an effective fighting force and exacted a high price from the British for their victory. How did Trumbull's composition reflect the realities of this battle, a struggle in which neither side won a clear victory?

Trumbull's painting *The Death of General Warren* was part of a series of paintings he began to commemorate the "great events of our country's revolution." The artist intended to use his painting as the basis for a set of engravings that he could sell as cheap prints to a popular market on both sides of the Atlantic. With this in mind Trumbull captured the chaotic horror of a battle scene in which both armies displayed heroism and nobility. The American General Warren lies mortally wounded, cradled in the arms of one of his troops, in the same pose in which Benjamin West portrayed British General Wolfe.

One element of the painting meant to appeal to British viewers is the depiction of British Major John Small in the center of the composition near Warren. Small stays the hand of one of his infantrymen poised to bayonet the dying Warren. By placing these two noble gestures—Warren's sacrifice and Small's humanitarian intervention—at the center of the painting, Trumbull shifts attention away from the actual outcome of the battle to the idea that virtuous men on both sides

performed noble deeds. This decision enhanced the moral complexity of the events while also making it and later engravings based on it attractive to British and American customers—effectively doubling the size of his potential market.

Trumbull's canvas also advanced the democratization of art begun by Benjamin West. In this painting virtue resides neither in one nation nor in any particular class of men. Trumbull portrays a broad range of soldiers heroically—from a gentlemanly British officer to a barefoot colonial soldier. Indeed Abigail Adams, an outspoken supporter of American independence and the wife of the prominent politician John Adams, noted that Trumbull "teaches mankind that it is not rank nor titles, but character alone, which interests posterity."

Trumbull all but ignored African Americans, consigning the two he did include to minor roles in the painting. Trumbull described the African American standing in the lower right corner behind an injured colonial officer as a "faithful negro." At least fourteen African Americans were among the troops defending Breeds Hill and Bunker Hill. The African American Peter Salem played an important

The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill



role in the actual battle, perhaps firing the shot that killed Major Pitcairn, the British figure collapsing near the center of the painting. The painting's slighting of that role probably reflected Trumbull's own racial ideas and those of his audience, who were not used to seeing African Americans depicted in anything but a

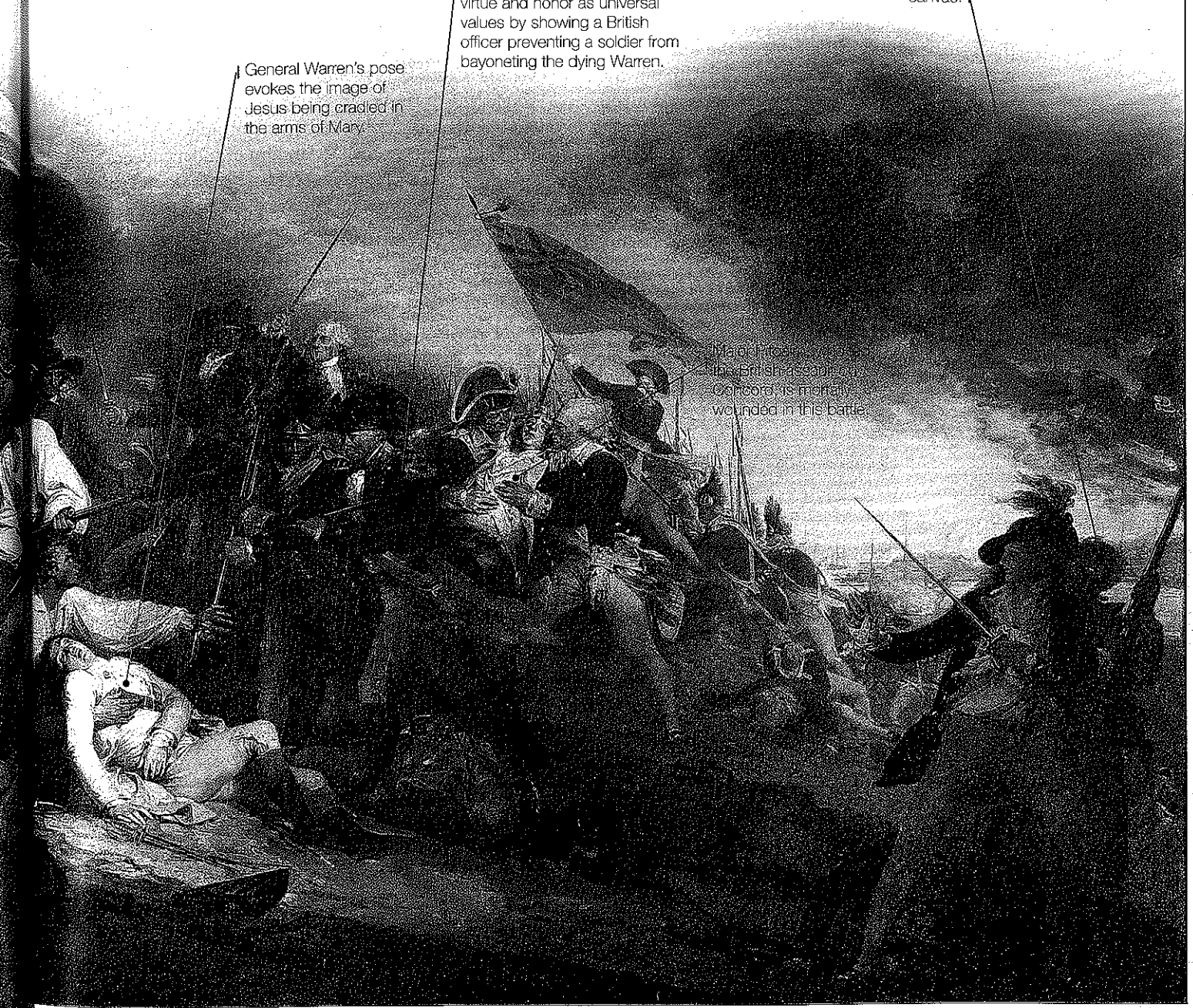
subservient role. For the moment the democratization of art was restricted to those of European descent. African Americans' treatment in American art mirrored their marginalization in the larger society.

Rather than portray an African American as heroic, Warren marginalizes this figure, literally placing him in the shadow of a white officer at the end of the canvas.

General Warren's pose evokes the image of Jesus being cradled in the arms of Mary.

Trumbull highlights the idea of virtue and honor as universal values by showing a British officer preventing a soldier from bayoneting the dying Warren.

Major Pitcairn, the British leader of the Loyalists, is mortally wounded in this battle.



What does Trumbull's portrayal of African Americans tell us about his views and those of his likely audiences?

declared independence from Britain, it had effectively asserted that the colonies had become independent states no longer under the authority of Parliament or the king.

On the very same day, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced his resolution that “these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states.” Congress then debated the Lee resolution and on June 11, 1776, appointed a committee to draft a formal declaration of independence. With John Adams (Massachusetts) as its chair, the committee included Robert Livingston (New York), Thomas Jefferson (Virginia), Roger Sherman (Connecticut), and Benjamin Franklin (Pennsylvania). Adams designated Jefferson to take the lead in drafting the formal resolution. On June 28 the committee presented the congressional delegates with the draft. Congress cut about a quarter of the text and made some minor revisions to the document. On July 4, 1776, Congress approved the final text of the

