

# A.P. U.S. History Notes

## Chapter 8: “America Secedes from the Empire”

~ 1775 – 1783 ~

- I. Congress Drafts George Washington
  1. After the bloodshed at Lexington and Concord in April of 1775, about 20,000 Minutemen swarmed around Boston, where they outnumbered the British.
  2. The Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775, with no real intention of independence, merely a desire to continue fighting in the hope that the king and Parliament would consent to a redress of grievances.
    - a. It sent another list of grievances to Parliament.
    - b. It also adopted measures to raise money for an army and a navy.
    - c. It also selected George Washington to command the army.
      - (1) George had never risen above the rank of colonel, and his largest command had only been of 1200 men, but he was a tall figure who looked like a leader, and thus, was a moral boost to troops.
      - (2) He radiated patience, courage, self-discipline, and a sense of justice, and though he insisted on working without pay, he did keep a careful expense account amounting to more than \$100,00.
- II. Bunker Hill and Hessian Hirelings
  1. In the first year, the war was one of consistency, as the colonists maintained their loyalty while still shooting at the king’s men.
  2. In May 1775, a tiny American force led by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold, surprised and captured the British garrisons at Ticonderoga and Crown Point.
  3. In June 1775, the colonials seized Bunker Hill (before known as Breed’s Hill).
    - a. Instead of flanking them, the Redcoats launched a frontal attack, and the heavily entrenched colonial sharpshooters mowed them down until meager gunpowder supplies ran out and they were forced to retreat.
  4. After Bunker Hill, George III slammed the door for all hope of reconciliation and declared the colonies to be in open rebellion, a treasonous affair.
  5. The King also hired many German mercenaries, called Hessians, who, because they were lured by booty and not duty, had large numbers desert and remained in America to become respectful citizens.
- III. The Abortive Conquest of Canada
  1. In October 1775, the British burned Falmouth (Portland), Maine.
  2. The colonists decided that invading Canada would add a 14<sup>th</sup> colony and deprive Britain of a valuable base for striking at the colonies in revolt.
    - a. Also, the French-Canadians would support the Americans because they supposedly were bitter about Britain’s taking over of their land.
    - b. General Richard Montgomery captured Montreal.
    - c. At Quebec, he was joined by the bedraggled army of General Benedict Arnold.
    - d. On the last day of 1775, in the assault of Quebec, Montgomery was killed and Arnold was wounded in one leg, and the whole campaign collapsed as the men retreated up the St. Lawrence River, reversing the way Montgomery had come.
    - e. Besides, the French-Canadians, who had welcomed the Quebec Act, didn’t really like the anti-Catholic invaders.
  3. In January 1776, the British set fire to Norfolk, Virginia, but in March, they were finally forced to evacuate Boston.
  4. In the South, the rebels won a victory against some 1500 Loyalists at Moore’s Creek Bridge, in South Carolina, and against an invading British fleet at Charleston Harbor.
- IV. Thomas Paine Preaches Common Sense
  1. In 1776, Thomas Paine published *Common Sense*, which urged colonials to stop this war of inconsistency, stop pretending loyalty, and just fight.
  2. Nowhere in the universe did a smaller body control a larger one, so Paine argued, saying why tiny Britain had to control gigantic America.
  3. He called King George III “the Royal Brute of Great Britain.”
- V. Paine and the Idea of “Republicanism”

1. Paine argued his idea that there should be a “republic” where senators, governors, and judges should have their power from the consent of the people.
2. He laced his ideas with Biblical imagery, familiar to common folk.
3. His ideas about rejecting monarchy and empire and embrace an independent republic fell on receptive ears in America, though it should be noted that these ideas already existed.
  - a. The New Englanders already practiced this type of government in their town meetings.
4. Some patriots, though, favored a republic ruled by a “natural aristocracy.”

