



Timeline (Detailed) – The Road to Nationhood 1764-1800

America During the Age of Revolution 1764-1775

1764

- **Sugar Act was Passed** – The English Parliament, desiring revenue from its North American Colonies, passed the first law specifically aimed at raising colonial money for the British Crown. The Sugar Act increased duties on non-British goods shipped to the Colonies.
- **Currency Act was Passed** - This Currency Act prohibited American Colonies from issuing their own currency, angering many American Colonists.
- **Colonial Opposition Commenced** - American Colonists protested against the Sugar Act and the Currency Act. In Massachusetts, participants in a town meeting cried out against taxation without proper representation in Parliament, and suggested some form of united protest throughout the Colonies. By the end of the year, many Colonies were practicing non-importation, refusing to use imported English goods.

1765

- **Quartering Act was Enacted** - The British further angered American Colonists with the Quartering Act, which required the Colonies to provide barracks and supplies to British troops.
- **Stamp Act was Enacted** - Parliament's first direct tax on the American Colonies, this act, like those passed in 1764, was enacted to raise money for Britain. It taxed newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, broadsides, legal documents, dice, and playing cards. Issued by Britain, the stamps were affixed to documents or packages to show that the tax had been paid.
- **Colonists Organized Protests** - American Colonists responded to Parliament's acts with organized protest. Throughout the Colonies, a network of secret organizations known as the Sons of Liberty was created, aimed at intimidating the stamp agents who collected Parliament's taxes. Before the Stamp Act could even take effect, all the appointed stamp agents in the Colonies had resigned. The Massachusetts Assembly suggested a meeting of all the Colonies to work for the repeal of the Stamp Act. All but four Colonies were represented. The Stamp Act Congress passed a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances," which claimed that American Colonists were equal to all other British citizens, protested taxation without representation, and stated that, without colonial representation in Parliament, Parliament could not tax Colonists. In addition, the Colonists increased their non-importation efforts.

1766

- **Stamp Act was Repealed** - The act was repealed, and the Colonies abandoned their ban on imported British goods.
- **Declaratory Act was Passed** - The Declaratory Act, passed by Parliament on the same day the Stamp Act was repealed, stated that Parliament could make laws binding the American Colonies "in all cases whatsoever."
- **Resistance Mounted in New York to the Quartering Act** - New York served as headquarters for British troops in America, so the Quartering Act (1765) had a great impact on New York City. When the New York Assembly refused to assist in quartering troops, a skirmish occurred in which one colonist was wounded. Parliament suspended the Assembly's powers but never carried out the suspension, since the Assembly soon agreed to contribute money toward the quartering of troops.

1767

- **Townshend Acts were Passed** - To help pay the expenses involved in governing the American Colonies, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which initiated taxes on glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea.
- **Nonimportation was Practiced** - In response to new taxes, the Colonies again decided to discourage the purchase of British imports.
- **Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies was Published** - Originally published in a newspaper, this widely reproduced pamphlet by John Dickinson declared that Parliament could not tax the Colonies, called the Townshend Acts unconstitutional, and denounced the suspension of the New York Assembly as a threat to colonial liberties.

1768

- **Massachusetts Circular Letter was Published** - Samuel Adams wrote a statement, approved by the Massachusetts House of Representatives, which attacked Parliament's persistence in taxing the Colonies without proper representation, and which called for unified resistance by all the Colonies. Many Colonies issued similar statements. In response, the British governor of Massachusetts dissolved the state's legislature.
- **British Troops Arrived in Boston** - Although the Sons of Liberty threatened armed resistance to arriving British troops, none was offered when the troops stationed themselves in Boston.

1769

- **Virginia's Resolutions were Passed** - The Virginia House of Burgesses passed resolutions condemning Britain's actions against Massachusetts, and stating that only Virginia's governor and legislature could tax its citizens. The members also drafted a formal letter to the King, completing it just before the legislature was dissolved by Virginia's royal governor.