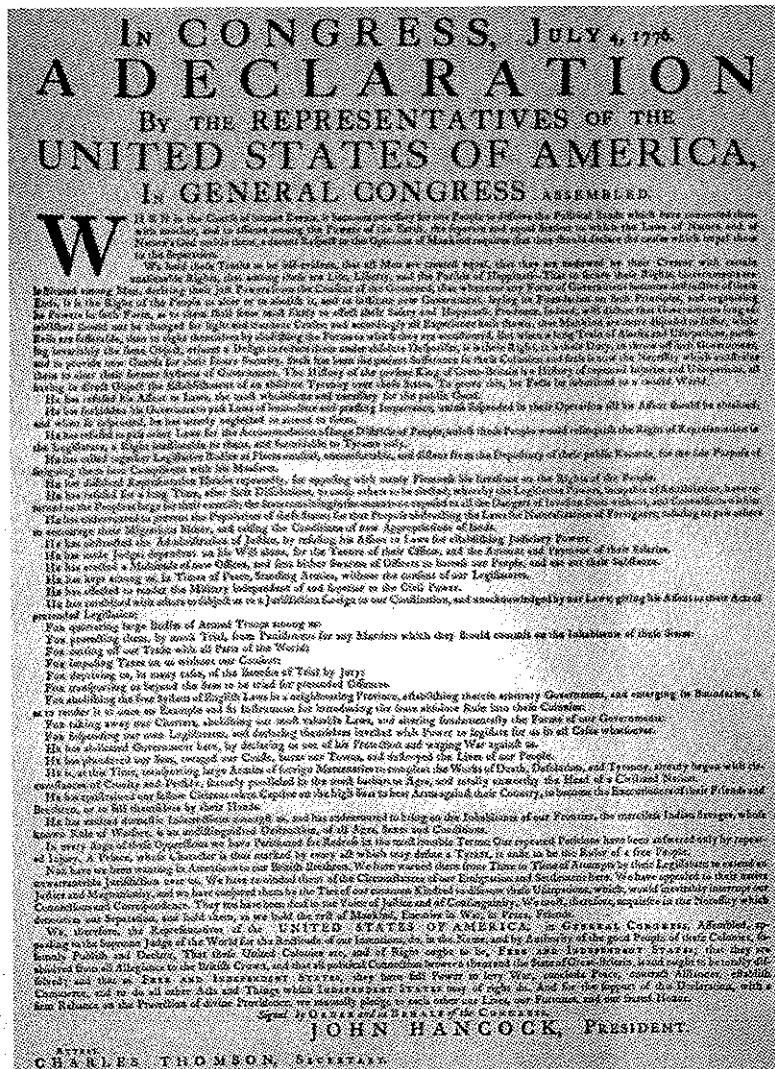
Declaration of Independence, a public defense of America’s decision to declare independence from Britain that was to be printed and sent to the individual states. Congress ordered copies of the declaration, which were then widely distributed.

Thomas Jefferson, the primary architect of the declaration, admitted that his text reflected the “sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation or letters, printed essays.” The introductory paragraph explained the reasons for separating from Britain. The second paragraph provided a powerful defense of the ideas of liberty and equality and affirmed that “all men are created Equal.” The Declaration asserted that all men were therefore entitled to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” A long list of grievances against King George III took up the bulk of the text. Printed as a single broadside, the indented list of charges against George III was immediately recognizable (4.9).

The drafters of the Declaration of Independence aimed it at both a domestic and a foreign audience. It made the case for independence to the American people and announced to the British government the reasons for taking up arms against it. The declaration also sought to help the cause of American diplomacy. If America were to fight a war against the most powerful nation on earth, it would need help from other European powers, such as Holland and Britain’s long-time rival, France. Because a powerful monarch then ruled France, the language of the declaration refrained from using the inflammatory antimonarchical rhetoric favored by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*. George III’s misdeeds, not monarchy itself, were to blame for America’s demand for independence.

The Plight of the Loyalists

The division between Patriots, colonists who supported American independence, and Loyalists, those wishing to remain loyal to the king, drove a deep wedge in colonial society. John Adams speculated that



4.9 The Declaration of Independence
The Declaration of Independence was printed as a broadside. This single-sheet format made it easy to post in public places. The layout of the Declaration—the typography and paragraphing—guides the reader through the main parts of its argument.

What audiences did the Declaration of Independence address?

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Declaration of Independence, 1776

Americans were evenly divided among Patriots, Loyalists, and those striving to remain neutral. Although it is difficult to establish hard figures for how colonists divided on the issue of independence, historians estimate that Patriots constituted about 40 percent of the population, neutrals another 40 percent, and Loyalists probably about 20 percent.

Many prominent Loyalists had openly opposed British policy toward the colony, but refused to accept the decision for independence. Minister Samuel Seabury captured the view of many Loyalists when he wrote: “To talk of a colony independent of the mother-country, is no better sense than to talk of a limb independent of the body to which it belongs.” The image of the dismemberment of the empire was a powerful one in the minds of colonials and Britons alike. At the start of the 1760s, supporters of American rights had used such images to try to persuade Britain to change its policy toward the colonies. At the time Benjamin Franklin was working as a colonial lobbyist in England, working for repeal of British taxes. He designed an engraving, *The Colonies Reduced*, to appeal to Parliament, evoking the horror of a possible separation between the colonists and the mother country (4.10). Seabury’s reassertion of the horrors that would follow from the dismemberment of the empire tapped into a powerful set of fears and anxieties among Americans unsure about the question of independence.

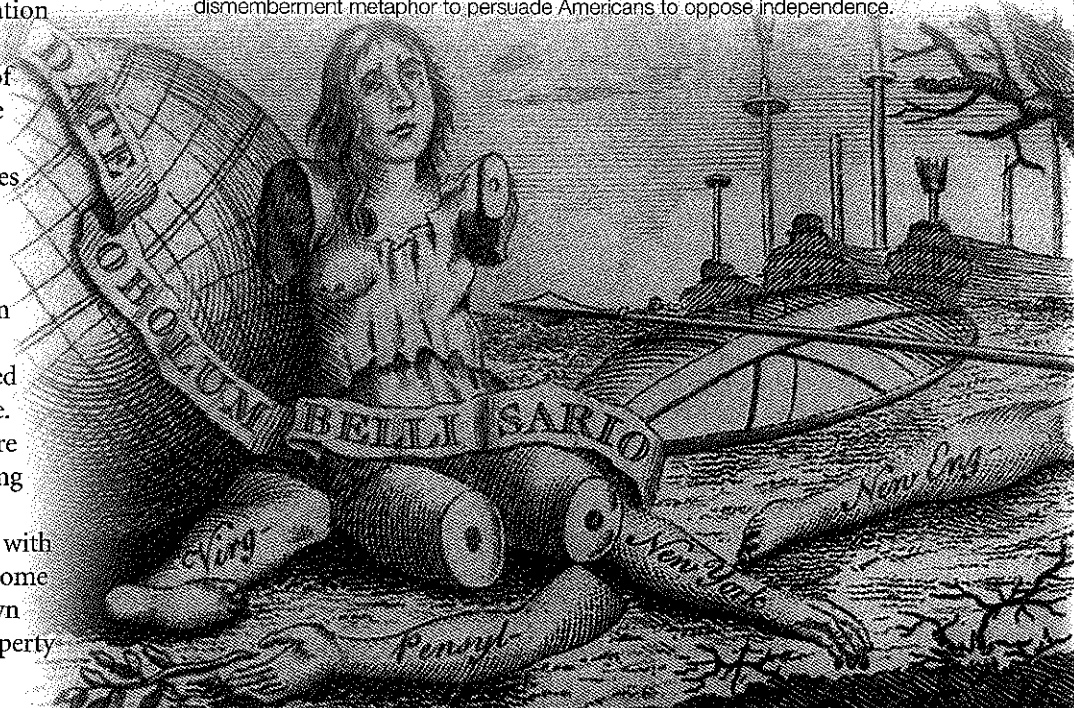
Loyalists suffered many hardships during the struggle for independence. In some places where Patriot feelings were strongest, individuals could be ostracized for refusing to support the Patriot cause. They were excluded from juries and were disarmed. Many states passed laws seizing Loyalist property. A complicated issue arising from these laws was how to deal with women married to Loyalist husbands. Some women brought property from their own family into their marriage. Was this property

also liable to confiscation? The story of Grace Gowden Galloway illustrates the rapid reversal of fortune that could befall anyone who opposed the Patriots’ side in the American Revolution. For the story of her struggle, see *Choices and Consequences: A Loyalist Wife’s Dilemma* (page 112).

The Loyalist cause appealed to many Americans, not just wealthy men and women like Grace and Joseph Galloway. New York boasted a sizeable Loyalist population, as did parts of the southern backcountry in the Carolinas. A number of religious sects, particularly groups such as the Quakers who were pacifists, opposed the violence of war. Beginning with Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, many slaves had sensed that a British victory, not independence, offered them the best chance for freedom. Historians estimate that as many as 100,000 slaves freed themselves by running away during the dislocation created by the war with Britain.

4.10 *The Colonies Reduced*

This image created by Benjamin Franklin plays on the idea of the dismemberment of the empire as a development fatal to both the colonies and the mother country. Franklin used this image early in America’s opposition to British policy. Loyalists later used the dismemberment metaphor to persuade Americans to oppose independence.



How did the metaphor of dismemberment influence Loyalist thought?

Choices and Consequences

A LOYALIST WIFE'S DILEMMA

Before the struggle for independence, Grace Gowden Galloway stood at the apex of Philadelphia society. Her husband, Joseph Galloway, was both wealthy and influential in Pennsylvania politics. Throughout the escalating conflict with Britain, Joseph Galloway supported reconciliation, and when war broke out, he became a Loyalist. Realizing that he could no longer count on the goodwill of his former friends and neighbors to protect him, Galloway and his daughter fled Philadelphia—perhaps the most ardent Patriot city outside of New England—for the safety of British-controlled New York in 1776. The government of Pennsylvania confiscated Galloway's estates and property, but Grace Galloway was determined to protect the property she had inherited from her own family and had brought into her marriage. She faced a difficult set of choices about what to do about her property:

Choices

- 1 Follow her husband and daughter into exile, accepting that neither she nor her husband would probably ever recover their property.
- 2 Follow her husband and daughter into exile and use every legal means available to prevent the confiscation of her property and fight an uphill battle to protect her property from afar.
- 3 Stay in Philadelphia and use every legal option to protect the properties that she had brought into her marriage before marrying Joseph Galloway.

