

31 When It's Over, Shout Hooray



General Washington, in skirts, beats Britannia. His whip has 13 lashes, one for each colony.

The American Revolutionary War lasted almost nine years and was longer than any war in American history until the Vietnam War in the 20th century. It actually went on for two years after the battle of Yorktown, but mostly just in small skirmishes. The battle of Yorktown convinced most people—but not King George III—that Great Britain had lost.

Now, back to the War of Independence.

The British had more fighting men, more guns, and more experience. But the Americans had a big advantage: they believed in their cause. In England the war was not popular, and the longer it lasted, the more unpopular it became. It went on and on and on—for more than eight years. Besides, the military leaders in England were trying to plan a war that was being fought thousands of miles away. That never works well.

After the American victory at Saratoga, the war in the North became stalemated. That means it was even. That was good for the Patriots. Holding on was

a kind of victory for the Americans; the British had to beat the Rebel forces in order to win. So the English generals tried a new strategy: they shifted the war south.

By 1778, three years into the war, Sir William Howe had gotten tired of the war and of being criticized for the way he was running things, so he resigned. General Henry Clinton became the new commander in chief of the British forces. Clinton believed the South was full of Loyalists and that they would help the English soldiers. He named Lord Charles Cornwallis commander of his troops in the southern states. Then he loaded soldiers onto



Lord Cornwallis won battles in the South, but lost many men. "What is our plan?" he wrote. "Without one, we cannot succeed, and I assure you I am quite tired of marching about the country."

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ships in New York harbor and sent them south. (Clinton kept a force in New York to hold on to that important city.)

Cornwallis was an able leader. First the British captured Savannah, Georgia. A British colonel wrote of ripping "one star and one stripe from the Rebel flag of America." He was talking about Georgia. It seemed to be in British hands. Next Cornwallis took Charleston, South Carolina. An American who was there described the British attack.

It appeared as if the stars were tumbling down...cannon balls whizzing and shells hissing continually amongst us; ammunition chests blowing up, great guns bursting and wounded men groaning.

The British won again at Camden, South Carolina. That was a big win. England thought it had won the South, but those who believed in the Patriot cause wouldn't let them have it. Americans formed guerilla bands and fought as the Indians did—with raiding parties. "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again," said Nathanael Greene (the same man who was quartermaster general at Valley Forge). It must have been frustrating for the English officers. They kept winning the big battles, but they seemed to be losing the war.

Then came the most important battle of all, the battle of Yorktown.

Yorktown is a river port, near the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. That's where General Cornwallis brought his troops in August 1781. It seemed an ideal headquarters spot for an army that got its supplies and support from the sea. Cornwallis's boss, General Clinton, was at the British military headquarters in New York; Clinton promised to send men and supplies by sea. The British were sure they would soon control Virginia.

Washington and a French general, the Comte de Rochambeau (kont-duh-ROSH-um-bo), were in Rhode Island making plans. At first they thought they would march their armies to New York, although they knew that city would be hard to take. Then they got word that a French admiral, Admiral de Grasse, was sailing from Haiti in the West Indies to Chesapeake Bay with a fleet of 28 ships. Could he blockadè the bay and keep supplies from Cornwallis? That was what they hoped would happen. Rochambeau and Washington decided it was the chance they had been waiting for. They knew they would have to march their troops south—almost 500 miles. They had only a few weeks to do it; the French fleet couldn't stay for long.



The siege of Yorktown really succeeded because the French navy drove off the British rescue fleet sent from New York. After that, Cornwallis and his redcoats were trapped.

The American war is over, but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. Nothing but the first act of the drama is closed.

—BENJAMIN RUSH

After the war, some 100,000 Loyalists moved from the United States to Canada.



