

# Famous First Facts

## About American Politics

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#### AMERICAN REVOLUTION

**1001. Plan for the union of the British colonies** to be given formal consideration was the Albany Plan of Union, drafted by Benjamin Franklin and presented to representatives of the colonies of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire at the Albany Congress, held at the Albany Courthouse in Albany, NY, from June 19 to July 11, 1754. Franklin urged the colonies to form a self-governing federation under a president-general appointed by the British crown, with a grand council of representatives chosen by each province. His plan may have been modeled on the government of the Iroquois Confederacy, which was represented at the Congress by a Mohawk delegation led by Hendrick (Tiyanoga), who addressed the participants on July 9. Though accepted by the Congress, Franklin's idea was turned down by both the American colonial legislatures and the British. An earlier suggestion for a confederation was made by William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, whose "Plan for the Union of the Colonies in America," composed in 1697, called for a central conference on matters of commerce and defense to which each colony would send two delegates.

**1002. Committee of correspondence formed in a British colony in America** was authorized on June 13, 1764, in Boston, MA, by the provincial House of Representatives, following a proposal made at a Boston town meeting. Its purpose was to stay in contact with the political leadership of the other provinces in order to achieve a united plan of action against oppressive British laws. In 1772–74, as the political crisis intensified, standing committees of correspondence were set up in most of the British colonies.

**1003. Colonial boycott of British goods** began in Boston, MA, in August 1764, when the city's merchants committed themselves not to wear lace and ruffles manufactured in Britain until Parliament eased its tough trade laws. In late 1767, after Parliament imposed a set of

new import duties (the Townshend Acts), a Boston town meeting extended the boycott to other British products. The idea was quickly taken up in other provinces. Nonimportation pledges and outright bans on British goods cost Britain nearly £1 million in 1769 and led to a partial repeal of the Townshend Acts.

**1004. Orator of the Revolution** was Patrick Henry of Virginia. As early as 1765, speaking before the Virginia House of Burgesses in Williamsburg, Henry publicly set himself in opposition to the colonial power as he brilliantly denounced the British Stamp Act, a law requiring colonial citizens to pay for a special stamp on legal publications and documents. In asserting the right of the Virginia assembly to pass its own laws and not merely to enact those of a distant Parliament, he appeared to threaten the crown itself. "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George III—" he began, but when interrupted by shouts of "Treason! treason!" he continued: "—may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it."

**1005. Direct tax on Britain's American colonists without their consent** was the Stamp Act, enacted on March 22, 1765, by Parliament. It required colonists to buy revenue stamps for every pair of dice, every pack of playing cards, and every newspaper, pamphlet, and document, including charters, legal papers, licenses, and college diplomas. The purpose of the tax was to raise funds to pay for the upkeep of the British army in America. The act was repealed in March 1766 after the colonists mounted a sustained boycott of British goods. It was replaced the following year by the Tea Tax, which taxed various articles of everyday use, in addition to tea.

**1006. Local government to refuse to obey the Stamp Act** was Frederick County, MD. On November 23, 1765, twelve judges of the Court of Frederick County declared that "all proceedings shall be valid and effectual without the use of stamps." Courts in many other cities and counties followed suit.

**1007—1014 FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS****AMERICAN REVOLUTION—continued**

**1007. City to be occupied by the British before the Revolution** was Boston, MA, where resentment against British taxes and Parliamentary authority was threatening to lead to insurrection. British troopships carrying two infantry regiments and supporting artillery arrived in the harbor on September 28, 1768. On October 1 the troops entered Boston and occupied the main public buildings, including the courthouse and the statehouse.

**1008. Attack on British soldiers by civilians in the Revolution** was made in New York City on January 18, 1770, by the Sons of Liberty, a crowd of Americans who attacked a group of 40 to 50 soldiers because they had cut down the liberty poles that the Americans had erected. The soldiers used their bayonets and dispersed them. No one was killed, but several persons on both sides were seriously injured. The mob fight has been termed the Battle of Golden Hill.

**1009. Americans killed by British soldiers in the Revolution** were shot on March 5, 1770, at Boston, MA, when British soldiers of the 29th Regiment of Foot fired at a taunting crowd, killing Crispus Attucks, James Caldwell, Patrick Carr, Samuel Gray, and Samuel Maverick. The incident became known as the Boston Massacre. The soldiers were tried for murder and were defended by John Adams and Josiah Quincy, Jr. Two soldiers were found guilty, branded on the hand, and discharged. Six other soldiers and an officer were acquitted. Attucks, the first American to fall, was an African-American whaler.

**1010. Protest against British taxation of tea shipments** occurred in October 1773, when a delegation of Philadelphians invited the agents of the East India Company, which had a monopoly on the sale of British tea, to resign their commissions or risk the consequences. Some of them complied. Intimidation of tea agents in port cities continued over the next few months, along with mass protest meetings.