Continuing Controversies

What does Grace Gowden Galloway's plight reveal about the situation of Loyalists during the American Revolution?

The legal status of the property of a woman married to a Loyalist was complicated. This issue came before American courts in *Martin v. Commonwealth* (1805). Building on a new conception of women as independent political actors, the state of Massachusetts claimed that a woman's choice to stay or flee was hers alone. The Massachusetts high court, however, disagreed with this new view of women's legal autonomy. The court held that the woman's decision to leave the state had been her husband's, not her own, and therefore the state did not have the right to seize her land. Although a defeat for women's rights, the outcome of the case would have certainly pleased Grace Gowden Galloway.

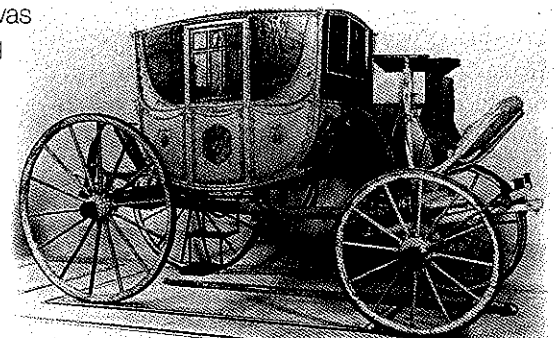
Decision

Grace chose to stay and fight. She hoped that by remaining in her home she could avoid eviction. She also concluded that the chances of defending her own property against confiscation would be easier if she stayed in Philadelphia.

Consequences

Grace courageously endured great hardship while defending her rights but was ultimately evicted. Snubbed and shunned by many of her former friends and acquaintances, and driven from her home, she lived in a modest set of rented rooms. In her diary Grace recounts her struggles and the indignities she suffered, including the time she "saw My own Chariot standing at my door for the Use of others while I am forced to Walk." She never rejoined her family and died alone in 1781. Although evicted from her home, she was more successful at protecting the property she had brought into the marriage, which eventually passed on to her descendents.

Eighteenth-century coach



America at War



Britain had good reason to be confident at the start of the war in the summer of 1776. Britain's navy was the most powerful in the world and its army formidable. The population of the British Isles was more than four times greater than that of the colonies. America began the war effort with only a citizen's militia. Fighting against the most powerful army in the world meant

that America would have to create a professional fighting force. Congress appointed George Washington the commander of the newly formed Continental Army.

Although Britain's population was much larger than that of the colonies, the relative size of the two armies in the field was not that lopsided. Over the course of the war, around 250,000 Americans served at one time or another, but the size of the American armed forces on the ground, including regulars and militia, never exceeded roughly ninety thousand troops. British forces, which included thirty thousand German Hessian mercenaries, never topped sixty thousand. Even if the British were able to defeat the American armed forces in the field and gain control of all of America's urban centers, conquering and pacifying the entire American continent would be a virtually impossible task. The British also never grasped that they were fighting a new type of war: not a struggle against another European power, but a battle against a decentralized independence movement.

The War in the North

Stiff colonial resistance at Breeds Hill and Bunker Hill had convinced the British military that the colonial militias were not an undisciplined rabble that would retreat if confronted by a well-trained professional army. The creation of a Continental Army under the leadership of George Washington underscored this fact and led the British to change their tactics. Rather than employing the army to subdue a rebel population, the British prepared for a sustained military conflict. Realizing that Patriot sympathies in New England were strongest, the British retreated to New York, a colony with a large Loyalist population. New York not only provided a safer base of operations, but the British also believed that if they could hold New York they would effectively cut New England off from the rest of America.

Although determined to defend New York against British attack, Washington suffered a decisive defeat at Brooklyn Heights in August of 1776. Washington retreated to Manhattan, but British Major General Sir William Howe soon drove his forces from New York. Retreating south through New Jersey, Washington eventually crossed the Delaware River and set up a winter base at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. During the winter, however, Washington's ranks, which had swelled with militiamen, dwindled as many militiamen simply returned home. These citizen soldiers had repulsed the immediate threat. They would also

effectively protect the American countryside and prevent Loyalist pockets from forming outside of British-controlled territory, but they were ill suited to sustained battle. Washington lamented their unpredictable coming and going: "come in, you cannot tell how" and "go, you cannot tell when, and act you cannot tell where." The militia's lack of discipline and of long-term commitment to fight was a constant source of frustration to Washington and other American military leaders. Still the militia remained vital, contributing both to the military and to the political success of the war effort.

Washington's retreat dealt a devastating blow to American morale. Indeed the winter encampment at Valley Forge marked the low point of American confidence in the war. Writing in his essay *The American Crisis*, Thomas Paine desperately tried to inspire Americans to continue the war effort, reminding them that "These are the times that try men's souls." Believing that he had decisively defeated Washington, an overconfident General Howe established his base camp in New York City and planned to enjoy the winter holiday festivities.

Realizing that America desperately needed a victory, Washington took a bold gamble and launched a surprise attack on Christmas night 1776. Leading his soldiers across the partially frozen Delaware River under cover of darkness, he attacked a British outpost manned by German mercenaries stationed at Trenton. Winning a victory at Trenton, Washington struck out a week later

“The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot, will in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW deserves the love and thanks of men and women.”

THOMAS PAINE, *The American Crisis* (1780)

4.11 Washington at the Battle of Princeton

In this painting the officer behind Washington is posed in the same position as General Wolfe and General Warren. Washington, by contrast, stands firm, a symbol of the virtuous new republic that rises from the noble sacrifice depicted in the background.

[Reproduced with permission of the Minor White Archive, Princeton University Art Museum. Copyright © The Trustees of Princeton University]

with another daring attack and victory at Princeton. General Howe had squandered his early advantage and allowed Washington time to regroup and score two important victories. Washington shrewdly abandoned his early strategy of fighting a conventional war against the British. He now realized that his primary goal was to wear down his opponents and avoid a decisive loss in the field. Such a strategy played to America's natural advantages and would eventually force the British to accept that they could not conquer America. To commemorate Washington's victory at Princeton, the trustees of Princeton College commissioned the eminent American painter Charles Wilson Peale to paint Washington at the Battle of Princeton (4.11). The portrait replaced a painting of George III, damaged during the battle when a cannonball removed the king's head.

The next major turning point in the Northern field came at Saratoga in the fall of 1777. A British army under the command of General John Burgoyne marched south from Canada. Burgoyne hoped to join forces with British forces under the leadership of General Major John Howe from New York. Their goal was to divide New England from the rest of the colonies. But an American force under the leadership of

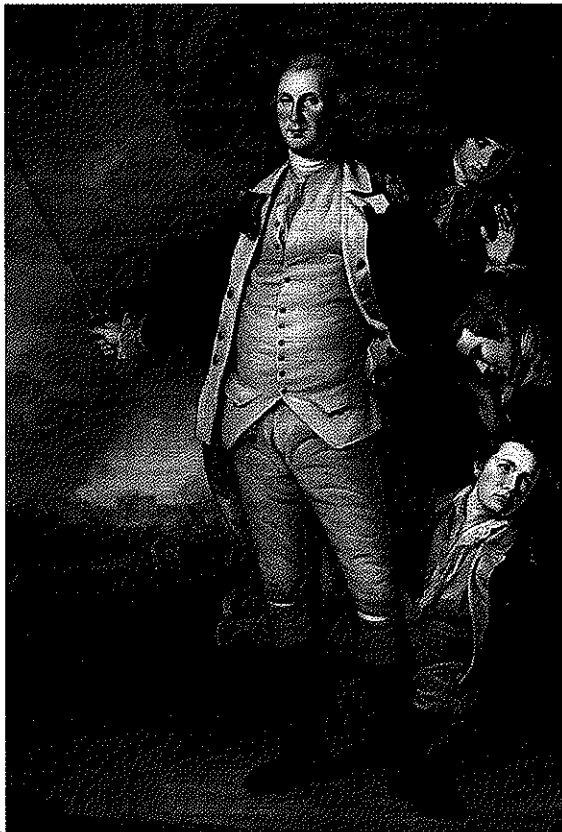
General Horatio Gates defeated Burgoyne at Saratoga, in upstate New York (4.12). In addition to providing Americans with an important victory and morale boost, the British defeat at Saratoga persuaded the French to commit troops and naval forces to aid the colonists.