1770

- **Townshend Acts Cut Back** - Because of the reduced profits resulting from the colonial boycott of imported British goods, Parliament withdrew all of the Townshend Acts (1767) taxes except for the tax on tea.
- **Nonimportation was Ended** - In response to Parliament's relaxation of its taxation laws, the Colonies relaxed their boycott of British imported goods (1767).
- **Conflict between Colonial Citizens and British Troops Occurred in New York** - After a leading New York Son of Liberty issued a broadside attacking the New York Assembly for complying with the 1765 Quartering Act, a riot erupted between citizens and soldiers, resulting in serious wounds but no fatalities.
- **Boston Massacre Occurred** - The arrival of troops in Boston provoked conflict between citizens and soldiers. On March 5, a group of British soldiers surrounded by an unfriendly crowd opened fire, killing three Americans and fatally wounding two more. A violent uprising was avoided only with the withdrawal of the troops to islands in the harbor. The soldiers were tried for murder, but convicted only of lesser crimes; noted patriot John Adams was their principal lawyer.

1772

- **Attack on the "Gaspee"** - After several boatloads of men attacked a grounded British customs schooner called the Gaspee near Providence, Rhode Island, the royal governor offered a reward for the discovery of the men, planning to send them to England for trial. The removal of the "Gaspee" trial to England outraged American Colonists.
- **Committees of Correspondence** - Samuel Adams called for a Boston town meeting to create committees of correspondence to communicate Boston's position to the other Colonies. Similar committees were soon created throughout the Colonies.

1773

- **Tea Act was Passed** - By reducing the tax on imported British tea, this act gave British merchants an unfair advantage in selling their tea in America. American Colonists condemned the act, and many planned to boycott tea.
- **Colonists Dumped Their Anger with The Boston Tea Party** - When British tea ships arrived in Boston Harbor, many citizens wanted the tea sent back to England without the payment of any taxes. The royal governor insisted on payment of all taxes. On December 16, a group of men disguised as Indians boarded the ships and dumped all the tea into Boston Harbor.

1774

- **Parliament Passed the Coercive Acts (the Colonists called it the Intolerable Acts)** - In response to the Boston Tea Party, Parliament passed several acts to punish Massachusetts. The Boston Port Bill banned the loading or unloading of any ships in Boston Harbor, and as such Boston Harbor was closed to commerce. The Administration of Justice Act offered protection to royal officials in Massachusetts, allowing them to transfer to England all court cases against them involving riot suppression or revenue collection. The Massachusetts

Government Act put the election of most government officials under the control of the Crown, essentially eliminating the Massachusetts charter of government.

- **Quartering Act Was Broadened** - Parliament broadened its previous Quartering Act (1765). British troops could now be quartered in any occupied dwelling.
- **The Colonies Organized Official Protest** - To protest Britain's actions, Massachusetts suggested a return to non-importation, but several states preferred a congress of all the Colonies to discuss united resistance. In May 1774, the Virginia Assembly called for a meeting in **Philadelphia** of all of the Colonies to plan a response to King George III and the British Crown. The Colonies soon named delegates to a congress -- the **First Continental Congress** -- to meet in **Philadelphia** on September 5.
- **The First Continental Congress Met** - The other Colonies came together in support of Massachusetts. Twelve of the thirteen Colonies sent a total of fifty-six delegates to the **First Continental Congress** which met at **Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia**. Only Georgia was not represented. One accomplishment of the Congress was the Association of 1774, which urged all Colonists to avoid using British goods, and to form committees to enforce this ban. The **First Continental Congress** drew up a Declaration of Rights and Grievances and an appeal to King George III. This was in response to the Colonies' outrage towards the British Parliament over punishing Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party. It was at **Carpenters' Hall** during the **First Continental Congress** that Patrick Henry stated, "The distinctions between Virginians, **Pennsylvanians**, New Yorkers, New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian but an American."
- **The New England Area Prepared for War** - British troops began to fortify Boston, and seized ammunition belonging to the Colony of Massachusetts. Thousands of American militiamen were ready to resist, but no fighting occurred. Massachusetts created a Provincial Congress, and a special Committee of Safety to decide when the militia should be called into action. Special groups of militia, known as Minute Men, were organized to be ready for instant action.

1775

- **New England Restraining Act was Passed** -Parliament passed an act banning trade between the New England Colonies and any other country besides Great Britain.
- **New England Resisted** - British troops continued to attempt to seize Colonial ammunition, but were turned back in Massachusetts, without any violence. Royal authorities decided that force should be used to enforce recent acts of Parliament; war seemed unavoidable.
- **Battle Ensued at Lexington and Concord** - Armed conflict broke out in Massachusetts at Lexington and Concord. British troops planned to destroy American ammunition at Concord. When the Boston Committee of Safety learned of this plan, it sent Paul Revere and William Dawes to alert the countryside and gather the Minute Men. On April 19, Minute Men and British troops met at Lexington, where a shot from a stray British gun lead to more British firing. The Americans only fired a few shots; several Americans were killed. The British marched on to Concord and destroyed some ammunition, but soon found the countryside swarming with militia. At the end of the day, many were dead on both sides.
- **The Second Continental Congress Met** - The **Second Continental Congress** met in **Philadelphia** in May 1775. John Hancock was elected president of Congress.