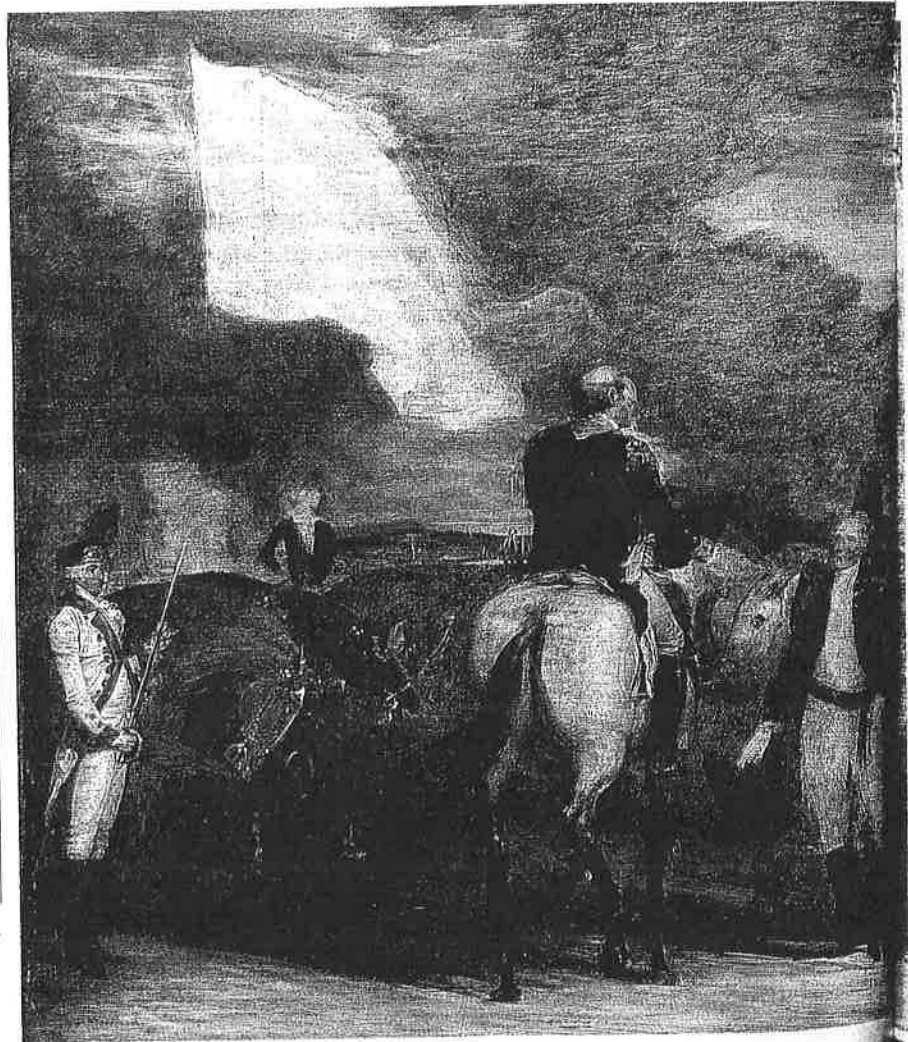
John Paul Jones

John Paul Jones was a Scottish-born merchant seaman who became America's first naval hero when, in 1779, the French gave him command of a small fleet and he set sail for England. In an exciting moonlit battle, his ship, the *Bonhomme Richard* (the French name for Ben Franklin's *Poor Richard*), fought the British warship *Serapis*. The British captain lashed the vessels together and asked Jones to surrender. He replied, "I have not yet begun to fight." And he had not. Before the night was over Jones accepted the surrender of his enemy.

They marched south together, and it must have been some sight. The French officers were elegant in white uniforms with gold braid. Their horses pulled wagons holding chests full of coins.

Most of the American officers wore bright blue uniforms with cream-colored trim (called buff). By this time many American privates (the ordinary soldiers) had uniforms, too, although they were often torn and ragged. But it didn't matter; the soldiers marched proudly with their general. They had become a disciplined army.

At Yorktown, three great military leaders greeted them: the dashing Frenchman, the Marquis de Lafayette; the cheerful German, Baron von Steuben; and a bold American, General Anthony Wayne (who was called "Mad Anthony" because he was so daring). They had great news for General Washington.