**1011. Destruction of British tea shipments** was the “Boston Tea Party,” which took place on December 16, 1773. Colonists enraged by the high British tea tax disguised themselves as Mohawks, boarded three ships (the *Dartmouth*, the *Beaver*, and the *Eleanor*), and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. Many other colonies held their own “tea parties.” In April 1774, 18 boxes of tea were dumped into New York Harbor at the “New York Tea Party.” On October 19, 1774, patriots in Annapolis, MD,

forced the owner of the ship *Peggy Stewart* to burn his cargo of taxed tea. On October 25, 1774, 51 women of Edenton, NC, burned their tea in support of the colonies’ cause. And on December 22, 1774, a “Tea Party” was held at Greenwich, NJ, in which tea was taken from the British ship *Greyhound* and burned.

**1012. Association of British colonies in America** was the Continental Association, proposed on October 18, 1774. It was joined over the course of the next six months by twelve of the colonies and to a limited extent by Georgia, the 13th. They agreed on a program of nonintercourse with Britain, including withdrawal from the slave trade, a trade embargo, and refusal to use British products. Any province that reneged on its promises in this regard was itself to be subject to a boycott by the others. Cooperation with the agreement was enforced on individuals by local committees.

**1013. Attack against the British by a state militia** occurred in New Hampshire on December 13, 1774, when Major John Sullivan led 400 men of the Granite State Volunteers in an attack on Fort William and Mary, a British garrison on the island of New Castle in Portsmouth harbor. They bound the commander of the fort and frightened the soldiers away, capturing 100 casks of powder and small arms. This attack took place some four months before the battle of Lexington.

**1014. Reconciliation plan to end the rebellion of the British colonies in America** was proposed to the British Parliament by Prime Minister William Pitt on February 1, 1775. Parliament was in receipt of resolutions from the Continental Congress protesting the Intolerable Acts, economic and political sanctions that Parliament had enacted the previous spring to retaliate against Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party. Pitt’s plan included Britain’s recognition of the Continental Congress, colonial recognition of Parliament’s superior authority, Parliament’s pledge to obtain the assent of the colonial assemblies before levying taxes, and Congress’s pledge to forward revenue to Britain. The plan was defeated in the House of Lords. Another reconciliation plan, put forward by Lord North on February 20, was rejected by the Continental Congress on July 31.

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**FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS 1015—1025**


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**1015. Clash of arms in the Revolutionary War** was the Battle of Lexington, a skirmish at Lexington, MA, on April 19, 1775, between 70 Minutemen volunteers under Captain John Parker and about 700 British regulars under Major John Pitcairn, who were on their way to destroy illegal military stores at nearby Concord. The Americans were ordered to disperse. As they were doing so, one of them fired a shot. The British returned fire, killing eight Minutemen and wounding ten.

**1016. War hero** was Captain John Parker of Lexington, MA, a farmer and mechanic who was the leader of a local volunteer militia group, the Minutemen. At midnight on April 18, 1775, the Boston silversmith Paul Revere reached Lexington on horseback with a warning that British troops were coming to destroy a supply depot at nearby Concord. The force of 700 British soldiers, led by Major John Pitcairn, reached the Lexington town common at dawn on April 19 to find the Minutemen waiting for them. Parker told his men, "Stand your ground. Don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here." The first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired shortly after, leaving one British soldier and ten Americans wounded and eight Americans dead. Parker himself died the following September, of illness.

**1017. Mobilization of American troops in the Revolutionary War** was ordered on April 23, 1775, by the Provincial Congress in Massachusetts. Some 13,600 American volunteers were called up from all over New England. The first major action of American forces was to lay siege to Boston, which was held by the British.

**1018. Call for troops to fight in the Revolutionary War** was made on May 10, 1775, at Philadelphia, PA, on the opening day of the second session of the Continental Congress. The delegates passed a resolution calling for 20,000 men to serve in the armed forces.

**1019. Naval battle in the Revolutionary War** took place on June 12, 1775, when Captain James Moore of the British schooner *Margaretta* arrived in the harbor of Machias, ME, and ordered the inhabitants to take down a liberty pole they had erected. The townspeople, led by Jeremiah and John O'Brien, set out in a confiscated sloop, the *Unity*, and in a hand-to-hand encounter captured the *Margaretta* and confiscated her cannons. The captured crew was marched overland to Cambridge, MA, where they were turned over to General George Washington. The American loss was four killed and eight wounded.