- **George Washington Named Commander in Chief** - In June 1775, John Adams proposed that Congress consider the forces in Boston a Continental army, and suggested the need for a General. He recommended George Washington for the position of Commander in Chief of the Continental forces. Congress began to enlist men from other Colonies to join the army in New England, and named a committee to draft military rules. On June 15, Washington was nominated to lead the army; he accepted the next day. To pay for the army, Congress issued bills of credit, and the twelve Colonies represented in the Congress promised to share in repaying the bills.
- **The Battle of Bunker Hill Waged** - On June 12, 1776, British General Gage put martial law in effect, and stated that any person helping the Americans would be considered a traitor and rebel. When Americans began to fortify a hill against British forces, British ships in the harbor discovered the activity and opened fire. British troops -- 2,400 in number -- arrived shortly after. Although the Americans -- 1,000 in number -- resisted several attacks, eventually they lost the fortification.
- **The Colonists Extended an Olive Branch Petition** - Congress issued a petition declaring its loyalty to King George III, and stating its hope that he would help arrange a reconciliation and prevent further hostilities against the Colonies. Four months later, King George III rejected the petition and declared the Colonies in rebellion.
- **Congress Created Treaties with the American Indians** - Acting as an independent government, Congress appointed commissioners to create peace treaties with the American Indians.
- **Congress Created the Navy** - Congress began to plan for aggressive action against British ships stocked with ammunition. It authorized the building of four armed ships, and began to formulate rules for a navy. On December 22, Congress named Esek Hopkins commodore of the fledgling American navy. Soon after, Congress authorized privateering, and issued rules for dealing with enemy vessels and plunder.
- **Congress Searched for Foreign Aid** - When a congressional committee began to investigate the possibility of foreign aid in the war against Great Britain, France expressed interest.

1776

- **"Common Sense" was Published** - Thomas Paine moved many to the cause of independence with his pamphlet titled "Common Sense" that was published in January 1776. In a direct, simple style, he cried out against King George III and the monarchical form of government.
- **The British Evacuated Boston** - American General Henry Knox arrived in Boston with cannons he had moved with great difficulty from Fort Ticonderoga, New York. Americans began to entrench themselves around Boston, planning to attack the British. British General William Howe planned an attack, but eventually retreated from Boston.
- **Congress Authorized the Colonies to Write Constitutions** - In May, the **Second Continental Congress** adopted a resolution authorizing the Colonies to adopt new constitutions; the former colonial governments had dissolved with the outbreak of war.
- **Congress Declared Independence from the British Crown** - When North Carolina and Virginia empowered their delegates to vote for American independence, Virginian Richard Henry Lee offered a resolution stating that the Colonies "are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." A committee was appointed to draft a declaration of independence,

and Thomas Jefferson was chosen to write it. Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence at the **Declaration House, or Graff House, in Philadelphia**. In writing this historic document, Jefferson appealed to the natural principles of justice and equality. On July 2, Congress voted in favor of independence, and on July 4, the Declaration of Independence was approved at **Independence Hall** in **Philadelphia**. Copies were sent throughout the Colonies to be read publicly.

- **Battle of Long Island** - After leaving Boston, British General Howe planned to use New York as a base. The British captured Staten Island and began a military build-up on Long Island in preparation for an advance on Brooklyn. Washington succeeded in saving his army by secretly retreating onto Manhattan Island. Washington eventually retreated from Manhattan, fearing the prospect of being trapped on the island, and the British occupied New York City.
- **Congress Named Commissioners to Treat with Foreign Nations** - Congress sent a delegation of three men to Europe -- Silas Deane, Benjamin Franklin, and Arthur Lee -- to prepare treaties of commerce and friendship, and to attempt to secure loans from foreign nations.
- **The Battle of White Plains Waged** - British and American battled at White Plains, New York, where the British captured an important fortification. Washington once again retreated, still attempting to save his army from the full force of the British army.
- **Retreat through New Jersey** - Washington and his army retreated across New Jersey, crossing the Delaware River into **Pennsylvania**. Congress, fearing a British attack on **Philadelphia**, fled to Baltimore.
- **Battle of Trenton** - On December 26, Washington launched a surprise attack against a British fortification at Trenton, New Jersey, that was staffed by Hessian soldiers. After one hour of confused fighting, the Hessians surrendered. Only five American soldiers were killed.