The active entry of France in the war changed the dynamics of the conflict. Rather than simply providing some resources, France was now fully committed to helping America win independence. In 1778 France and America signed a treaty promising to fight until American independence was secured. Spain soon joined France as an opponent of Britain. Within two years Britain declared war on Holland, which had become an important source of arms and other supplies for the American war effort. The great European powers were now at war. What had begun as a colonial war for independence fought exclusively in North America had mushroomed into a global conflict involving the Mediterranean, Africa, India, and the Caribbean. The wealthy sugar islands of the Caribbean were at risk from French attack. Britain had to divert important resources from the war effort in North America to protect these possessions. Fighting a war on multiple fronts drained British resources.

The Southern Campaigns and Final Victory at Yorktown

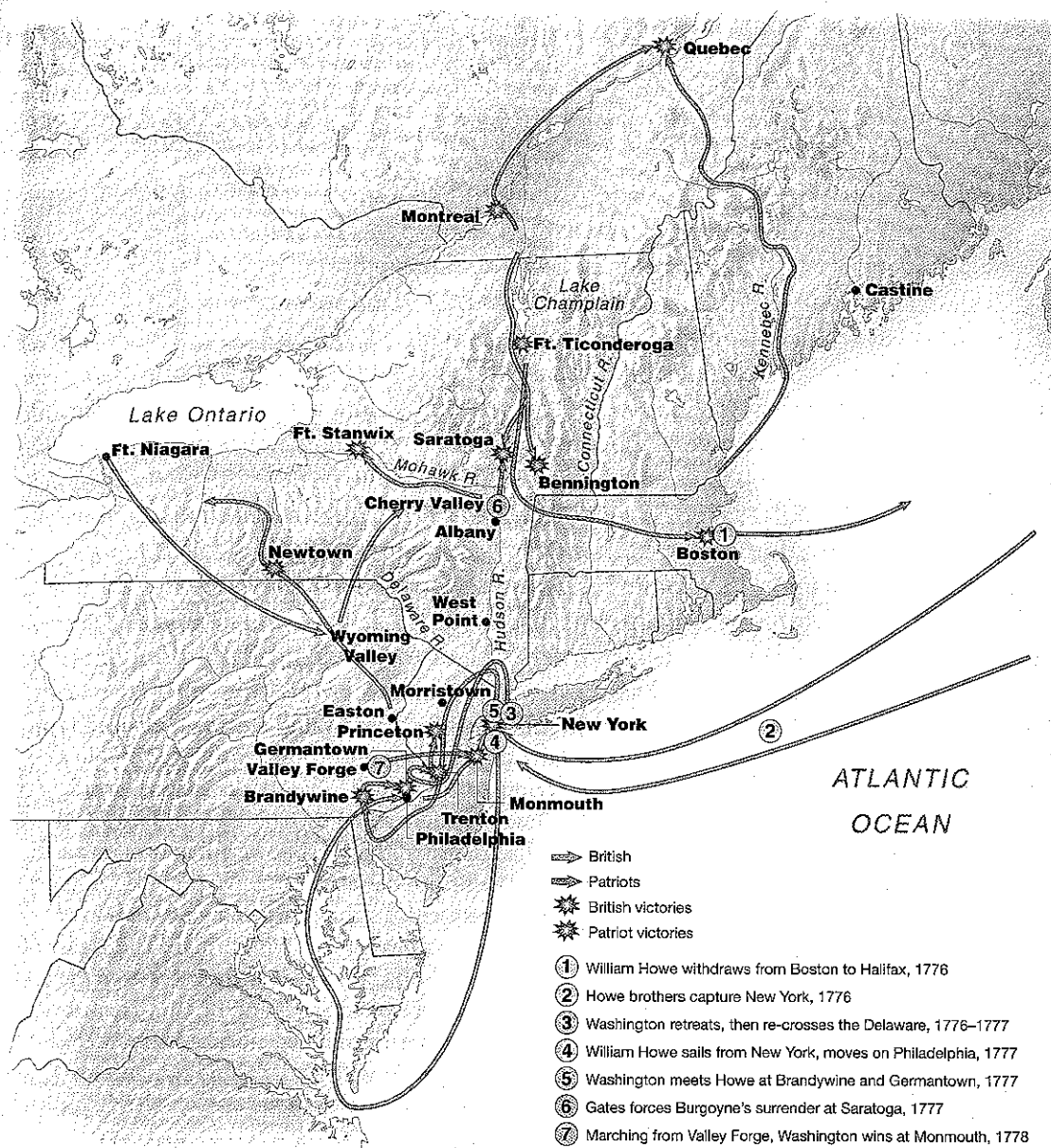
The British believed that Loyalist sympathies were greatest in the colonial South. They also saw the South, with its cash crops of tobacco, indigo, and rice, as more valuable economically than the North. Initially the British strategy seemed to pay off. British troops scored impressive victories at Savannah (Georgia), Charleston (South Carolina), and Camden (South Carolina). But still they failed to consolidate their power in the region. The colonial militias played a pivotal role, harassing Loyalists and promoting the Patriot cause. The British were especially vulnerable to hit-and-run operations by commanders such as South Carolina's Francis Marion. Nicknamed the “swamp fox” by his frustrated opponents, Marion would appear out of nowhere, attack and retreat, and then disappear into the swamps before the British could retaliate.

The course of the war in the South changed dramatically in 1781 when General Nathaniel Greene and General Daniel Morgan scored a major defeat against the British forces under Lord Cornwallis at Cowpens (South Carolina). American



4.12 Northern Campaigns

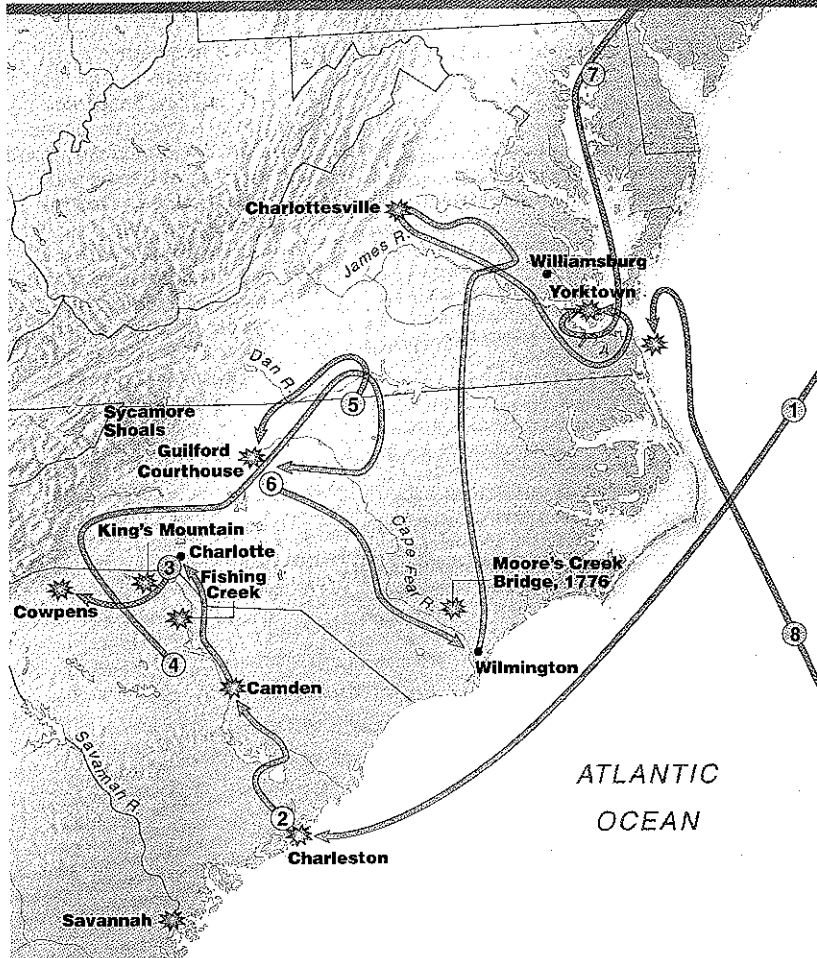
Although the British won important victories around New York City, Washington's triumphs at Trenton and Princeton helped restore American morale. The turning point in the war in the North, however, was the defeat of the British at Saratoga, which helped persuade the French to increase their support for the American cause.



forces also inflicted heavy losses at Guilford Court House (North Carolina) in 1781. Cornwallis retreated to Virginia and established a well-fortified base at Yorktown in the winter of 1781 (4.13).