**1020. Major battle of the Revolutionary War** was the Battle of Bunker Hill, fought on June 17, 1775, at Breed's Hill (the actual location) in Boston, MA. More than 2,000 British soldiers under General William Howe mounted an assault against American volunteer forces dug in around the crest of the hill. Ordered not to fire on the enemy until they could see "the whites of their eyes," the Americans waited until the British frontal assault was only 15 paces away, then opened with a withering volley that halted the British advance. A second British attack also failed, but a third sally overwhelmed the American troops, who had run out of ammunition. The battle resulted in more than 1,000 British and about 400 American casualties, including the American commander, General Joseph Warren.

**1021. Royal proclamation declaring Britain's colonies in America to be in open rebellion** was issued by King George III on August 23, 1775, after he rejected the Olive Branch Petition, sent to him by the Continental Congress the previous July. The petition, written by John Dickinson, was a statement of loyalty to the crown and a request for the king's assistance in resolving the conflict.

**1022. American prisoners of war** were captured by the British between 1776 and 1783 and held on prison ships anchored in New York Harbor. More than 11,000 American soldiers died in captivity during the war and were buried in a crypt in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, which is now marked by the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument.

**1023. Colony to declare its independence** was New Hampshire, which issued its own Declaration of Independence from Great Britain in 1776, several months before the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

**1024. Models of republican liberty** for the architects of the American Revolution of 1776 were the Jews of the Bible, the ancient Roman republic, and the Native American tribes, whose egalitarian and collegial political traditions were observed at first hand by many of its leaders.

**1025. Public call for independence to be published** was *Common Sense*, published on January 9, 1776, in Philadelphia, PA. The 50-page pamphlet, written by the Anglo-American revolutionary Thomas Paine, attacked the concept of monarchy and provided reasoned justification for American independence. With sales of 100,000 copies in three months, it was the first bestseller of American political thought.

**1026—1032 FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS****AMERICAN REVOLUTION—continued**

**1026. Major battle lost by American forces** was the Battle of Long Island, fought on August 27, 1776, between soldiers under British general Lord William Howe, commander in chief of the British Army in North America, and the Continental Army under George Washington. The American forces, outnumbered two to one, were outflanked by Howe, who took 1,200 American prisoners and inflicted about 400 casualties. However, rather than pursue a complete victory, Howe elected to lay siege, allowing Washington and his remaining men to escape to Manhattan under cover of fog.

**1027. Peace conference during the American Revolution** was held on Staten Island (now a borough of New York City) on September 11, 1776. The American delegates—Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edmund Rutledge—met with the British admiral, Lord Richard Howe, who offered pardons for American rebels in return for the voiding of the Declaration of Independence. They turned him down.

**1028. American executed as a spy** was Nathan Hale, a young schoolteacher from Connecticut. Hale joined the Connecticut militia in July 1775 and was promoted to captain under Thomas Knowlton's Rangers. Volunteering in August 1776 to observe British troop movements on Long Island, he crossed the British lines posing as a Dutch schoolteacher. On September 21, as he made his way back to the American position at Harlem Heights, he was betrayed and captured. Hale was hanged the next morning without a trial by order of General William Howe, the British commander. His famous last words—"I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country"—were adapted from *Cato*, a play by Joseph Addison.

**1029. Traitor to the American cause during the Revolutionary War** was William Demont (or Dement), a member of the 5th Pennsylvania Battalion, who was appointed adjutant in Colonel Robert Magraw's battalion on February 29, 1776. He deserted on November 2, 1776, and notified the British of the position of Fort Washington (now a neighborhood in New York City). Demont's act enabled the British general Sir William Howe to conquer the fort with a force of 8,900 men on November 16, 1776. They captured 2,818 American officers and men, 43 guns, and 2,800 muskets.

**1030. Foreign officers recruited to the cause of the American Revolution** were recruited in Europe in 1776–77 by Silas Deane of Connecticut, who had been charged by the Continental Congress with finding military experts willing to lend their assistance. Most of them were not of high caliber. Among the foreign military leaders who received officers' commissions in the Continental Army were Tadeusz Kósciuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski of Poland, Johann de Kalb and Baron von Steuben of Germany, and the Marquis de Lafayette of France. Pulaski and de Kalb both lost their lives in battle.

**1031. Major American victory in the Revolutionary War** occurred at the Battle of Saratoga, actually a series of battles fought in 1777 in upstate New York. The British general John Burgoyne was pushing down from Canada along the Hudson River with an army of 6,000 regulars and auxiliaries with the plan of cutting off New England from the rest of the colonies. Ranged against him was a smaller American force commanded by General Horatio Gates. After several failed British assaults, Burgoyne made a last attempt at a breakthrough at the Battle of Bemis Heights, also called the Second Battle of Freeman's Farm, fought on October 7, 1777. Gates's forces threw back the British, killing some 700 men, about four times the American losses. On October 17, 1777, Burgoyne and his remaining army surrendered to Gates at Saratoga. The victory, a turning point in the war, prevented the British from pursuing a divide-and-conquer strategy and encouraged the French to offer aid to the new nation.