1777

- **Washington Defeated the British in the Battle of Princeton** - British General Howe reacted to the Battle of Trenton by sending a large force of men to New Jersey. At Princeton, General Washington once again launched a surprise attack, and succeeded in defeating the British. His efforts cleared most of New Jersey of enemy forces, and greatly boosted American morale.
- **America Developed a Flag** - On June 14, Congress declared that **the flag of the United States** would consist of thirteen alternating red and white stripes, and a blue field with thirteen white stars.
- **The British Attacked Philadelphia** - British and Americans met at Brandywine Creek, **Pennsylvania**. The Americans retreated, and the British soon occupied **Philadelphia**, forcing Congress once again to flee the city. The British soldiers occupied **Philadelphia** from September 1777 to June of 1778. During their occupation, the British pillaged the city, and many American prisoners of war died and were buried in **Washington Square**, one block from **Independence Hall**. General Washington, after retreating further during the **Battle of Germantown**, settled his army for the winter in **Valley Forge, Pennsylvania** -- a winter of extreme cold and great hunger. Valley Forge is just 30 miles outside **Philadelphia**.

- **Saratoga** - On October 7, British and American troops engaged in New York. Fatigued from battle and short of supplies, British General John Burgoyne's troops were repulsed by American forces under General Horatio Gates. On October 8, Burgoyne retreated to Saratoga; by October 13th, he asked for terms of surrender. The "Convention of Saratoga" called for Burgoyne's army to be sent back to England, and for each soldier to pledge not to serve again in the war against the Colonies.
- **The "Conway Cabal" Occurred** - Many in Congress were unhappy with Washington's leadership; some murmured the name of General Horatio Gates as a possible replacement. Thomas Conway, the army's Inspector General, wrote a critical letter to Gates about Washington, leading many to believe there was an organized effort to replace Washington. Conway resigned from the army, and eventually apologized to Washington.
- **Articles of Confederation Were Adopted** - When Richard Henry Lee made a motion for independence in 1776, he also proposed a formal plan of union among the states. After a discussion lasting more than a year, the Articles of Confederation were adopted by Congress in late 1777, although the states did not ratify the Articles until 1781. The Articles of Confederation established the first form of American government

1778

- **France and America Became Allies** - France and America formed an alliance, negotiated by Benjamin Franklin, stating that each would consider the other a "most favored nation" for trade and friendship; France would be obligated to fight for American independence; and America would be obligated to stand by France if war should occur between France and Great Britain. Within four months, France and Great Britain were at war.
- **The British Attempted to Make Peace** - Threatened by the alliance between France and America, Parliament proposed the repeal of the Tea Act (1773) and Coercive Acts (1774), pledged not to tax the Colonies, and sent peace commissioners to America. However, most Americans were interested only in British recognition of American independence. When a British commissioner tried to bribe congressmen Joseph Reed, Robert Morris, and Francis Dana, Americans became even less interested in reconciliation. Competing for support from the American people, both Congress and the desperate commissioners appealed directly to them with broadsides, but the British commissioners soon returned to Great Britain, their mission a failure.
- **John Paul Jones Won Some Victories** - Although Esek Hopkins was never very successful with the American Navy, Captain John Paul Jones won several victories against the British with his ship named the "Ranger."
- **The Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey** - When the British headed for New York, Washington left **Valley Forge, Pennsylvania** to follow. At the Battle of Monmouth in New Jersey, American General Charles Lee gave several confused orders, and then ordered a sudden retreat. Washington's arrival on the scene saved the battle, although the British escaped to New York during the night. Lee was later court-martialed.

1779

- **The British Attacked in the North and South** - Fighting continued in both the northern and southern states. In the frontier settlements of **Pennsylvania**, Loyalists and Indians led by

Mohawk Joseph Brant attacked American settlers. The Loyalists soon were defeated, and Americans went on to destroy many Native American villages whose residents were fighting on the side of the British.

- **Spain Joined the War** - Spain asked Britain for Gibraltar as a reward for joining the war on the British side. When Britain refused, Spain joined with France in its war against Britain, although refusing to recognize American independence.

