

Post-independence and building a new government – Ch. 9 “The Confederation and the Constitution,” *The American Pageant* pp. 166-171

Overall main idea: *After the Revolutionary War, the United States’ state governments and society became more democratic, with some limitations, but it struggled to create a stable economy and national government.*

Part Two: Building the New Nation

Main idea: *The United States formed its own government and grew in nationalism, industrial economy, transportation, political democracy, reform movements and culture, but was still divided over slavery.*

The American Revolution was not necessarily a radical or total change; it did not suddenly and violently overturn the entire political and social framework; some isolated people were not even affected by it much

Changes: social customs, political systems, ideas about society, government and gender roles

The Pursuit of Equality

Main idea: *American society changed as a result of the revolution as hereditary rights were struck down, church and state separated, slavery was challenged, and women were expected to be virtuous “Republican Mothers.”*

Societal changes resulting from the American Revolution:

States reduced property-holding requirements for voting

Common people were addressed as “Mr.” and “Mrs.” instead of just high class people; “masters” became “bosses” instead

Indentured servitude was virtually abolished in all states by 1800

Hereditary titles and aristocratic pretensions were ridiculous and looked down upon; inheritance laws were struck down

Trade organizations/unions grew slightly

Many states separated church and government, no longer having an “established” (tax-supported) church; New England continued to have the Congregational Church; the Anglican Church was de-Anglicized and reformed as the Episcopal Church and de-established; Thomas Jefferson wrote and helped pass the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, allowing all religions in Virginia

Philadelphia Quakers founded the world’s first antislavery society in 1775; the Continental Congress debated abolishing the slave trade and slavery but ultimately backed down, fearing disunity of the new nation; many northern states abolished slavery or provided for gradual abolition of slaves; some idealistic southerners freed their slaves on their own (**manumission**); still, laws (slave codes and black codes) continued to discriminate against blacks in North and South

Women gained little rights from the revolution; New Jersey’s state constitution allowed them to vote until a new law was passed later; most continued to do traditional women’s work

Republican Motherhood – the idea that it was the mother’s job to teach and form civic virtue and Republican ideals in her family (including husband) and so provide the

foundation for the new republic; just as a mother must look out for the good of the entire family over her own self-interest, so must American citizens look out for the good of the entire country over their own self-interests

Constitution Making in the States

Main idea: *The Continental Congress called on the colonies to make individual constitutions for their new states, which were based on republican and democratic ideas.*

1776 – the Continental Congress called upon the colonies to make new constitutions, in effect creating their new state governments

The new state constitutions were based on republican and democratic ideas:

Constitutional convention – Massachusetts called a special convention to create the constitution, then submitted it to the people to approve; the only way to change it was by another special convention; the Federal government would later use this idea

Constitution – a written document of fundamental laws on which the future government and laws are based; Britain had no written constitution; they used traditions, customs and precedents that were known as “common law”

Bill of Rights – a document included in the constitutions that guaranteed certain rights in the future government that no law could infringe upon

Division of power into branches – strong legislative branch (the assembly/congress) which the people had the most direct control over; weaker executive and judicial branches (the colonists deeply distrusted them based on their problems with the British previously)

Larger enfranchisement (voting rights) to include almost all propertied white men – allowed poorer western districts to have more power; previously the richer Easterners and planters ruled the government

Also, many states moved their capitals farther west, toward the middle of the state, away from the former richer Eastern centers of power

Economic Crosscurrents

Main idea: *The United States economy was more open and free after the war, stifling radical violence and upheavals, but still struggled from speculation, inflation and lack of control.*

States seized formerly royal and loyalist land and divided it into smaller plots before selling

The radical violence and upheavals associated with later revolutions did not happen in America because there was so much cheap land available; no one was desperate for money or property or access to it

Manufacturing increased after the war due to non-importation agreements and the war itself; when the Americans were cut off from British goods because of non-importation, they were forced to make their own; the war also created the need for lots of equipment and supplies; this manufacturing was converted to non-military sale after the war

The Americans no longer were confined to mercantilism for Britain; they could trade with whomever they wanted now; yet they made a lot of their pre-Revolution money off British subjects, who were now off limits; Americans began trade with other foreign nations who were formerly off limits

Speculators and profiteers took advantage of the difficult situation in war and made lots of money and so took lots of power; state governments were heavily in debt; inflation was rampant; many wealthier people lost their entire fortunes

People had a general disrespect for taxes and the law in general

A Shaky Start Toward Union

Main idea: *The beginnings of the first national United States government were unstable due to disunity and difficult economic conditions.*

It is difficult to set up a new government, but especially difficult to set up a new type of government (Republicanism)

Americans were not very unified, more likely to side with their region or state or even their own self-interests over a new national government; America was more of a name and a land than a nation; they no longer even had a common cause or enemy like in the Revolutionary War

British goods began flooding the market in the 1780s, making American competition much more difficult

Advantages: the thirteen states were basically similar in government, traditions, customs and heritage; they had great leaders like George Washington, James Madison, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton

Overall main idea: *After the Revolutionary War, the United States' state governments and society became more democratic, with some limitations, but it struggled to create a stable economy and national government.*