**1032. Framework for a national government** was contained in the Articles of Confederation. The idea for a confederation of states was suggested to the Continental Congress by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia on June 7, 1776. A congressional committee headed by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania drafted the "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union," which were adopted on November 15, 1777, submitted to the state two days later, and declared ratified on March 1, 1781. The Articles established a loose federation of sovereign states under a weak national government that lacked a chief executive and a judicial system. Congress, the only institution of the national government, could pass no laws without the consent of nine states, which was attained only rarely, and it had no power to levy taxes or to enforce treaties. The result was political and financial instability. On June 26, 1786, Congress began debate on a motion by Charles Pinckney of South Carolina to reorganize the Articles of Confederation.

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**FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS 1033—1039**


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ation. Eight months later, Congress agreed that the states should hold a convention to revise the plan of government. The Constitutional Convention opened in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787.

**1033. State to ratify the Articles of Confederation** was South Carolina, on February 5, 1778. The last of the 13 states to ratify them was Maryland, which withheld its ratification until Virginia ceded to the United States the western lands it claimed. Maryland ratified the Articles on February 27, 1781, and Congress declared them fully ratified on March 1.

**1034. American general to engage in treason** was Benedict Arnold, the Connecticut-born Revolutionary officer whose defection to the British has made his name, among Americans, a synonym for a traitor. Arnold was a courageous and capable battlefield commander whose hastily improvised navy won a key victory over a superior British fleet on Lake Champlain on October 11, 1776. However, Arnold's efforts in Canada proved a failure, and the Continental Congress viewed him as untrustworthy. In February 1777 he was passed over for promotion. Believing that he would receive better treatment from the British, Arnold contacted British secret service chief Major John André in May 1779 and indicated that he was willing to shift his allegiance. In September 1780 Arnold promised to deliver the important garrison at West Point, NY, to the enemy in return for £20,000, plus a lifetime stipend of £500 per annum, but the plot was revealed when André was captured with incriminating documents. Arnold fled on a British ship, leaving André to the hangman's noose, an act that earned him the enmity of many Loyalists. After leading a raid on New London, CT, in September 1781, Arnold moved permanently to England in 1782, where he died in 1801.

**1035. Naval hero** was John Paul Jones, the Scottish-born captain who led a series of spectacular actions against the British during the Revolutionary War. The most famous took place on September 23, 1779, when Jones, commanding the *Bonhomme Richard* at the head of a four-ship squadron, captured the warship *Serapis* and its convoy of merchant vessels in a three-hour battle off the coast of Britain. He won the victory despite long odds, and his retort to the enemy's call for his surrender—"I have not yet begun to fight"—was made part of American folklore. He was decorated by the United States and the king of France, became a rear admiral in the Russian Navy after political infighting put an end to his American career, and died in obscurity in Paris.

**1036. Centennial celebration of the Revolution** was held at Lexington and Concord, MA, on April 19, 1875, to commemorate the 100th birthday of American liberty. The participants included President Ulysses Simpson Grant, three cabinet secretaries, and many state governors.

**AMERICAN REVOLUTION—CONTINENTAL CONGRESS**

**1037. Call for a congress of the American colonies** was made by colonial leaders in Providence, RI, on May 17, 1774, in reaction to the enactment by Britain's Parliament of the Coercive Acts and other punitive laws. It was supported by their counterparts in Philadelphia and New York. All the colonies with the exception of Georgia—which eventually changed its mind—agreed to choose and send delegates to a Continental Congress, which convened in Philadelphia the following September. (Earlier intercolonial congresses, including the Albany Congress, held in Albany, NY, in 1754, and the Stamp Act Congress, held in New York City in 1765, had narrow goals and involved only a few of the provinces.)

**1038. President of the Continental Congress** was Peyton Randolph, a delegate from Virginia, who was elected on September 5, 1774, the day the Congress assembled. He resigned on October 22, 1774, to attend the Virginia State Legislature, and his place was taken on the same day by Henry Middleton of South Carolina.

**1039. Seat of the Continental Congress** was Philadelphia, PA, where the first session of the Continental Congress opened on September 5, 1774, presided over by Peyton Randolph of Virginia and Henry Middleton of South Carolina. It ended on October 26. The second session, from May 10, 1775, to December 12, 1776, was also held in Philadelphia. From December 20, 1776, to March 4, 1777, Congress met at Baltimore, MD; from March 4 to September 18, 1777, again at Philadelphia; on September 27, 1777, at Lancaster, PA; at York, PA, from September 30, 1777, to June 27, 1778; in Philadelphia from July 2, 1778, to June 27, 1783; at Princeton, NJ, from June 30 to November 4, 1783; at Annapolis, MD, from November 26, 1783, to June 3, 1784; and at Trenton, NJ, from November 1 to December 24, 1784. The four final sessions of the Continental Congress were held at New York City (January 11 to November 4, 1785; November 7, 1785, to November 3, 1786; November 6, 1786, to October 30, 1787; and November 5, 1787, to October 21, 1788). After the adoption

**1040—1047 FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS****AMERICAN REVOLUTION—CONTINENTAL CONGRESS—continued**

of the Constitution, Congress remained in New York, meeting there from March 4, 1789, to August 12, 1790. It met in Philadelphia from December 6, 1790, to May 14, 1800, after which it moved permanently to Washington, DC.

