

The American Revolution



From A to Z
By Leah Hill

A

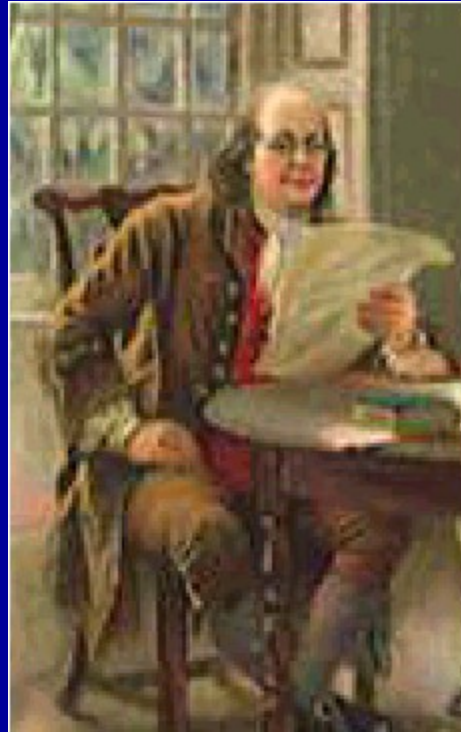
April 19, 1775



The “shot heard ‘round the world” was fired on this day marking the beginning of the American Revolution. British soldiers met a militia of farmers on the green in Lexington, Massachusetts. The Lexington Militia did not even intend to fight, but someone fired on the British, and in the end, eight Americans died. So began the Revolution that would change the world forever.

B

Benjamin Franklin



Benjamin Franklin was one of this country's Founding Fathers. He was around 80 years old during the first Continental Congress which met to discuss independence. He is well known for writing *Poor Richard's Almanac* and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. He was also a scientist, diplomat, businessman, philosopher, and statesman.

C

Constitution



The American Revolution did not end just because the war ended. There was still the struggle of beginning a new nation. Our Founding Fathers were in a way conducting the ultimate political experiment. The first attempt at a government, the Articles of the Confederation, did not go so well. Therefore, the Continental Congress met once again, and, after much debate, ratified the Constitution. This document explains the division of power between states and the federal government, and the three branches of our government. This document was extremely radical for its time. This time, the experiment worked, and has continued to work for over 200 years.

D

Daughters of Liberty



Women had a major role in the Revolutionary War, especially in the time leading up to war. Women controlled the domestic part of the household, therefore they were able to lead boycotts of British goods before the war. Many women also took part in the war and helped the soldiers. Molly Pitcher is even said to have fought alongside the men during the war by loading the canons. Many of these women were known as Daughters of Liberty.

E

England



England, or Great Britain, had begun taxing the Americas for revenue in 1764 to replace the money that had been used during the Seven Years' War. Many Americans protested these taxes. Several acts, as these were called, were passed in Parliament between 1764 and 1775. Americans began to demand representation in Parliament if they were to be taxed. Parliament denied their demands, and things escalated. Although King George III was not fully responsible for the passage of these acts, he gave the American people a face for their anger. That is why he is personally accused of being a tyrant in the Declaration of Independence.

F

France



At the beginning of the Revolution, French king Louis XVI began aiding the colonists by smuggling military supplies, with hopes of embarrassing Great Britain. He was not willing to get involved in the fight until after the Americans defeated the British at Saratoga. After this victory, Louis recognized the United States as an independent nation. The French navy was especially helpful to the U.S. Pictured above are General Washington and the French military man Marquis Lafayette. He worked side by side with Washington during the latter part of the war.

G

“Give me liberty,
or give me death!”



Patrick Henry gave this famous speech on March 23, 1775 at St. John's Church. In this very powerful speech, Henry points out the fact that the British government has ignored their pleas for representation. The only solution was to prepare for war with Great Britain. According to Henry, God had ordained their cause and nothing was standing in their way. Henry later had a major role in the Continental Congress after the end of the war.