#### VI. Jefferson’s “Explanation” of Independence

1. Members of the Philadelphia Congress, instructed by their colonies, gradually moved toward a clean break with Britain.
2. On June 7, 1776, fiery Richard Henry urged for complete independence, an idea that was finally adopted on July 2, 1776.
3. To write such a statement, Congress appointed Thomas Jefferson, already renown as a great writer, to concoct a Declaration of Independence.
  - a. He did so eloquently, coming up with a list of grievances against King George III and persuasively explaining why the colonies had the right to revolt.
  - b. His “explanation” of independence also upheld the “natural rights” of humankind.
4. When Congress approved it on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, John Adams proclaimed that date to be celebrated from then on with fireworks, but because of editing and final approval, it was not completely approved until July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776.

#### VII. Patriots and Loyalists

1. The War of Independence was a war within a war, as not all colonials were united.
  - a. There were Patriots, who supported rebellion and were called “Whigs.”
  - b. There were Loyalists, who supported the King, often went to battle against fellow Americans, and were called “Tories.”
  - c. There were those who didn’t care, and these people were constantly being asked to join one side or another.
2. During the war, the British proved that they could only control Tory areas, because when Redcoats packed up and left other areas, the rebels would regain control.
3. The Patriot militias constantly harassed small British detachments.
4. Loyalists were generally conservatives, but the war divided families.
  - a. Benjamin Franklin was against his illegitimate son, William, the last royal governor of New Jersey.
5. The Patriots were generally the younger generation, like Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry.
6. Loyalists were most numerous where the Anglican Church was strongest.
7. There were also those who sold to the highest bidder, selling the British and ignoring starving, freezing soldiers (i.e. George Washington at Valley Forge).
8. Loyalists were less numerous in New England, where Presbyterianism and Congregationalism flourished.

#### VIII. The Loyalist Exodus

1. After the Declaration of Independence, Loyalists and Patriots were more sharply divided, and Patriots often confiscated Loyalist property and resell it (good way to raise money).
2. Some 50,000 Loyalists served the British in one way or another (fighting, spying, etc...), and it was an oddity that the Brits didn’t make more use of them during the war.

#### IX. General Washington at Bay

1. After the evacuation of Boston, the British focused on New York as a HQ for operations.
  - a. An awe-inspiring fleet appeared off the coast in July 1776, consisting of some 500 ships and 35,000 men—the largest armed force seen in America ever until the Civil War.
  - b. Washington could only muster 18,000 ill-trained men to fight, and they were routed at the Battle of Long Island.
  - c. Washington escaped to Manhattan Island, crossed the Hudson River to New Jersey, reaching the Delaware River with taunting, fox-hunt calling British on his heels.
  - d. Crossing the Delaware River at Trenton on a cold December 26, 1776, and surprised and captured a thousand Hessians who were sleeping off their Christmas Day celebration (drinking).
  - e. He then left his campfires burning as a ruse, slipped away, and inflicted a sharp defeat on a smaller British detachment at Princeton, showing his military genius at its best.

- f. It was odd that General William Howe, the British general, didn't crush Washington when he was at the Delaware, but he well remembered Bunker Hill, and was cautious.

#### X. Burgoyne's Blundering Invasion

1. London officials adopted a complicated scheme for capturing the vital Hudson River Valley in 1777 which, if successful, would sever New England from the rest of the colonies:
  - a. General Burgoyne would push down the Lake Champlain route from Canada.
  - b. General Howe's troops in New York, if needed, could advance up the Hudson and meet Burgoyne in Albany.
  - c. A third and much smaller British force commanded by Colonel Barry St. Ledger would come in from the west by way of Lake Ontario and the Mohawk Valley.
2. However, Benedict Arnold, after failure at Quebec, retreated slowly along the St. Lawrence back to Lake Champlain, where the British would have to win control (of the lake) before proceeding.
  - a. The Brits stopped to build a huge force, while Arnold assembled a tattered flotilla from whatever boats he could find.
  - b. His "navy" was destroyed, but he had gained valuable time, because winter set in and the British settled in Canada; they would have to begin anew the next spring.
    - (1) Had Arnold not contributed his daring and skill, the Brits most likely would have recaptured Ticonderoga and Burgoyne could have started from there and succeeded in his venture.
3. Burgoyne began his mission with 7000 troops and a heavy baggage train consisting of a great number of the officers' wives.
  - a. Meanwhile, sneaky rebels, sensing the kill, were gathering along his flanks.
4. General Howe, at a time when he should be starting up the Hudson, deliberately embarked for an attack on Philadelphia.
  - a. He wanted to force an encounter with Washington and leave the path wide open for Burgoyne's thrust; he thought he had enough time to help Burgoyne if needed.
  - b. Washington transferred his troops to Philly, but was defeated at Brandywine Creek and Germantown.
  - c. Then, the fun-loving Howe settled down in Philadelphia, leaving Burgoyne "to the dogs."
  - d. Ben Franklin, in Paris, joked that Howe hadn't captured Philadelphia, but that "Philadelphia had captured Howe."
5. Washington finally retired for the winter at Valley Forge, where his troops froze in the cold, but a recently arrived Prussian drill master, Baron von Steuben, whipped the cold troops into shape.
6. Burgoyne's doomed troops were bogged down, and the rebels swarmed in with a series of sharp engagements, pushing the St. Legers force back at Oriskany while Burgoyne, unable to advance or retreat, surrendered his entire force at Saratoga, on October 17, 1777.
  - a. Perhaps one of the most decisive battles in British and American history.