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The French admiral, the Comte de Grasse, had arrived at Chesapeake Bay, fought the English fleet, and sent it sailing back to New York. And that wasn't all. De Grasse had brought extra troops who could fight on land. When George Washington heard all that news he took off his hat and handkerchief and waved them about. That was unusual behavior for the dignified general. "I have never seen a man moved by a greater or more sincere joy than was General Washington," wrote a French duke. When a French general stepped ashore, Washington gave the startled officer a big hug.

The French-American army moved into Yorktown. They dug deep trenches at night. In the morning the British redcoats found themselves trapped. A half-circle of entrenched soldiers faced them. The York River was behind them. The Americans began firing their cannons. Then a brave young colonel named Alexander Hamilton led an attack. He captured a key British earth fortress.

The British didn't have a chance. They were outnumbered and outflanked. Cornwallis did everything he could. He even tried to save his army by sailing his soldiers across the York River to safety. But he had bad luck—a sudden storm swamped the boats.

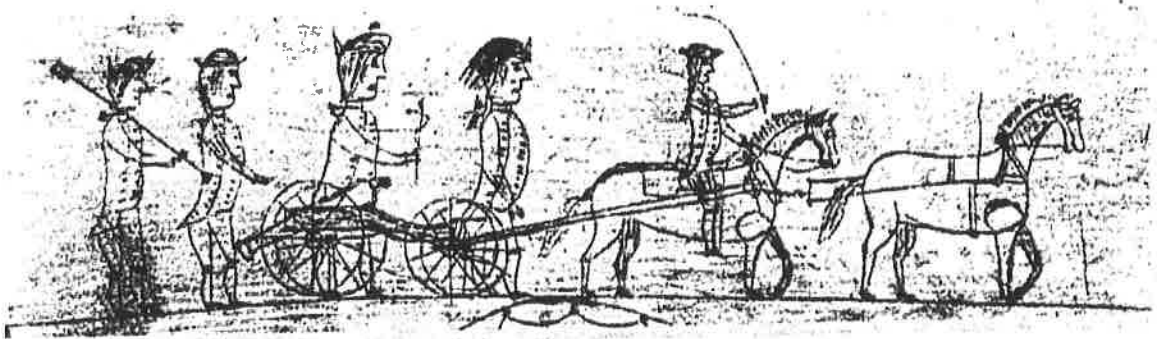
The British adventure in America was coming to

When the British surrendered at Yorktown, Lord Cornwallis could not bring himself to hand over his sword in person, so Brigadier General Charles O'Hara of the Guards did the deed. The War of Independence was over.



After beating off the British fleet, the French admiral De Grasse sent ships to fetch the American troops to Williamsburg.

The British surrender at Yorktown took place exactly four years to the day after Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga.



In this drawing scratched on a powder horn, a band of Continental soldiers moves a siege cannon toward enemy lines. This type of cannon was used at Yorktown.

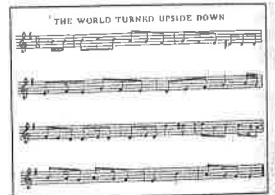
The war is officially over in September 1783 when a peace agreement—known as the Treaty of Paris (because it is signed in Paris, France)—is accepted by English and American delegates (including Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay). The British recognize that their former colonies are “to be free, sovereign and independent states.” Britain cedes to the new nation all its land south of the Great Lakes and east of the Mississippi. Florida is returned to Spain. The Americans agree to “earnestly recommend” to the states that confiscated Loyalist property be returned to its former owners.

an end at Yorktown, just 25 miles from Jamestown, where it had all begun.

An English drummer boy climbed on top of a trench and beat his drums. An officer followed waving a white handkerchief. The great British army was surrendering. It was October 17, 1781.

Two days later, American soldiers stood proudly in a long line; facing them was a line of happy French soldiers. Between them marched the British and German armies; the defeated men were wearing clean uniforms and trying to keep their heads high, but many British soldiers cried when they laid down their arms. Army bands played an old English nursery tune, “The World Turned Upside Down.” Here are the words and music:

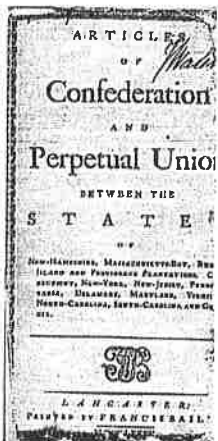
*If buttercups buzzed after the bee;
If boats were on land, churches on sea;
If ponies rode men and grass ate the cows;
And cats should be chased to holes by the mouse;
If the mammas sold their babies to the gypsies for half a crown;
Summer were spring and the t’other way round;
Then all the world would be upside down.*



And upside down it was. David had licked Goliath. The colonies would soon be states; the infant New World was growing up. A superpower had been defeated by an upstart colony.