H

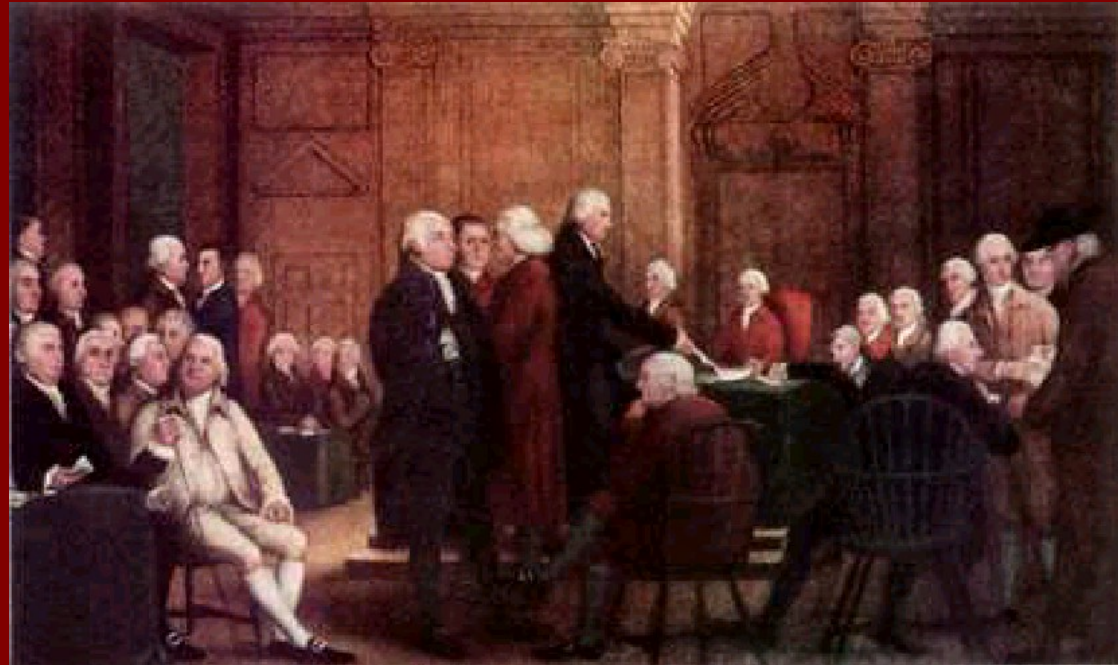
Hancock



John Hancock is famous for his signature on the Declaration of Independence. He signed it first and made his signature huge. He was also one of the wealthiest men in Boston and was harassed by the commissioners that had remained in America even after the Revenue act (a way of collecting taxes for Britain) had been repealed. This made him furious and helped to fuel his patriotism.

I

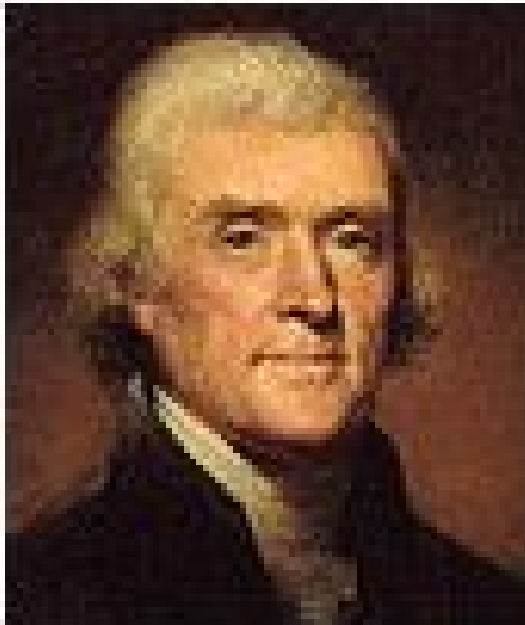
Independence



The idea of independence from Great Britain was a very radical idea. No one believed that the small United States could win independence from the Empire. But that is just what they did. When the Founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence, they were in all actuality signing their own death warrants. If the Great Britain had won the war, these men would more than likely have been tried and convicted of treason, and would immediately have been killed. Thankfully, the U.S. won the war and these men changed the course of history.

J

Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson is the man who penned the Declaration of Independence. He believed that he was not only working for America, but for the entire world. The world needed to see that there was an alternative to the corrupt monarchies of the past, and that alternative was a republic in which all men were represented in the government and the people governed themselves. He was a key player in the events following the Revolution and was also a supporter of separation of church and state after the Revolution. He believed that everyone had the right to worship however they wanted to. His ideas are still debated today.

K

Kings Mountain



On October 7, 1780, a force of 1,400 Americans fought 1,100 Loyalists (Americans loyal to Britain) at Kings Mountain in South Carolina. Many of the Americans had been harassed by the Loyalists for several months and were just waiting for the right moment to strike. The battle was devastating to the Loyalists who lost at least 650; 150 dead and 600 captured. This incident shows how the Revolution was also a kind of civil war that pitted neighbor against neighbor.