**1040. Session of the Continental Congress** began on September 5, 1774, at Carpenters' Hall, Philadelphia, PA. The participants were 44 delegates from eleven colonies, including John Adams and Samuel Adams of Massachusetts; John Jay of New York; Roger Sherman from Connecticut; and George Washington, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and Benjamin Harrison, from Virginia. (Delegates from Georgia and North Carolina did not attend until later sessions.) The Congress adjourned on October 26, 1774, recommending another session to begin on May 10, 1775, in Philadelphia.

**1041. Chaplain of the Continental Congress** was the Reverend Jacob Duche, rector of Christ Church, an Episcopalian church in Philadelphia, PA, who was elected chaplain by the Continental Congress on September 6, 1774. The election of a chaplain was the first act undertaken by the Continental Congress after the presentation of credentials and the adoption of rules of order. The chaplain offered his first prayer at a meeting of Congress on September 7.

**1042. Objection to opening a congressional session with prayer** was made on September 6, 1774, by John Jay of New York, delegate to the first session of the Continental Congress, which had assembled at Philadelphia, PA. Once the delegates had presented their credentials and adopted rules of order, they entertained a proposal to elect a chaplain who would offer prayer at the beginning of each session. Jay objected, citing the variety of religious views held by the delegates. He was countered by Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, who replied that he "was no bigot and could hear a prayer from any gentleman of piety and virtue who was also a friend of his country." A chaplain was elected and the first prayer was offered on the following day.

**1043. Prayer offered at a session of Congress** was offered on the morning of September 7, 1774, the third day of the first Continental Congress, at Carpenters' Hall, Philadelphia, PA. The Reverend Jacob Duche, who had been elected chaplain the previous day, read the morning service of the Episcopal Church, with his clerk making the responses. He also recited

a prayer that began: "O Lord our Heavenly Father . . . look down in mercy, we beseech thee, on these our American States, who have fled to thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee. To Thee have they appealed for the righteousness of their cause; to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support, which Thou alone canst give; take them, therefore, Heavenly Father, under Thy nurturing care. . . ."

**1044. Major action taken by the Continental Congress** was the endorsement on September 17, 1774, of the Suffolk Resolves, four resolutions authored by Joseph Warren of Massachusetts that took an aggressive stance towards Britain's attempts to impose punitive economic and political sanctions on its rebellious American colonies. They denounced the Intolerable Acts enacted by Parliament, encouraged Massachusetts residents to defy the British by refusing to do business with them or pay taxes to the crown, and recommended the formation of a militia. The resolutions were unanimously adopted on September 9, 1774, by a group of Massachusetts political leaders who convened after the abolition by Parliament of the colony's representative legislature. They were carried by Paul Revere to Philadelphia, PA, where Congress voted to endorse them.

**1045. Medal awarded by the Continental Congress** was granted to General George Washington for his exploit of March 17, 1776, in compelling the British forces to evacuate Boston, MA. The date of the resolution authorizing the medal was March 25, 1776. It was struck in Paris. The obverse showed Washington in profile. The reverse showed Washington and his officers on horseback viewing the town of Boston in the distance with the British fleet in view under sail. The medal was not actually presented to Washington until 1786.

**1046. Lottery held by the Continental Congress** was held on April 10, 1777, in Philadelphia, PA, for the purpose of raising funds. The lottery was approved on November 1, 1776, and seven managers were appointed to conduct it. Treasury bank notes were awarded as prizes, payable at the end of five years. Funds were obtained by lottery by individual colonies at various times prior to this national lottery.

**1047. Medal awarded by the Continental Congress to a foreigner** was a silver medal presented to Lieutenant Colonel François Louis Teissieidre de Fleury, who commanded the first of the storming parties in the assault upon Stony Point, NY, on July 15, 1779. He was the first man to enter the main fort and strike the

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**FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS 1048—1056**


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British flag with his own hands. Fleury, who had been in the French military service, joined the Continental Army in 1777. The date of the congressional resolution was July 26, 1779, and the presentation was made on October 1.