A new nation was being formed: a nation that would try not to make the mistakes of its European parents. A nation that would be founded on ideas of freedom and equality. A nation ruled by laws, not kings. That nation soon had a great seal—which you can see on every dollar bill. On one side are two Latin words, *annuit coeptis*—“[God] has favored our venture.” On the other side are the Latin words *novus ordo seclorum*. They mean, “A new order of the ages [is created].”

32 Experimenting with a Nation



The Articles of Confederation were the country's first constitution—but they were too weak to do a good job.

Imagine a city built of wooden blocks. Do you see it in your mind? Make sure it has houses and bridges and walls. Knock it down. Now build it again.

Which takes longer, destroying or building? Which is harder?

It's the same way with governments.

Revolutions are difficult—overthrowing Britain wasn't easy at all for the American colonists—but building a strong nation was much harder.

The American Revolution was unusual; it produced people who were good at nation building. When you study other revolutions, like the ones in France and Russia, you'll see how lucky we were.

At first, though, it looked like it might not happen. It seemed as if the 13 states would never get along. They certainly weren't "united." Each state

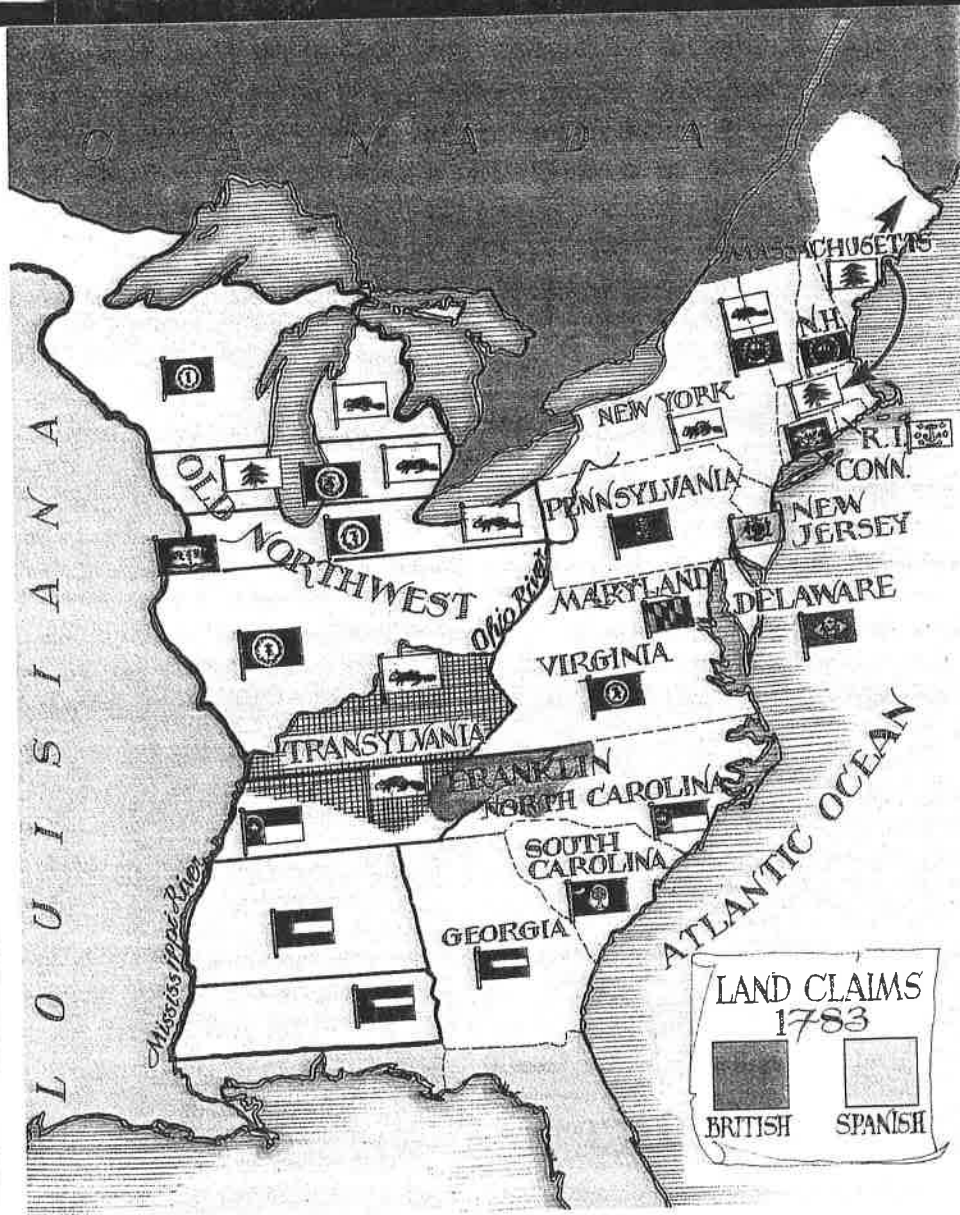
was printing its own money and making its own rules. Eleven states had their own navies. Virginia's navy had 72 ships. The Continental Congress was trying to run a national government, and it had a navy, too—but it was smaller than Virginia's. The Congress was also printing money. As you can guess, soon none of the money was worth anything, and that was terrible for most citizens.