1780

- **The British Took Charleston, South Carolina** - After a brief fight, the British took Charleston, capturing 5,400 men and four American ships in the harbor. It was the worst American defeat of the war.
- **A Mutiny Occurred in the Continental Army** - When the value of Continental currency sank to a new low, Congress had problems supplying the United States Army. Great shortages of food led to a short-lived mutiny among some Connecticut soldiers at Washington's camp in New Jersey.
- **Benedict Arnold Committed Treason** - American General Benedict Arnold, frustrated and ambitious, began dealing with British General Sir Henry Clinton. After he was promised the command at West Point by General Washington, Arnold told Clinton that he would give the strategic American fortification to the British. But when British Major John André, acting as messenger, was captured, Arnold fled to a British ship, revealing his involvement in the treasonous plan. André was executed as a spy, and Arnold was made a brigadier general in the British army.

1781

- **Congress Created a Department of Finance** - American finances were in such dire straits that Congress saw the need for a separate Department of Finance. Robert Morris was appointed Superintendent of Finance.
- **The Articles of Confederation Were Ratified** - With the ratification of the Articles of Confederation, under discussion since 1777, Congress assumed a new title, "The United States in Congress Assembled."
- **French and American Troops Waged War at the Battle of Yorktown, Virginia** - French and American forces joined at Yorktown, on land and at sea, and attacked British fortifications. Key British points were soon held by the Americans and French, and British General Cornwallis soon surrendered, giving up almost 8,000 men. With this defeat, Britain lost hope of winning the war in America.

1782

- **Peace Negotiations Commenced in Paris** - British, French, and American commissioners met in Paris to discuss peace. The United States sent Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay. By November, the commissioners had drafted a peace treaty. Its terms called for Great Britain to recognize American independence and provide for the evacuation of all British troops. Great Britain also gave up its territory between the Mississippi River and the Allegheny Mountains, doubling the size of the new nation.

1783

- **The American Army Complained** - When a delegation of army officers complained to Congress about their unpaid salaries and pensions, Congress had no quick solution. An anonymous letter urged officers to unite and attempt one last appeal to Congress. If its attempt was ignored, the army was prepared to revolt against Congress. Washington, addressing the army in person at its headquarters in Newburgh, New York, convinced them to be patient, and not to dishonor themselves after their glorious victory. Visibly moved, the officers adopted resolutions to present to Congress, and pledged not to threaten violence or rebellion.
- **Congress Ratified the Preliminary Articles of Peace** - After Spain, France, and Britain successfully came to terms, the treaty between France, Britain, and America was put into effect, and warfare formally ceased. Congress ratified the Articles of Peace on April 15.
- **The Loyalists and British Evacuated New York** - New York City was the last Loyalist refuge in America. Starting in April, nearly 30,000 Loyalists, knowing that the British soon would leave New York, packed their belongings and sailed to Canada and England, followed shortly by the British army. In November, when the British sailed away, Washington entered the city and formally bade farewell to his officers. Soon after, he resigned his commission.
- **The American Army Disbanded** - In June, most of Washington's army disbanded and headed for home just before the British evacuated New York. A small force remained until all the British had departed.
- **Congress Was Threatened** - A group of soldiers from **Pennsylvania** marched on Congress, demanding their pay. Armed and angry, they surrounded **Independence Hall** in **Philadelphia**. The members of Congress eventually were allowed to leave the building; they fled to Princeton, New Jersey.
- **Treaty of Paris Signed** - The United States and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Paris to officially end the American Revolutionary War. Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States.

1784

- **The Western Territories** - Thomas Jefferson headed a committee that proposed a plan for dividing the western territories, providing a temporary government for the West, and devising a method for new western states to enter the Union on an equal basis with the original states. The plan was adopted, but not put into effect.
- **Congress Created a Board of Finance** - When Robert Morris resigned as Superintendent of Finance, he was replaced by a Board of Finance consisting of three commissioners.
- **New York Named as the Temporary Capital** - Congress decided to make New York City the temporary capital of the United States, until the location of a permanent federal city was decided upon.

1785

- **Congress Lacked Power over Commerce** - When American commissioners attempted to make trade arrangements with Britain, the British Ambassador refused, because any state could decline to abide by Congress's trade regulations. The inability of Congress to regulate commerce on a national scale led to the formation of a committee dedicated to appealing to

the states to grant Congress enlarged powers over commerce. Despite these attempts, no effective action was taken.