**1048. Congress to call itself “The United States in Congress Assembled”** was the seventh session of the Continental Congress, which met at Philadelphia, PA, from July 2, 1778, to June 27, 1783. Midway through the session, on March 1, 1781, the Articles of Confederation establishing a national government were declared in force, having been ratified by all 13 states between February 5, 1778, and February 27, 1781. On March 2, 1781, the Continental Congress adopted the title “The United States in Congress Assembled.” Samuel Huntington of Connecticut continued as its president.

**1049. Complete edition of *Journals of the Continental Congress*** was not published until 1904–1937 by the Library of Congress. This edition includes the confidential records, as well as the official records kept of the daily proceedings of the First and Second Continental Congress.

#### **AMERICAN REVOLUTION—DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

**1050. Declaration of independence by citizens of an American colony** was formally made on July 12, 1774, in the First Presbyterian Church in Carlisle, PA, at a meeting of freeholders and freemen from the several townships. The Reverend John Montgomery presided. A similar statement was the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, adopted by local citizens on May 20, 1775, in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, NC.

**1051. Declaration of rights** was passed by the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, PA, on October 14, 1774, and was known as the “Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress.” It stated that the the colonists “are entitled to life, liberty and property; and they have never ceded to any foreign power whatsoever a right to dispose of either without their consent.”

**1052. Proclamation of the unification of the colonies** was a resolution adopted by the Second Continental Congress on June 7, 1775: “On motion, resolved, that Thursday, the 20th of July next, be observed throughout the Twelve United Colonies as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer.” Only twelve of the 13 colonies were represented because Georgia did not send delegates to the First and Second Continental Congresses.

**1053. Declaration of independence by a British colony** was made by New Hampshire, whose provisional government announced its independence from Britain on January 5, 1776, six months before the signing of the national Declaration of Independence.

**1054. Colonial government to instruct its delegates to the Continental Congress to proclaim independence** was North Carolina. In April 12, 1776, the Provincial Congress in session at Halifax, NC, by unanimous action empowered its delegates to the Second Continental Congress to concur with delegates of other provinces in declaring independence from Great Britain. The declaration is known as the “Halifax Resolves.”

**1055. Statement of the principle of inalienable rights** was formulated by George Mason of Virginia in his *Declaration of Rights*, adopted on June 12, 1776, by the Virginia Convention and incorporated into the state constitution. The first article reads: “That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot by any compact deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possession property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.” Thomas Jefferson drew on this model when he drafted the Declaration of Independence.

**1056. Congressional vote on a declaration of independence** took place in Philadelphia, PA, on July 1, 1776, after the delegates, meeting as a committee, debated a resolution that had been introduced on June 7 by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia and seconded by John Adams of Massachusetts. The first part of this resolution read: “RESOLVED. That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.” The motion was carried, but not unanimously; negative votes were cast by Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and some of the delegates from Delaware. On the following day, Congress, meeting in formal session, took a second vote, with twelve states in favor, one abstaining, and none opposed. The delegates then debated the document written by Thomas Jefferson, which they adopted, with amendments, on July 4.

**1057—1067 FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS****AMERICAN REVOLUTION—DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE—continued**

**1057. Signer of the Declaration of Independence** was John Hancock of Massachusetts, president of the Continental Congress, who signed it on July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, PA. It was also signed by secretary Charles Thomson, who was not a delegate. The parchment copy was signed by the delegates on August 2, 1776.

**1058. Printing of the Declaration of Independence** was done on July 5, 1776, in Philadelphia, PA, by John Dunlap in a folio broadside and distributed the same day. On July 4, Congress, acting as a Committee of the Whole, approved the Declaration and ordered that it be printed and that copies be “sent to the several assemblies, conventions and committees or counsels of safety and to the several commanding officers of the Continental troops that it be proclaimed in each of the United States and at the head of the army.”

**1059. Newspaper to publish the Declaration of Independence** was the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* of Philadelphia, PA, which printed the text in its edition of July 6, 1776.

**1060. Public reading of the Declaration of Independence** took place on July 8, 1776, when Colonel John Nixon, delegated by the high sheriff of Philadelphia, read it in the old State House yard (now Independence Square). The Liberty Bell, which bears the biblical inscription “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof,” was rung to call the citizens together to hear the reading.

**1061. Publication of the Declaration of Independence in another language** took place in Philadelphia, PA, on July 9, 1776, when a translation of the Declaration was published in the *Staatsbote*, a German-language newspaper.

**AMERICANA**

**1062. Use of “America” as a geographical designation** was in the *Cosmographiae Introductio*, a world map by the geographer Martin Waldseemüller (also called Ilacomilus or Hylacomylus) of Württemberg (now Germany). In April 1507, at St. Die in the Vosges Mountains of Alsace, Waldseemüller printed one thousand copies of the map using twelve woodcut blocks. The book contained an account by the Italian explorer Amerigo (Americus) Vespucci of his discoveries in South America. Waldseemüller labeled the New World “America” in his honor.