Cornwallis's retreat to Yorktown proved to be a strategic blunder for the British that Washington quickly turned to America's advantage. Before Saratoga the French had not committed major naval resources to the American cause, and America's own small navy was no match for the superior British fleet. With their naval superiority the British were confident that the retreat to Yorktown made strategic sense. With the guns of the British navy at their disposal, and new supplies, Yorktown seemed like a good strategic location to regroup.

But things went awry for the British when, early in the fall of 1781, the French dispatched a formidable fleet under the command of Admiral Paul de Grasse from the Caribbean to help the American cause. With the French navy supporting the Americans, the balance of power at sea shifted, giving the Americans a naval advantage. Washington seized the opportunity, ordering French forces under the Marquis de Lafayette and the Comte de Rochambeau to join American troops in an assault on Yorktown. With support from de Grasse's navy, the Americans and French trapped Cornwallis in Yorktown. Although French support was indispensable, this fanciful French image of the victory at Yorktown, drawn by a French artist, portrays this



4.13 Southern Campaigns

Although the British scored impressive victories early in the South, especially at Charleston, American forces recovered and forced Cornwallis to retreat to Virginia. Cornwallis's move proved to be a strategic error, since it allowed the French fleet to cut off Cornwallis and enabled Washington to trap the British at Yorktown.

- ➡ British
- ➡ Patriots
- ★ British victories
- ★ Patriot victories

- ① Clinton and Cornwallis force surrender of Charleston, May 1780
- ② Cornwallis bests Gates at Camden and moves north, August 1780
- ③ Morgan meets British at Cowpens, defeats Tarleton, January 1781
- ④ Cornwallis pursues Greene's army across the Dan River, February 1781
- ⑤ Greene confronts Cornwallis at Guilford Courthouse, March 1781
- ⑥ After a retreat to Wilmington, Cornwallis moves to Virginia, April 1781
- ⑦ Washington moves south, pins Cornwallis at Yorktown, August 1781
- ⑧ French Admiral De Grasse from West Indies, defeats the British fleet, September 1781

subordinate of Cornwallis. During the negotiation of the surrender, British musicians played an old popular tune called "The World Turned Upside Down." America had turned the world upside down: It had defeated the most powerful nation on earth.

The British defeat at Yorktown provided American diplomats with a strong bargaining position in negotiating a peace treaty with Britain. The Treaty of Paris (1783) officially ended the war between the newly created United States and Britain. The treaty recognized American independence, acknowledged America's border with Canada, and recognized American fishing rights in the area off Newfoundland.

historic moment as though the Americans hardly figured in it at all (4.14).
 Outnumbered and with his land and sea escapes cut off, Cornwallis decided that he had no alternative but to surrender to Washington in October of 1781. Washington then appointed General Benjamin Lincoln to receive the British surrender, offered by a

4.14 Defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown
 A French artist's fanciful depiction of the American and French victory at Yorktown focused entirely on the French navy and army. A medieval-looking walled city in the background also signifies his lack of familiarity with the events.



Why was the song "The World Turned Upside Down" so appropriate for the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown?

The Radicalism of the American Revolution



The American Revolution encompassed two interrelated struggles. The Revolution was both a colonial war for independence and a revolutionary struggle to change American government and society. Thus the war was both a struggle for home rule—the right of Americans to govern themselves—and a war for who should rule at home, a contest to determine the nature of American government and the structure of society. The American Revolution set in motion a social and political transformation that affected nearly every aspect of American society. The Declaration of Independence had articulated the twin ideals of equality and liberty. Some Americans took the declaration's bold affirmation of liberty and equality to be an endorsement of more than colonial independence. For them these words were revolutionary. The message of the Declaration inspired them to undertake a radical transformation of American politics and society.

The first constitutions drafted by the states in 1776 included language that echoed the Declaration's affirmation of the ideals of liberty and equality. Few Americans doubted the importance of this affirmation; deciding how far to take it, however, proved controversial. The Pennsylvania Constitution went further than any other state constitution in embracing a democratic conception of equality—at least for white men.

Not every group in America benefited equally from the promise of the Revolution. African slaves, Indians, and women were not included fully in the Revolution's promise of equality and liberty. Although the promise of the Revolution remained unfilled for many in America, oppressed groups throughout American history would use this promise to seek to obtain the full rights of citizenship.

Popular Politics in the Revolutionary Era

British taxation was not the only set of policies that produced violent resistance during the Revolutionary era. Colonists also opposed unfair taxes imposed by their own colonial governments. The established colonial elites who dominated government also came under attack. In the Carolinas, a Regulator movement emerged that sought reform of colonial government. The Regulators, as their name implied, sought to regulate society by eliminating corruption and bringing the rule of law to places that lacked it. The Regulators resented eastern interests who were eager to tax western farmers, but not interested in sharing political power with them. Thus in backcountry North Carolina, Regulators opposed oppressive tax policies, including taxes enacted to pay for a lavish new palace for the royal governor. Some Regulators, such as Herman Husband, wove together religious themes with democratic ideas and formulated a forceful critique of corruption and inequality in North Carolina. Husband fused his

religious rhetoric with a class-conscious critique of the eastern elites who dominated state politics. Husband noted that “obedience to just laws, and subjection to slavery” were not the same. Resistance to unjust authority was legitimate because “God gave all men a knowledge of their privileges, and a true zeal to maintain them.” In contrast with Husband's views, the royal governor and his supporters among the clergy asserted that “subjection to lawful authority,” not resistance, was the “plain and principal doctrine of Christianity.”

In 1770 one thousand Regulators marched on the Orange County courthouse in Hillsborough. The protesters not only shut down the court but also publicly whipped a court official who was notorious for charging excessively high fees to process basic legal documents. The angry crowd also meted out punishments to several lawyers whose high fees were a source of irritation to backcountry residents. Such fees fell heavily on poor folk and blocked their access to the courts. The protests of the Regulators prompted the royal governor to dispatch the militia, which defeated the Regulators and restored order.

Although the Regulators were not victorious, their class-conscious rhetoric and critique of power and corruption struck a resonant note in many parts of the Carolina backcountry.

Constitutional Experiments: Testing the Limits of Democracy

When the Continental Congress directed the states to draft new constitutions, the new states became political laboratories for constitutional experimentation. Different visions of constitutional government were set against one another in this vibrant public debate. Virginia broke new ground by framing a detailed declaration of rights that would serve as

a model for other states. By contrast virtually every other state apart from Vermont rejected Pennsylvania's radical democratic experiment. Massachusetts, like Virginia, became a model for other states, pioneering a number of constitutional developments that would become essential features of American constitutionalism, particularly in areas such as the separation of powers and checks and balances between these different branches.

In June of 1776 the new state of Virginia drafted a Declaration of Rights and a Constitution. The chief architect of the Declaration of Rights was George Mason, an influential Patriot leader in Virginia. The document asserted that life, liberty, and property were fundamental rights and that "all men are by nature equally free and independent." Some Virginians worried that this language might undermine the institution of slavery, encouraging slaves to revolt. Another delegate calmed these fears by pointing out that an armed population organized as a well-regulated militia would be more than adequate to protect Virginians from its slave population. Indeed the Virginia Declaration of Rights also affirmed "That a well regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state; that standing armies, in time of peace, should be avoided as dangerous to liberty; and that, in all cases, the military should be under strict subordination to, and be governed by, the civil power." The Declaration of Rights also protected other basic liberties: trial by jury, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.

Pennsylvania drafted its constitution not long after Virginia's. While members of a slave-owning planter elite drafted Virginia's Declaration of Rights and Constitution, a more democratic coalition that included urban artisans influenced by the ideas of Thomas Paine and backcountry farmers resentful of the old eastern colonial elites, and similar to the Regulators, drafted Pennsylvania's constitution. Echoing Paine's ideas in *Common Sense*, the Pennsylvania Constitution created a form of representative government with a single legislature, a system known as **unicameralism**.

Responding to the frustration of frontier settlers, who had sought the creation of a state militia to protect them from Indian attack, and the necessities of fighting against Britain, the Pennsylvania Constitution also created a citizens' militia and became the first state constitution to expressly protect the right of citizens to bear arms "in defense of themselves and the state." In keeping with Paine's



4.15 Timothy Matlack

To symbolize Matlack's role in drafting the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, the painter included several items in the background, including law books, the great seal of Pennsylvania, the text of the Pennsylvania Constitution, and a powder horn and musket. [Source: Charles Willson Peale's, "Timothy Matlack," c. 1790, oil on canvas. Access. # 1998.218/ Photograph © 2010 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.]