- **Conference Held at Mount Vernon, Virginia** - Several commissioners from Virginia and Maryland met at Mount Vernon in Virginia, which was the home of George Washington, to discuss regulation of trade between the two states. At the meeting's conclusion, the commissioners suggested that all the states meet at a convention in Annapolis to discuss common commercial problems.
- **Basic Land Ordinance Was Enacted** - Congress arranged for surveys to divide the Western territories into townships, with one lot in each town set aside as a site for a public school.

1786

- **Shay's Rebellion Served As Spark for New Government Reforms** - Shay's Rebellion occurred in Massachusetts and was viewed as an effort to "level" the inequalities that the new nation was experiencing in the aftermath of the Revolution. Due to the lack of a Federal response to this armed uprising, there were newly energized calls to reevaluate the Articles of Confederation. Further, this rebellion gave strong impetus to the **Constitutional Convention** which began in May 1787.
- **Attempts Made to Revise the Articles of Confederation** - In Congress, Charles Pinckney proposed a revision of the Articles of Confederation. A committee debated the question, and recommended several changes, including granting Congress power over foreign and domestic commerce, and enabling Congress to collect money owed by the states. Under the Articles of Confederation, unanimous approval from all thirteen states would be necessary to pass the suggested changes. Doubting that all the states would ever agree, Congress never acted.
- **Annapolis Convention Held** - Nine states agreed to send delegates to Annapolis, Maryland to discuss commerce, but only five state delegations arrived on time. Because of the poor attendance, the delegates decided to invite the states to another convention. Alexander Hamilton drafted an address to the states, inviting them to a convention to be held in **Philadelphia** in 1787, to discuss not only commerce, but all matters necessary to improve the federal government. After debate, on February 21, 1787, Congress endorsed the plan to revise the Articles of Confederation.

1787

- **The Constitutional Convention Met in Philadelphia** - Every state but Rhode Island sent delegates to the **Constitutional Convention** in **Philadelphia** which met at **Independence Hall**. The gathering included some of the most respected and talented men in America. George Washington was named president.
- **The Virginia Plan Was Proposed** - Edmund Randolph proposed the "Virginia Plan," drafted by James Madison -- a plan that recommended an entirely new form of government, including an executive, a judiciary, and a legislature composed of two houses and including a number of representatives from each state based on their population.
- **The New Jersey Plan Was Proposed** - Opposition came from the small states, which feared domination by the more populous states in the legislature. William Paterson proposed the "New Jersey Plan," which essentially revised the Articles of Confederation, preserving equal

representation of the states. After much debate, the Convention rejected the New Jersey Plan, deciding instead to work toward an entirely new form of government.

- **The Connecticut Compromise Was Successful** - The issue of representation in the two houses of the new national legislature became a major sticking point for the Convention. Roger Sherman was helpful in framing the "Connecticut Compromise," a plan that suggested representation in the lower house (the House of Representatives) based on population, and equal representation in the upper house (the Senate). With this compromise, the Convention succeeded in completing a rough draft of a constitution.
- **A Committee of Style Was Appointed** - A Committee of Style was appointed to create a final draft; Gouverneur Morris was chosen to write it. After carefully reviewing the draft, the Convention approved the Constitution on September 17, 1787. After signing it and sending it to Congress, the **Constitutional Convention** adjourned.
- **It Was a Rising Sun** - During the proceedings of the **Constitutional Convention**, George Washington was seated in the only original piece of furniture still in **Independence Hall** today, the high-back chair that has a gilded sun carved at the top. Throughout the **Constitutional Convention**, Benjamin Franklin noticed this chair and the half-sun depicted on it. Noting that painters often found it difficult in their art to distinguish a rising sun from a setting one, Franklin commented that he had similar concerns about the future of America. Was the sun rising or setting upon this nation? But, as Franklin saw the finished Constitution taking form and the system of government it would produce, he stated, "Now, at length, I have the happiness to know that it is a rising sun and not a setting sun."
- **The Northwest Ordinance Was Implemented** - While the Constitutional Convention debated a new government, Congress decided upon a plan for governing all Western territories north of the Ohio River. The Northwest Ordinance provided for a plan of government, the creation of states, the acceptance of each new state as an equal of the original states, freedom of religion, right to a trial by jury, public support of education, and the prohibition of slavery. Arthur St. Clair was named first governor of the territory.
- **Congress Received the Constitution of the United States** - Although some congressmen were displeased at the Convention for doing far more than revising the Articles of Confederation, on September 28 Congress agreed to pass the Constitution on to the states, so each could debate it in separate ratifying conventions. Nine states had to agree to the new Constitution for it to go into effect.
- **The Federalist Was Born** - Supporters of the Constitution – Federalists – and opponents of the Constitution – Anti-Federalists – fought fiercely in the press. Seventy-seven essays, written anonymously by "Publius," appeared in New York newspapers, explaining and defending the new Constitution. These essays, published in book form with eight additional essays, were titled *The Federalist*. Written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist* was the most organized, coherent effort to defend the Constitution.