Besides all that, each state got into the taxing business: New York was taxing goods from New Jersey, and New Jersey was taxing goods from New York. Virginia and Maryland

In 1782, Colonel Lewis Nicola wrote a letter to General Washington suggesting he use his army to seize power and proclaim himself king. Washington replied, "You could not have found a person to whom your schemes were more disagreeable."

Supply & Demand

There is an economic law called the law of *supply and demand*. If there is a big supply of something, the price—usually goes down. Gold is expensive because it is beautiful and *rare*. If there were gold nuggets all over the place, the price of gold would go way down. Money works in roughly the same way. If a government prints lots of money, the value of its money goes down. That means it costs many dollars to buy something that once took only a few dollars. That is called *inflation*.



Everyone who could make a claim to the lands west of the Appalachians and east of the Mississippi was doing it. Some areas were claimed by three or four states at once. (See key to the right of map.)

have. The first constitution of the United States was called the Articles of Confederation. It didn't work well at all. That was because the American citizens were afraid of political power. They had had a bad experience with kings and parliament. They were afraid of a strong congress and of a strong president. So they went to the other extreme. They didn't give Congress the power to do much of anything. There was no president except the president of the Congress. And there wasn't much he could do either. Ask anyone, "Who was the first president of our country?" The answer will be "George Washington." But you can say that the first president was John Hanson. Very few people will believe you. It's true, though. Hanson became president under the Articles of Con-

were squabbling over boundary lines. Little states were jealous of big states—and vice versa. In Massachusetts some farmers rebelled against the government in Boston. In Philadelphia and New York newspapers reported a movement to create three separate nations out of the 13 former colonies. In England people were saying that the Americans would soon be begging to be taken back.

As you can see, the United States got off to a rocky start. We didn't have a good working plan for a government.

We didn't begin with the Constitution we now

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N.Y.

Va.

S.C.

N.C.

Mass.

Pa.

R.I.

N.J.

Del.

Ga.

federation, on November 5, 1781. President Hanson didn't make himself remembered, because he had no power.

In 1781 Americans were facing one of the toughest problems there can be in designing a government. How do you provide freedom for each person and still have a government powerful enough to accomplish things?

You have to give up some freedom when you are part of a society that is ruled by laws. The question is, how much do you have to give up? The Americans, at the end of the 18th century, had just fought hard for liberty. They weren't about to give up much at all. They went too far—but they learned.