What made Pennsylvania's Constitution so radical for its day?

democratic ideas, the constitution rejected property requirements for voting. Any male taxpayer who resided in the state for a year could vote. Timothy Matlack, who had helped write this radical constitution, commissioned a portrait that reflected its diverse influences (4.15). A powder horn and musket appear in the background, the text of the Pennsylvania Constitution before him on the table, and volumes of important British legal texts rest on the table behind him.

The Revolution prompted a lively public debate over how far to take the idea of democracy. Although Pennsylvania may have gone further than most in implementing these ideas, similar debates occurred in the press in other states. The traditional Whig theory of representation assumed that only property owners could exercise the independent judgment necessary to vote. Individuals without property would be at the mercy of the rich and powerful who could influence their votes on election day. Whig theory also viewed the possession of property as an essential way of demonstrating that one had a permanent stake in society. According to the Whigs only men with such an interest would be able to act in the long-term interests of society. The Revolution nurtured a competing vision of government, far more democratic in spirit. The anonymous author of the pamphlet *The People the Best Governors*

dangers of too much democracy, and of unicameralism, than John Adams. Fearful of Paine's influence, Adams reluctantly conceded that Paine's work had helped rally Americans to the idea of independence, but Adams feared that Paine's work had "a better hand at pulling down than building" up governments. Indeed Adams worried that Paine's "feeble" ideas about government would mislead Americans when the time came to draft new state constitutions. Adams incorporated his own views on the matter into his short, but influential, essay, "Thoughts on Government," which he wrote in response to a request from North Carolina's Provincial Congress, the body responsible for framing its new constitution.

Most states were unwilling to follow Pennsylvania's radical model, opting to retain some type of property requirement for voting and office holding. In general, however, the new property requirements the states adopted were somewhat lower than they had been during the colonial period, so on balance, the pool of eligible voters increased. Although not a resounding victory for those who shared the democratic views of Thomas Paine and the author of "The People the Best Governors," the Revolution clearly led to a greater democratization of politics.

Although not the most democratic experiment in government, the Massachusetts Constitution

"Shall We Say, that every Individual of the Community, old and young, male and female, as well as rich and poor, must consent, expressly to every Act of Legislation?"

JOHN ADAMS to James Sullivan, May 1776

championed this alternative vision of politics, asserting that "the people know best their own wants and necessities, and therefore are best able to rule themselves." According to this view, a propertied elite was not needed to act as a check on the people.

Those who rejected the radical notion of equality implicit in democracy ridiculed the new, more democratic theories being advanced. The Reverend Charles Bullman of South Carolina, for example, suggested that if these ideas were not checked, "Every silly clown and illiterate mechanic will take upon him to censure the conduct of his Prince or Governor." Among the Patriot elite no figure expressed greater reservations about the

produced interesting innovations. John Adams played a leading role in helping to draft it. Adopted in 1780 it remains the oldest continuously functioning written constitution in the world. Setting the terms for nearly all subsequent constitution-making in America, Massachusetts had taken revolutionary-era constitutional ideas in several new directions. Massachusetts saw a constitution as the supreme law that had to rest on the express consent of the government. Legislative bodies had drafted earlier state constitutions, but a special convention drafted the Massachusetts constitution, which it then submitted directly to the people for ratification. The idea of securing express consent for the constitution led Massachusetts to take the

unprecedented step of eliminating property requirements for this special ratification process. Thus even those white men who would not meet the property requirements for voting for the legislature under the proposed constitution were able to vote on the Constitution. The notion that a constitution had to be submitted to the people directly for ratification was a radical innovation that quickly became an accepted feature of American constitutional life.

The Massachusetts Constitution also became the first to successfully implement an effective system of checks and balances. While all of the early state governments supported the principle of separation of powers, making the powers of the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of government distinct, these early constitutions had not built in the checks and balances that would make this ideal a practical reality. To make separation of powers effective, the different branches of government had to have the ability to check one another's power. Massachusetts went further than any other state in devising a system that achieved this goal. The Massachusetts office of governor had considerable power, including the right to veto acts of the legislature. This gave the executive the ability to check the legislature. The legislature was given a check on the governor through its ability to override a gubernatorial veto by a two-thirds vote. Finally, to compensate and balance this additional power, Massachusetts made the governor an office directly elected by the people, not appointed by the legislature as many other states had opted to do.

Another important experiment in constitutional government was the Articles of Confederation, the constitution that Congress framed for the new United States of America. Although Congress drafted the articles in 1777, the states did not ratify them for another four years. The government created by the articles was not a national government, but rather "a firm league of friendship" among the sovereign states. Thus Article II of the articles affirmed that "Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled." Because fighting the British was then Con-

gress's top priority, Congress cobbled together the Articles of Confederation without providing many features that the individual states had included in their constitutions. Frustration and fear of British-style government also shaped the minds of Congress. Having just cast off a powerful central government with a powerful king, the articles abandoned the idea of a single unified executive to enforce the law. Nor did the articles have the power to tax, another governmental power that the British had abused. The articles created a weak government whose ability to tax, engage in military actions, and conduct diplomacy depended entirely on the goodwill of the states.

African Americans Struggle for Freedom

The great English literary figure Dr. Samuel Johnson pointed out the hypocrisy of Americans claiming to be champions of liberty while enslaving Africans.

"How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negro slaves?"

Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1775

In some cases slaves invoked the ideas of the Revolution explicitly, while in others they voted with their feet, seizing opportunities to free themselves. The dislocations associated with America's war for

independence provided opportunities for African Americans seeking to escape the bondage of slavery. For some, fleeing to the British side provided the best chance for freedom. Other slaves seized on the ideas nurtured by the broader revolutionary changes that accompanied the war for independence. The ideas of liberty and equality intensified the burgeoning movement for the abolition of slavery more generally. Although the Revolution did not eradicate slavery, it did put it on the road to extinction in New England and the mid-Atlantic regions.

Slaves, eager to cast off their own shackles, appropriated the Revolution's language of liberty. During the Stamp Act protests in South Carolina (1765), slaves staged their own parade chanting "liberty." Alarmed South Carolinians viewed such activities as evidence of a plan for rebellion. To thwart the imagined threat, they mobilized the militia, which also served as slave patrols. Blacks in New England fared better when they invoked the Revolution's ideals than did blacks in the South. In

1774 a group of slaves petitioned the governor, council, and House of Representatives of the Province of Massachusetts for their freedom. In their petition the slaves used the language of the Declaration of Independence, including the idea of natural rights and the notion that government rested on the consent of the governed. They asserted: "We have in common with all other men a naturel right to our freedoms without Being depriv'd of them by our fellow men."

Less than a decade later, another slave, Mum Bett, successfully sued for her freedom. A local jury in western Massachusetts heard the case and based their verdict on the language of the state's declaration of rights, which stated clearly that "All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties." Mum Bett changed her name to Elizabeth Freeman, obtained employment as a housekeeper in the home of the lawyer who defended her, and eventually became a respected midwife and nurse in her community. Citing this precedent the state's highest court eventually upheld the decision and officially abolished slavery in Massachusetts.

New England went further than any other region in its support for the abolition of slavery. Vermont's 1777 Constitution expressly prohibited slavery, the first constitution in the nation to take such a bold step. In the mid-Atlantic Pennsylvania and New York adopted gradual schemes of emancipation.

The American Revolution in Indian Country

The struggle between Britain and the American colonies had enormous consequences for American Indians. Although neutrality appealed to many Indians, avoiding entanglement in the conflict between Britain and America became impossible. Faced with the need to make a choice, many Indian nations chose to side with Britain, whose colonial policies, including the Proclamation of 1763, had blocked American expansion into indigenous peoples' lands. An American victory would inevitably mean more settlers streaming into American Indian country and greater destruction of the habitats that Indians depended on for their survival.

The language of the Declaration of Independence had underscored America's deep-seated fear and hostility toward American

Indians. Among the many complaints Jefferson leveled against the king was: "He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions." Jefferson's view of American Indians as "savages" engaged in acts of barbarism rallied Americans against the British.

One event that whipped up anti-Indian feelings among Americans was the murder of Jane McCrea in upstate New York at the hands of Mohawk Indians. Jane was traveling to meet her fiancé, a British soldier, when pro-British Mohawk Indians attacked her. McCrea's political sympathies did not prevent her from becoming a martyr for the Patriot cause. Colonial newspapers lamented her sad fate, which was also memorialized in poetry. In 1780 a novel about her demise appeared, and the painter John Trumbull made several sketches of McCrea's murder for a possible painting before deciding to abandon the subject and move on to other projects, including his painting of the death of General Warren. The story of McCrea continued to attract artists decades later. Writer Joel Barlow, a close friend of Jefferson and important literary figure in early America, memorialized the event in one of his poems, and artist John Vanderlyn used the event as the basis for this dramatic painting (4.16), which was displayed in 1804. Vanderlyn's representation of the light-skinned McCrea and the dark-skinned American Indians underscores the role of the painting as a morality tale between

4.16 Death of Jane McCrea

John Vanderlyn painted this scene several decades after the event occurred. He took several liberties with history. McCrea's fiancé, the military figure rushing to rescue her (circled in red), wears the blue uniform of a Continental soldier. In reality McCrea was a Loyalist and her fiancé a British regular. [Source: John Vanderlyn, "The Murder of Jane McCrea", 1804. Oil on canvas, 32 1/2 x 26 1/2 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. Purchased by Subscription. Acc# 1855.4]

good and evil. The American Indians are depicted as cruel savages about to murder McCrea.