**1063. Political document printed in America** was the “Oath of a Free Man,” printed in March 1639 by the Stephen Day Press, Cambridge, MA. It was a one-page sheet that read: “I doe solemnly bind myself in the sight of God, that when I shall be called to give my voice touching any subject of this State, in which Freemen are to deal, I will give my vote and suffrage as I shall judge in mine own conscience may best conduce and tend to the publick weal of the body, without respect of persons, or favour of any man.”

**1064. Use of the name “United States” instead of “United Colonies”** was authorized on September 9, 1776, by the Second Continental Congress: “That in all continental commissions and other instruments where heretofore the words, ‘United Colonies’ have been used, the style be altered, for the future, to the ‘United States.’”

**1065. Map of the United States** engraved in America was a wall map, 41 by 46.5 inches, made by Abel Buell in New Haven, CT, in 1783, after the Treaty of Paris. It was a line engraving and was advertised for sale in the *Connecticut Journal* of March 31, 1784: “As this Map is the effect of the compiler’s long and unwearied application, diligence and industry, and as perfection has been the great object of his labors, and it being the first ever compiled, engraved, and finished by any one man, and an American, he flatters himself, that every patriotic gentleman, and lover of geographical knowledge, will not hesitate to encourage the improvement of his country. Every favour will be most gratefully acknowledged, by the public’s most obedient and very humble servant.”

**1066. Use of the term “Era of Good Feelings”** to describe the administration of President James Monroe occurred in the pages of the *Columbian Centinel*, a Boston newspaper, in the spring of 1817, shortly after his inauguration. The disappearance of the Federalist Party had left Monroe’s Democratic-Republicans without an opposition, giving the nation a temporary sense of unity.

**1067. National hall of fame** was National Statuary Hall, formerly the Hall of the United States House of Representatives in the Capitol at Washington, DC, which was established by act of Congress of July 2, 1864. Each state was invited to contribute marble or bronze statues of its most distinguished citizens.



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**FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS 1068—1076**


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**1068. Use of “American” as an adjective** instead of “United States” was officially recommended by John Hay, secretary of state, who instructed American diplomatic and consular officers under date of August 3, 1904, to adopt it. The adjective form of designation is not used in strictly formal documents and in notarial acts performed by consular officers; instead, the full name of the country is given (for example: the Government of the United States of America; Embassy of the United States of America).

**1069. Museum devoted solely to American political memorabilia** was the Museum of American Political Life, which opened in 1989 at the University of Hartford campus in West Hartford, CT. The museum’s mission was to collect, preserve and exhibit artifacts and other materials relating to presidential campaigns, presidents and the electoral process. The core of the museum’s holdings were donated by collector J. Doyle Dewitt and included 60,000 artifacts, such as posters, buttons, banners, textiles, prints, medals, fine pottery, glassware, snuff-boxes, ribbons, torchlights, and a variety of other electoral paraphernalia.

#### AMERICANA—BOOKS

**1070. Book describing the government of a British colony in America** was *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate as Hath Hapned in Virginia Since the First Planting of that Collony*, by Captain John Smith, one of the leaders of the British settlement at Jamestown, VA. It was published in London in 1608.

**1071. American woman to write political satire and history** was Mercy Otis Warren, sister of the revolutionary leader James Otis and wife of Major General James Warren. Her books included two political satires (*The Adulateur*, published in 1773, and *The Group*, published in 1775). Her *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observation*, a three-volume narrative history of the Revolutionary War, was published in Boston, MA, in 1805.

**1072. Political satire** was a 16-page pamphlet by Francis Hopkinson entitled *A Pretty Story, Written in the Year of Our Lord 1774 by Peter Grievous, Esquire, ABCDE. Veluti in Speculo*. It was a political satire on the administration of the British colonies in North America and the causes of the American Revolution. It was printed in Williamsburg, VA, in 1774 by John Pinkney, for the benefit of Clementine Rind’s children.

**1073. Comic political history of the United States** was *A Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan*, a 135-page book by Hector Bull-Us, the pseudonym of James Kirke Paulding, author of the novel *Westward Ho!*, who also served as secretary of the Navy from 1837 to 1841. It was published in 1812 in New York City by Inskip and Bradford. The work portrays the United States and England as a father and son who begin amicably but soon become engaged in an acrimonious family feud.

**1074. Scholarly political history of the United States** was *A Political and Civil History of the U.S.A. from the year 1763 to the close of the administration of President Washington in March, 1797 including a summary view of the political and civil state of the North American colonies, prior to that period*, by Timothy Pitkin. It was published in two volumes by Hezekiah Howe and Durrie and Peck in 1828 at New Haven, CT.