L

Locke



John Locke's philosophy of government was the most cited by the American people before, during, and after the Revolution. He believed that all men were born with certain rights that could not be trampled upon. He believed that people had the right to rebel against their government if their rights were not being respected. Americans loved this philosophy because it joined both traditional religious values and popular government.

M

Minutemen



The term “minutemen” was used to describe special units of the Massachusetts militia. They were called minutemen because they had to be ready at a moment’s notice to defend the country against the British.

N

Navy



One problem that Americans had in the Revolutionary War was the fact that they did not have much of a navy. The British were the greatest naval force in the world and controlled the seas. This problem was lessened after the French entered the conflict as an American ally.

O

October 1777



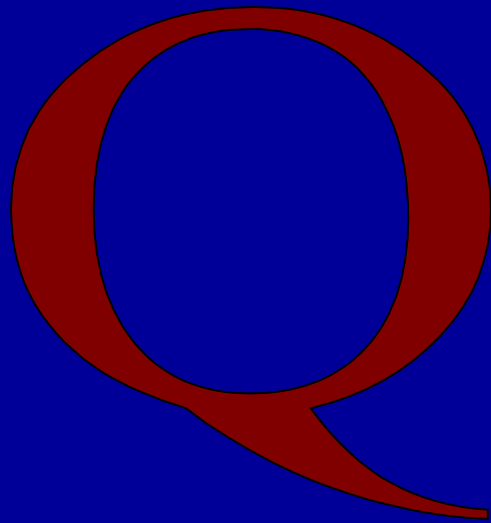
October of 1777 was a bad month for the British. They began trying to divide the country by sending an army south from Canada. The result was a crushing defeat at Saratoga in New York. This defeat is what inevitably persuaded the French to recognize the U.S. as an independent country, and also persuaded King Louis XVI to join the conflict as an American ally.

P

Paine



Thomas Paine did not even come to America until 1774. However, he agreed with the American cause and became one of the most influential writers of that time. In his work *Common Sense*, he pointed out several reasons why independence was worth fighting the British. He also wrote *The American Crisis* while with George Washington and his troops to boost morale, which was quickly declining. After it was read, the Americans crossed the Delaware and defeated a group of Hessian soldiers. This helped to boost the patriot cause until the end of the war.



Quartering Act



Passed by Parliament in May 1765, the Quartering Act was meant to force colonists to house and supply British soldiers in their homes. Many of the assemblies in the colonies protested this act of parliament. The New York assembly was punished in 1767 for failing to comply with the act. This was one of several acts that led to the Revolutionary War.

R

Revere



Paul Revere is best known for his “midnight ride” to warn the colonists that the British had arrived on April 18, 1775. He was a well known engraver and silversmith, as well as an active patriot. His most famous work is the engraving of the Boston Massacre, which was highly exaggerated to fan outrage at the British.

Samuel Adams



T

Tax



Because Britain had acquired a large debt during the Seven Year's War, Parliament decided to raise revenue by taxing the colonists in America. They began by raising taxes on sugar, tea, coffee, and wine (Sugar Act). Then they began requiring everything printed to be on special stamped paper that could only be bought from stamp distributors with the money going to Britain (Stamp Act). Acts such as these continued from 1764 until 1775. These taxes were some of the main reasons colonists decided to rebel. Many had come to America to try to avoid taxes anyway. They believed Parliament was overstepping its bounds and needed to let them tax themselves.

U

United States



The colonies took this name during the American Revolution. There were 13 original states: New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