Pro-British tribes siding with the British, whose policies they saw as limiting colonial expansion westward, scored notable victories on the western frontier during 1782. After these successes, many Indians were stunned to learn that the British had surrendered at Yorktown. Indians were excluded from the negotiations that ended the war. Many viewed the Treaty of Paris (1783), which ceded much of American Indian country to America, as a betrayal.

Liberty's Daughters: Women and the Revolutionary Movement

Women took an active role in the revolutionary cause. One of the most outspoken female Patriots was Mercy Otis Warren, wife of patriot leader James Warren and sister of James Otis. Warren's gifts as a poet, playwright, and eventually historian allowed her to champion the American cause in a variety of literary endeavors. Her satirical plays mocked British policy and took aim at leading British politicians and military figures. The fictional names of the characters in her plays communicated Warren's disdain for the British. Warren's scathing satire mocked the actions of Brigadier General Hateall, Secretary of State Dupe, and Governor Rapatio. These sinister plotters against American liberty were matched by equally talented and virtuous American Patriot leaders, whose names, Brutus or Honestus, signified their commitment to Roman republican virtue.

Women also served in various roles in the war effort. When mustered into service the militia often depended on support from women. An eyewitness to such a mobilization in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1774 noted that local women "surpassed the Men for Eagerness & Spirit in the Défense of Liberty by Arms." Women not only provided moral support, "animating their Husbands & Sons to fight for their liberties," but also helped "making Cartridges." Some women actively supported the efforts of troops, becoming "Molly Pitchers," women who hauled water and carried supplies to soldiers. Deborah Sampson took this commitment a step further, disguising herself as a man and serving the Continental Army under the name Robert Shirtcliffe. A camp physician discovered Sampson while attending to her during a bout of fever. The Continental Army also had camp followers—women, including the wives of soldiers, who washed, cooked,

nursed, and tended to other needs of soldiers during the Revolution.

The Revolution's emphasis on liberty and equality boosted notions of gender equality. Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, wrote to her husband who was serving in the Continental Congress and working on his own ideas about politics in his essay "Thoughts on Government." Abigail demanded that her husband "remember the ladies" and work toward greater legal equality for women (see *Competing Visions: Remember the Ladies*). A few women went further than Abigail, demanding not only legal equality but also some measure of political equality, at least for women who owned property.

One supporter of this idea was Hannah Corbin, sister of Patriot leader Richard Henry Lee. While Abigail Adams's life was a model of female propriety, Corbin led an unconventional lifestyle that made her acutely aware of the inferior legal status of women. After her husband died an untimely death at the age of thirty-five, Corbin managed the affairs of her husband's plantation. Her husband's will stipulated that if she ever remarried, Hannah would lose control of her family's estate. The spirited Corbin was unwilling to accept the choice of remaining a widow or losing control of her property. Rejecting contemporary moral codes Hannah Corbin began a common-law relationship with another man (living together as husband and wife without being legally married). Although the two lived together as husband and wife, the fact that they were not legally married allowed her to preserve control of her estate. The defiant and independent Corbin later wrote to her brother inquiring why women who owned property were prohibited from voting. Lee could provide no reasonable explanation to his sister's inquiry. Lee even conceded that in theory, a policy allowing such women to vote was plausible, but fell back on custom, noting that "it has never been the practice either here or in England" and speculating that "Perhaps 'twas thought rather out of character for women to press into those tumultuous assemblages of men."

Every state, apart from New Jersey, limited suffrage to men. It is not clear if New Jersey's omission was deliberate or accidental. Still New Jersey women who fulfilled the state's property requirements took full advantage of this omission and voted in elections for more than three decades before state legislature revoked this right.

Although the Revolution did not usher in the legal or political changes sought by Adams and Corbin, the ideas of equality espoused by the

Competing Visions

REMEMBER THE LADIES

A strong supporter of independence, and an articulate and forceful personality, Abigail Adams believed that the American Revolution provided an opportunity for women to gain much-needed legal reform. This was particularly needed in areas such as property law, where women were considered legally dead once they married.

In this spirited letter written shortly before Congress declared independence from Britain, Abigail made her displeasure with the inferior legal status of women quite clear to her husband.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 Mar. 1776

I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

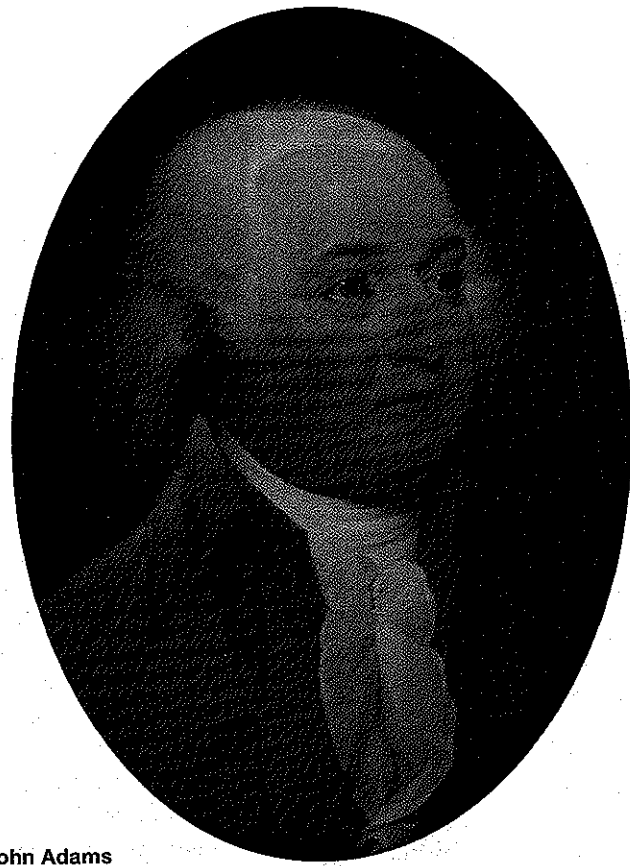
In a somewhat dismissive reply, Adams nevertheless revealed how the Revolution's ideas about equality permeated American society.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 Apr. 1776

As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government every where. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient—that schools and Colleges were grown turbulent—that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters. But your Letter was the first Intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerful than all the rest were grown discontented. —This is rather too coarse a Compliment but you are so saucy, I wont blot it out. Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems.