#### XI. Strange French Bedfellows

1. France was eager to get revenge on Britain, and secretly supplied the Americans throughout much of the war.
2. After the humiliation at Saratoga, the British offered the Americans a measure that gave them home rule—everything they wanted except independence.
3. After Saratoga, France finally was persuaded to enter the war against Britain.
  - a. Louis XVI's ministers argued that this was the perfect time to act, because if Britain regained control, she might then try to capture the French West Indies for compensation for the war.
  - b. Now was the time the strike, rather than risk a stronger Britain with its reunited colonies.
4. France, in 1778, offered a treaty of alliance, offering America everything that Britain had offered, plus recognition of independence.
  - a. The Americans accepted with caution, since France was pro-Catholic, but since they needed help, they'd take it.

#### XII. The Colonial War Becomes a World War

1. In 1779, Spain and Holland entered the war against Britain.
2. In 1780, Catherine the Great of Russia took the lead in organizing the Armed Neutrality (she later called it the Armed Nullity) that lined up all of Europe's neutrals in passive hostility against England.

3. America, though it kept the war going until 1778, didn't win until France, Spain, and Holland joined in and Britain couldn't handle them all.
4. Britain, with the French now in the seas, decided to finally evacuate Philadelphia and concentrate their forces in New York, and even though Washington attacked them at Monmouth on a blisteringly hot day in which scores of men died of sunstroke, the British escaped to New York.

#### XIII. Blow and Counterblow

1. French reinforcements, commanded by Comte de Rochambeau, arrived in Newport, Rhode Island in 1780, but flares sometimes erupted between the Americans and the French.
2. In 1780, feeling unappreciated and lured by British gold, General Benedict Arnold turned traitor by plotting with the British to sell out West Point.
  - a. When the plot was discovered, he fled with the British.
  - b. "Whom can we trust now?" cried George Washington in anguish.
3. The British devised a plan to roll up the colonies from the South.
  - a. Georgia was ruthlessly overrun in 1778-1779.
  - b. Charleston, South Carolina, fell in 1780.
  - c. In the Carolinas, Patriots bitterly fought their Loyalist neighbors.
  - d. However, in 1781, American riflemen wiped out a British detachment at King's Mountain, and then defeated a smaller force at Cowpens.
  - e. At the Carolina campaign of 1781, Quaker-reared tactician General Nathanael Greene distinguished himself with his strategy of delay.
    - (1) By slowly retreating and losing battles but winning campaigns, he helped clear the British out of most of Georgia and South Carolina.