1788

- **The Constitution Was Ratified by Nine States** - On June 21, 1778, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the new Constitution, making its adoption official. Preceding New Hampshire were Delaware, **Pennsylvania**, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, and South Carolina. Virginia and New York ratified shortly after

New Hampshire, followed by North Carolina in November 1789. Rhode Island was last to ratify, not joining the Union until May 1790.

- **Congress Stepped Aside for a New Government** - On July 2, 1788, Congress announced that the Constitution of the United States had been adopted. By September, a committee had prepared for the change in government, naming New York City as the temporary official capital, and setting dates for elections and for the meeting of the first Congress under the new Constitution. Congress completed its business on October 10. Its last action was the granting of ten square miles of land to Congress for a federal town in Washington, D.C.

1789

- **George Washington Inaugurated** – George Washington was inaugurated into his first term as the first President of the United States at Federal Hall in New York City.
- **First Congress Met** – The first Federal Congress under the new Constitution of the United States met in New York City.

1790

- **Benjamin Franklin's Death** – Benjamin Franklin died on April 17 at the age of 84. He is buried at **Christ Church Burial Ground in Philadelphia**.
- **Nation's Capital Moved to Philadelphia** - **Philadelphia** became the nation's temporary Capital while the permanent site in Washington, D.C., is prepared near the Potomac River.

1791

- **The First Bank of the United States was Created** - The First Bank of the United States was chartered by Congress and President Washington in **Philadelphia**, under the direction of the First Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. The First Bank's legacy lives on because it sparked the first great Constitutional debate regarding the interpretation of The United States Constitution. The debate was between the conservatives and liberals about whether or not there should be a Federal Banking system with a Treasury Department.
- **Bill of Rights Ratified** - Initially drafted by James Madison in 1789, the Bill of Rights was written at a time when ideological conflict between Federalists and anti-Federalists, dating from the **Philadelphia Convention in 1787**, threatened the Constitution's ratification. The Bill was influenced by George Mason's 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights, the 1689 English Bill of Rights, works of the Age of Enlightenment pertaining to natural rights, and earlier English political documents such as the Magna Carta (1215). The Bill was largely a response to the Constitution's influential opponents, including prominent Founding Fathers, who argued that it failed to protect the basic principles of human liberty.

The Bill of Rights consists of the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution. These amendments became law upon ratification in 1791. These amendments limit the powers of the federal government, protecting the rights of the people by preventing Congress from abridging freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religious worship, the freedom to petition, and the right to keep and bear arms, preventing unreasonable search and seizure, cruel and unusual punishment, and self-incrimination, and guaranteeing due process of law and a speedy public trial with an impartial jury.

The Bill of Rights plays a central role in American law and government, and remains a fundamental symbol of the freedoms and culture of the nation. One of the original fourteen copies of the Bill of Rights is on public display at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

1793

- **George Washington Inaugurated** – George Washington was inaugurated into his second term as the first President of the United States at **Congress Hall in Philadelphia.**

1797

- **John Adams Inaugurated** – John Adams was inaugurated into his first and only term as the second President of the United States at **Congress Hall in Philadelphia.** The inauguration of John Adams was quite significant since it marked the first peaceful transition of power in a modern democracy.

1800

- **The Nation's Capital Moved from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C.** - The United States Government moved to its new home in Washington, D.C. which is bordered by the states of Virginia (to the West) and Maryland (to the North, East and South).

Source: The Constitutional Walking Tour of Philadelphia; and “America During the Age of Revolution, 1764-1789,” This timeline is drawn largely from the work of Richard B. Morris, in particular his *Encyclopedia of American History*. The Library of Congress, American Memory, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Continental Congress & Constitutional Convention Broad­sides Collection, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/continental/timeline.html>