Abigail Adams



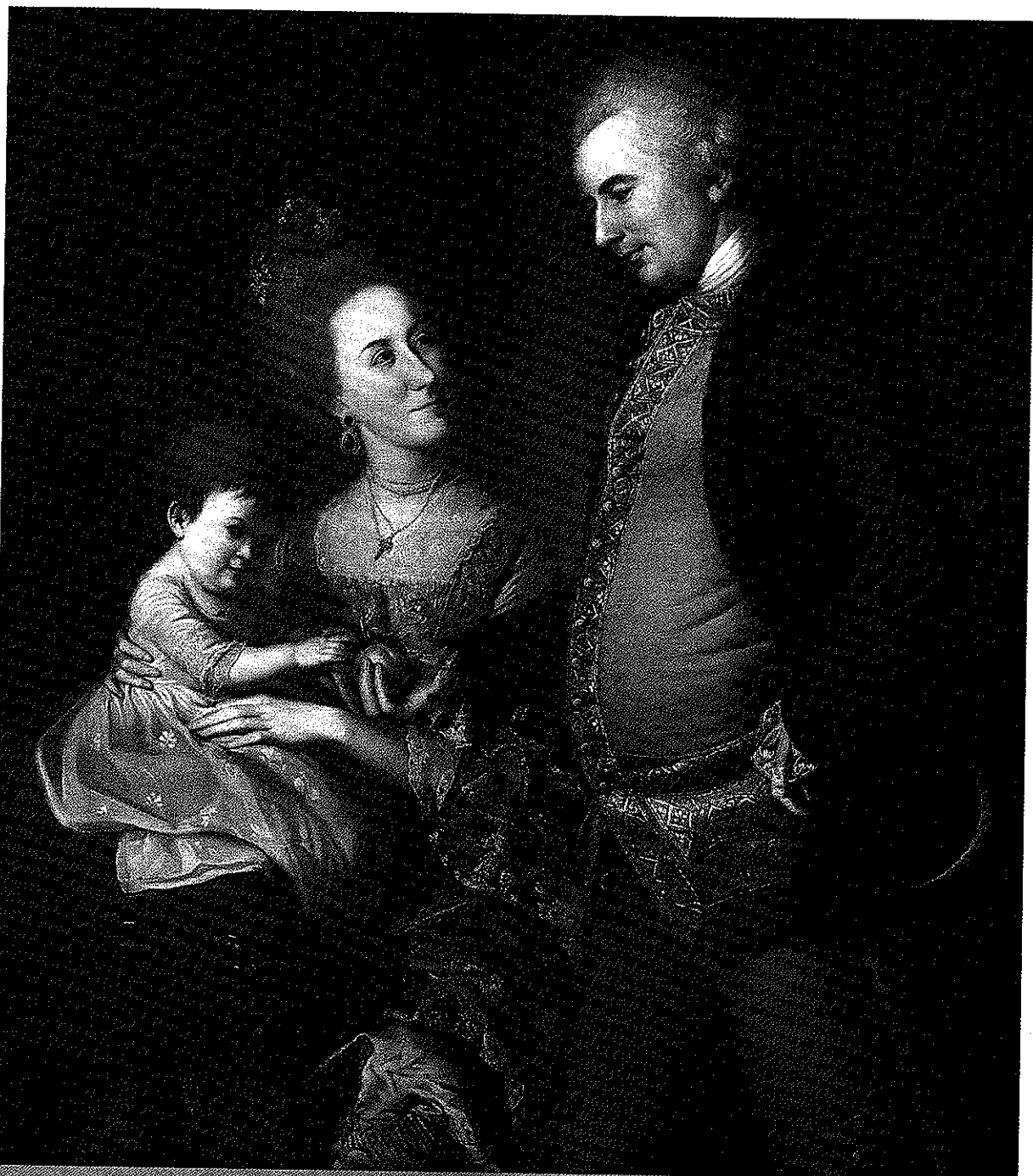
John Adams

Revolution did influence ideas about marriage and family life. Lucy Knox, wife of General Henry Knox, wrote to her husband a year after the Declaration of Independence to remind him to “not consider yourself as commander in chief of your own house,” but recognize that “there is such a thing as equal command.” Lucy Knox viewed marriage as an egalitarian relationship between husband and wife, one in which the two lived together as companions. Scholars describe this new conception of husband and wife as **companionate marriage**. The Revolution not only altered ideas about marriage but also

changed attitudes about patriarchal authority, a fact reflected in the portraiture of the day. In his painting of the Cadwalader family, Charles Wilson Peale gives a model of a companionate marriage (**4.17**). Peale’s painting contrasts with a style of family portraiture seen in a painting of the Isaac Royall family done thirty years earlier. A comparison of the portraits shows how ideas of family relations, including the relationship between husband and wife, and parents and children, had changed in the intervening years (**4.18**). In Peale’s painting John and Elizabeth Cadwalader look directly at one another. His hand

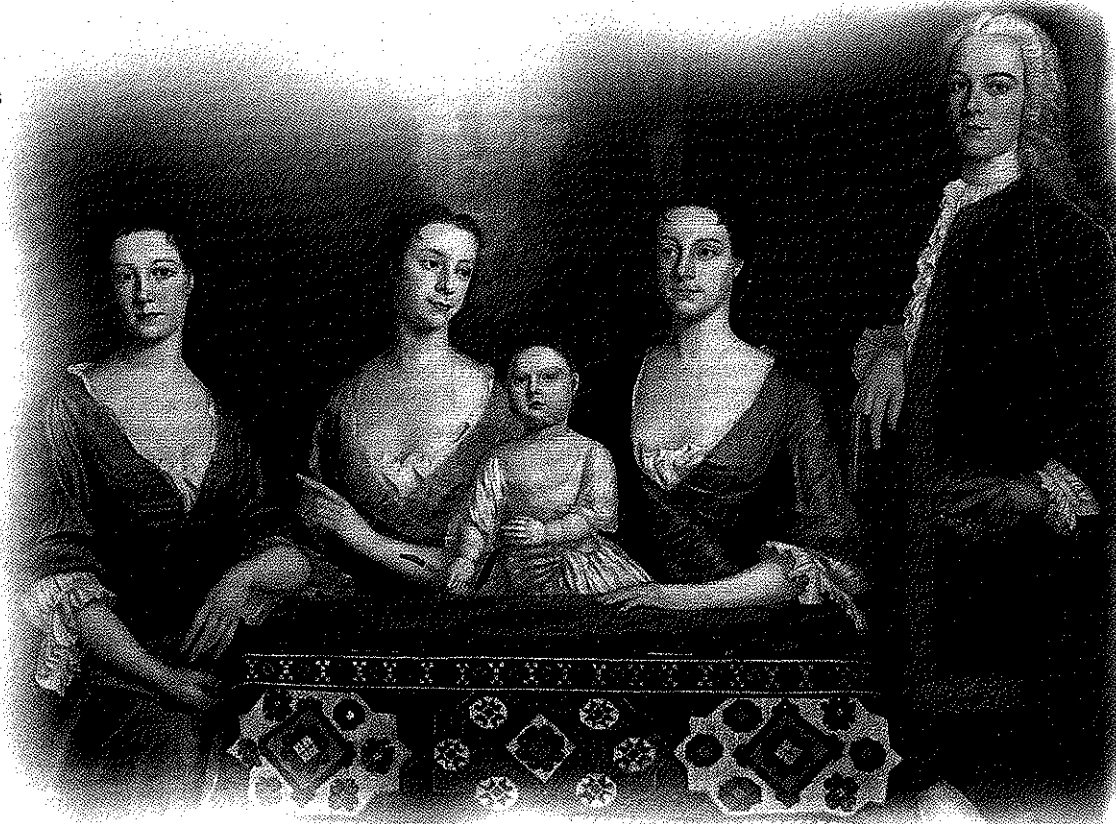
4.17 Cadwalader Family

Charles Wilson Peale’s portrait of the Cadwalader family evokes the ideal of companionate marriage, in which husbands and wives enjoyed an intimate and egalitarian relationship within marriage. [Source: Charles Willson Peale, “Portrait of John and Elizabeth Lloyd Cadwalader and Their Daughter Anne”. 1772. Oil on canvas, 50 1/2" x 41 1/4" (128.3 x 104.8 cm). Photo: Graydon Wood. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Purchased for the Cadwalader collection with funds contributed by the Mabel Pew Myrin Trust and the gift of an anonymous donor, 1983. Acc: 1983-90-3.]



How do these two paintings demonstrate the changing views of the family in the era of the American Revolution?

rests on hers, and their young child reaches for the peach held by his father. The intimacy of the family is evidenced in the physical closeness of its members. By contrast the portrait of the Royall family reveals little of this physical closeness. The husband has no physical contact with his wife or his children.



4.18 *Isaac Royall and Family*, by Robert Feke, 1741

This portrait of the Royall family, done almost three decades before the Cadwalader portrait, captures the more patriarchal view of the family. The father stands somewhat aloof from the family.

Conclusion

American resistance to British policy impelled the thirteen colonies to declare their independence from Britain and wage war against the most powerful nation on earth. Americans had started this process convinced that they were simply defending the cherished rights of Englishmen. By the time Americans published the Declaration of Independence in 1776, their ideas had evolved and their claims asserted the fundamental rights of all men. What began as a colonial war for independence had become a genuine revolution.

The ideas of equality and liberty that inspired the American Revolution transformed American society. White men were the greatest beneficiaries of the Revolution. The ideas of liberty and equality articulated in the Declaration of Independence infused the first constitutions drafted by the individual states. These new governments experimented with how to apply these abstract principles. No state went further than Pennsylvania in implementing the ideas of democracy. Yet

within a generation Pennsylvania's radical experiment in unicameralism would be cast aside in favor of the more typical bicameral model favored by most states. Only New Jersey followed the logic of equality to allow women to vote. Still the Revolution's ideas transformed ideas about women's roles and helped slaves in New England and the mid-Atlantic states to push for the abolition of slavery. One group largely excluded from the benefits of the Revolution was American Indians, many of whom had backed the British.

As the young republic confronted new problems, including how to pay for its recent war for independence, Americans began to re-examine their political institutions. Americans also grappled with how to deal with the democratic ideals unleashed by the Revolution. Even more significant, Americans would jettison the Articles of Confederation in favor of a new more powerful central government. America's experiment in constitutional government was only just beginning.