The national government, under the Articles of Confederation, was just too weak. Everyone seemed to know it. Most of the time the states wouldn't even send representatives to Philadelphia to vote at meetings of the Congress. A lot of people felt the voting wasn't fair anyway. Each state had an equal vote in Congress. That meant that 68,000 Rhode Islanders had one vote, and so did 538,000 Virginians.

Then something really insulting happened. In 1783 Congress got chased out of Philadelphia by its own army, because it hadn't paid the soldiers their salaries. But Congress had no money to pay the salaries and no power to collect taxes. (It is tax money that governments use to pay their bills.)

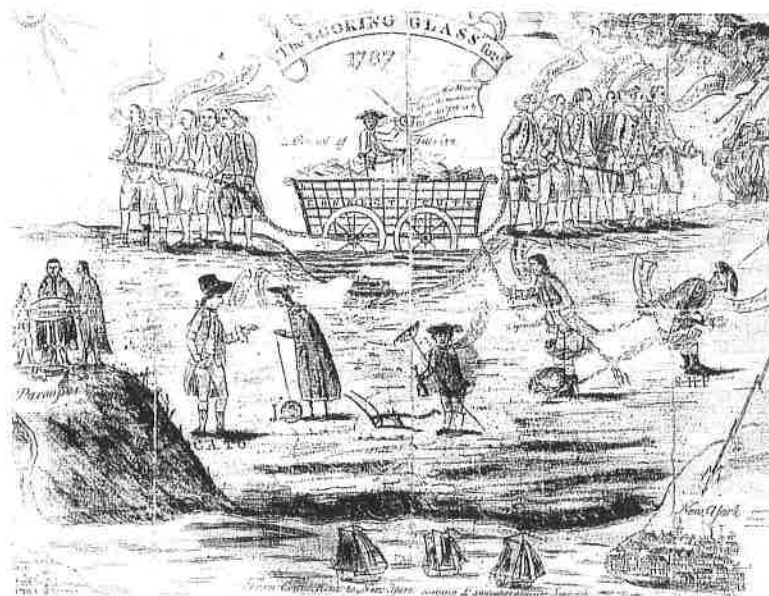
It would take six years for the people living in this land to create a workable kind of government.

At first the former colonists didn't even know what to call themselves. We began as a nation without a name. Some called us the American Commonwealth; others said the American Confederation. Some talked of "united states"; a few said *the* United States.

But most people still thought of themselves first as citizens of the state they lived in. They were having a hard time accepting the idea of a nation that might be more important and powerful

The Articles of Confederation were written by a committee appointed by the Second Continental Congress on July 12, 1776. They were ratified in 1781 and lasted until 1789.

In 1787, when this cartoon was printed, America's government was in a mess. Two groups of six states are engaged in a tug-of-war, each trying to pull a wagon labeled "Connecticut" over to their side.



A HISTORY OF US

England's Indian Ally

Mohawk Joseph Brant (you remember, William Johnson's brother-in-law) was now fighting settlers in western New York and Pennsylvania. Easterners were ignoring Indian treaties and moving into those regions. The English were secretly helping Brant, who was a skilled warrior. They didn't think the new nation would last long. In 1785 Brant went to England and met George III. He made a big hit in England. Brant was highly educated and had translated the Bible into Mohawk.

In this British cartoon, a triumphant America has laid down bow and arrow and is offering the olive branch of peace to a weeping Britannia.

than their separate and beloved states. They didn't even like the word "nation." They called it a "union" of states.

People in the territories felt the same way. You already know about independent Vermont. Well, some people tried to make Kentucky into a nation, too. (In 1792 the Commonwealth of Kentucky became the first state west of the Appalachian mountains.) There was even a state that called itself Franklin, off to the west of North Carolina. It was territory where Mound Builders had once flourished. Before long Franklin became a state with an Indian name: Tennessee.

Settlers were filling up the Ohio River Valley, and that was causing problems. Much of that western land was claimed by Virginia, but other big states were claiming some of it, too. The states without western lands were jealous. How could arguments between the states be settled unless a central government had more power than any one state?

There was one good thing about the Articles of Confederation: they were so weak they made a strong constitution possible.