V

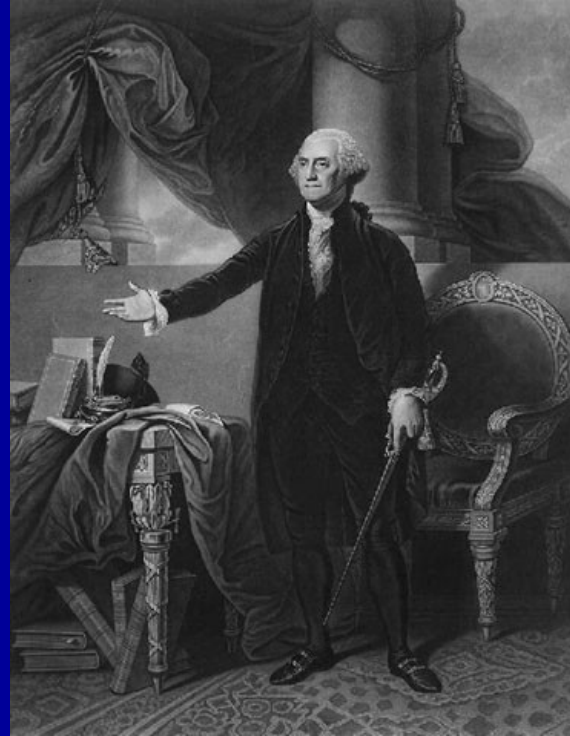
Valley Forge



Valley Forge is in Pennsylvania. Washington and his troops made their winter camp there in the winter of 1777-78. This was a good place because it was high enough to keep an eye on Philadelphia, but far enough away to be safe from surprise attack. Unfortunately, the winter of 1777-78 was extremely harsh and supplies were scarce. Almost 2,000 soldiers died, and 2,000 more deserted the army. The ones that stayed came back in the spring a fully trained army.

W

Washington



George Washington first gained fame as a military leader during the French and Indian War. He believed that the Americans needed to use force to gain independence from Britain. Therefore, he became the leading General in the fight for independence. Unlike most military leaders, he did not take control of the country and begin to "rule". He much preferred a private life, so he went home after the war. He remained there until he was asked to become the first President. He was president during the first 8 years that the United States existed. This was probably the most difficult years in this countries government as it tried to find its place in the world.

X

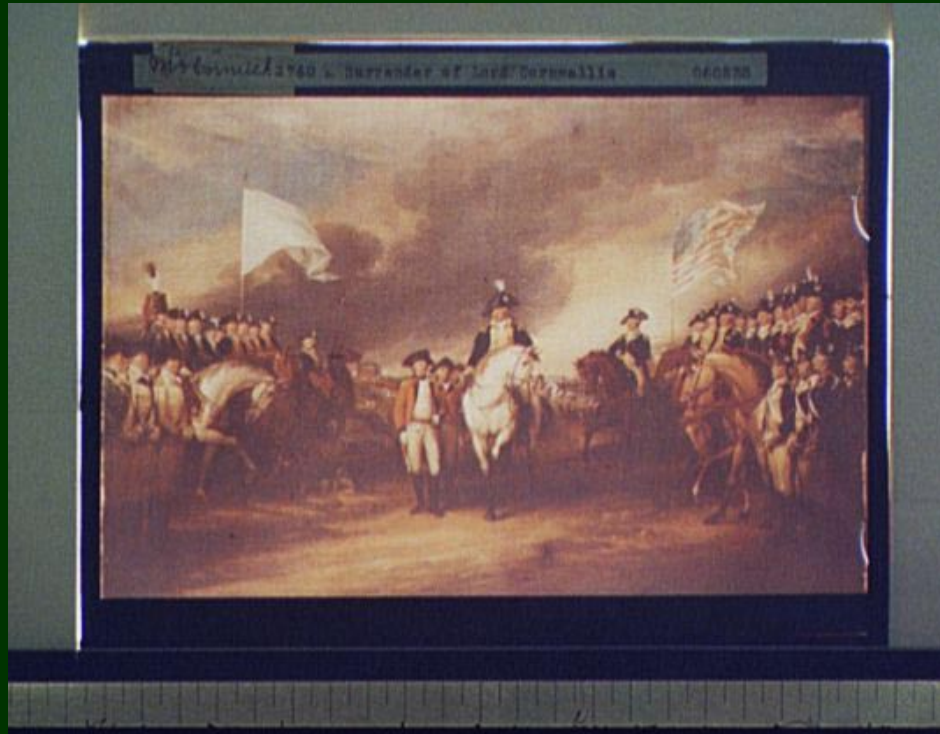
“EXpression of the American Mind”



This is how Thomas Jefferson described the purpose of the Declaration of Independence. He asserted that the point was not to come up with a new idea, or to copy someone else's. The purpose was to give the British government and the world the “expression of the American mind” at the time of the American Revolution.

Y

Yorktown



The American forces, with the help of the French, defeated General Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. This was to be the last battle of the war. The war would have continued if King George had gotten his way, but a bankrupt Parliament stopped him.

Z

Zealous



Patriots of the fight for independence were very zealous in their fight. They were willing to sacrifice everything they had for what they knew this country could be. Had the war gone the other way, many of the key men involved in the Revolution would have been executed as traitors. The world could not believe that a band of farmers had defeated the super power of the world. The American Revolution was the beginning of a new world. What happened in America would inspire others to try to change their governments to one of independence and democracy.