#### XIV. The Land Frontier and the Sea Frontier

1. 1777 was known as the "bloody year" on the frontier, as Indians went on a scalping spree.
2. Most of the Indians supported Britain and believed that if they won, it would stop American expansion into the West, and save Indian land.
3. Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, recently converted to Anglicanism, and his men ravaged the backcountry of Pennsylvania and New York until check by Americans in 1779.
4. In 1784, the pro-British Iroquois (the Oneidas and the Tuscaroras had sided with the Americans, the other four with the British) signed the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the first treaty between the U.S. and an Indian nation.
  - a. Under its terms, the Indians ceded most of their land.
5. Even in wartime, pioneers moved west, showing their gratitude to the French with such town names as Louisville while remembering the Revolution with Lexington, Kentucky.
6. George Rogers Clark, an audacious frontiersman, floated down the Ohio River with about 175 in 1778-1779 and captured forts Kaskaskia, Chohokia, and Vincennes in quick succession.
7. The tiny American navy never really hurt the British warships, but it did destroy British merchant shipping and carried the war into the waters around the British Isles.
8. Swift privateers preyed on enemy shipping, capturing many ships and forcing them to sail in convoys.

#### XV. Yorktown and the Final Curtain.

1. Before the last decisive victory, inflation continued to soar, and the government was virtually bankrupt, and announced that it could only repay many of its debts at a rate of 2.5 cents on the dollar.
2. However, Cornwallis was blundering into a trap.
  - a. Retreating to Chesapeake Bay and assuming that British control of the seas would give him much needed backup, Cornwallis instead was trapped by Washington's army, which had come 300 miles from New York, Rochambeau's French army, and the navy of French Admiral de Grasse.
3. After hearing the news of Cornwallis' defeat, Lord North cried, "Oh God! It's all over!"
4. Stubborn King George wanted to continue the war, since he still had 54,000 troops in North America and 32,000 in the U.S., and fighting did continue for about a year after Yorktown, especially in the South, but America had won.

#### XVI. Peace at Paris

1. Many Brits were weary of the war, since they had suffered heavy reverse in India and the West Indies, the island of Minorca in the Mediterranean had fallen, and the Rock of Gibraltar was tottering.
2. Ben Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay met in Paris for a peace deal.
  - a. Jay suspected that France would try to keep the U.S. cooped up east of the Alleghenies and keep America weak.

- b. Instead, Jay, thinking that France would betray American ambitious to satisfy those of Spain, secretly made separate overtures to London (against instructions from Congress) and came to terms quickly with the British, who were eager to entice one of their enemies from the alliance.
3. The Treaty of Paris of 1783, Britain formally recognized the USA and granted generous boundaries, stretching majestically to the Mississippi on the west, the Great Lakes on the north, and to Spanish Florida on the South.
  - a. The Yankees also retained a share in the priceless fisheries of Newfoundland.
  - b. Americans couldn't persecute Loyalists, though, and Congress could only *recommend* legislatures that confiscated Loyalist land.

#### XVII. A New Nation Legitimized

1. Britain had ceded so much land because it was trying to entice America from its French alliance.
  - a. Remember, George Rogers Clark had only conquered a small part of the land.
2. Also, during the time, the American-friendly Whigs were in control of the Parliament, which was not to be the case in later years.
3. France approved the treaty, though with cautious eyes.
4. In truth, America came out the big winner, and seldom, if ever, have any people been so favored.

#### XVIII. Makers of America: The Loyalists

1. Loyalists were conservative, well-educated, thought that a complete break with Britain would invite anarchy, and felt that America couldn't win against the more powerful army in the world.
2. Many Britons had settled in America after the Seven Years' War, and they had reason to support their home country.
3. Thousands of African-Americans joined the British ranks for hope of freedom from bondage.
  - a. Many Black Loyalists won their freedom from Britain.
  - b. Others suffered betrayal, such as when Cornwallis abandoned over 4000 former slaves in Virginia and when many Black Loyalists boarded ships expecting to embark for freedom and instead found themselves sold back into slavery.
  - c. Some Black exiles settled in Britain, but weren't really accepted easily.
4. Most Loyalists remained in America, where they faced special burdens and struggled to re-establish themselves in a society that viewed them as traitors.
5. Hugh Gaine, though, succeeded.
  - a. He reopened his business and even won contracts fro the new government.
  - b. He also published the new national army regulations authored by Baron von Steuben.
  - c. When New York ratified the Constitution in 1788, Gaine rode the float at the head of the city's celebration parade.
  - d. He had, like many other former Loyalists, become an American.