**1075. Reference book of American political history** was *Hill’s Political History of the United States: A Condensed Summary of the Important Political Events in United States History, from the Founding of the Government to the Present Time, with Forms of Naturalization, Directions Relating to Australian Ballot, Qualifications in Order to Vote, Etc.* The compiler was Thomas E. Hill. The book was published by Hill’s company, the Hill Standard Book Company, Chicago, IL, in 1894.

#### AMERICANA—FLAGS

**1076. Flag flown by the Continental Army under Commander-in-Chief George Washington** was the Grand Union Flag, also called the Continental Flag, which was flown for the first time on January 1, 1776, at Washington’s headquarters at Cambridge, MA. It was similar to the Stars and Stripes, except that instead of the current field of stars, the flag showed in its upper left corner Britain’s Union Jack (the superimposed crosses of St. George and St. Andrew). The 13 stripes symbolic of the 13 colonies, alternating red and white, were the same as they are now. The flag was made to Washington’s specifications by Rebecca Young of Baltimore, MD, the mother of Mary Young Pickersgill, who later sewed the flag that inspired “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

**1077—1086 FAMOUS FIRST FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS****AMERICANA—FLAGS—continued**

**1077. American flag saluted by a foreigner** was the Continental Union flag flown by the brig *Andrea Doria* at St. Eustatius, Dutch West Indies, on November 16, 1776. It was saluted by Johannes de Graeff, governor of the colony. The brig was captained by Nicholas Biddle, who had been sent to St. Eustatius to transport arms and ammunition for the American army.

**1078. National flag to represent the United States** was the design adopted in Philadelphia, PA, on June 14, 1777, by the Second Continental Congress of the United States of America, during its war of independence against Britain. The resolution, read by John Adams of Massachusetts, declared: "Resolved, that the Flag of the thirteen United States shall be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the Union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation." The first specimen is said to have been stitched by Betsy Ross (Elizabeth Griscom Ross) in her shop at 239 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA, at the request of George Washington, Robert Morris, and Colonel George Ross, for the Continental Congress. The design of the flag remains unchanged, except for the adding of a new star for each newly admitted state.

**1079. American flag displayed on a warship** was flown in Portsmouth Harbor, NH, when a group of young women presented to Captain John Paul Jones a flag they had made, using cloth taken from their own and their mothers' gowns. Captain Jones raised it to the mast of his ship, the *Ranger*, on July 4, 1777.

**1080. American flag flown in battle** was carried on September 3, 1777, by a detachment of light infantry and cavalry under General William Maxwell at Cooch's Bridge, DE, where they met an advance guard of British and Hessian troops under Generals Richard Howe, Charles Cornwallis, and Wilhelm von Knyphausen.

**1081. American flag flown on the high seas** was carried by Captain Thomas Thompson of the American sloop *Raleigh*, who engaged a British vessel on September 4, 1777.

**1082. American flag saluted by a foreign nation** was flown from the top mast of the *Ranger*, under the command of Captain John Paul Jones. The *Ranger* sailed for France on November 1, 1777, with dispatches announcing the surrender of British general John Burgoyne. On February 14, 1778, the *Ranger* saluted the French flag in the harbor of Quiberon, France,

with 13 guns. The salute was returned by Admiral La Motte Piquet with nine guns, the same salute authorized by the French court to be given in honor of an admiral of Holland or of any other republic.

**1083. Map to show the American flag** was *A New and correct Map of the United States of North America Layd down from the latest Observations and best Authority agreeable to the Peace of 1783*, drawn by Abel Buell and published in 1784. The flag was part of an elaborate display of symbols, including the eagle and the rising sun, that were used to decorate the title.

**1084. Ship to carry the American flag around the world** was the *Columbia*, a 212-ton vessel under Captain Kendrick that sailed from Boston, MA, on September 30, 1787, on a fur-trading mission to Canada. It was accompanied by the sloop *Washington*, under Captain Robert Gray, who exchanged commands with Captain Kendrick and completed the trip, returning to Boston on August 9, 1790. The trip took nearly three years and covered a distance of 41,899 miles. The crew explored the Queen Charlotte Islands and discovered the straits of Juan de Fuca and the mouth of the Columbia River.

**1085. Changes in the American flag to be authorized by Congress** were passed by Congress on January 13, 1794, an "act making an alteration in the flag of the United States" and providing "that from and after the first day of May 1795, the Flag of the United States be fifteen stripes, alternate red and white; and that the union be fifteen stars, white, in a blue field." The change was made so that Vermont and Kentucky would be represented on the flag. A law passed on April 4, 1818, reduced the number of stripes to 13 to represent the original 13 states, as in the first American flag, and provided one star for each state. A new star was to be added on the Fourth of July following the admission of each new state.

**1086. American flag flown over a fortress of the Old World** was flown on April 27, 1805, when Lieutenant Presley Neville O'Bannon of the Marines raised the colors over the harbor fortress stronghold of Derna (Tripoli) in the First Tripolitan War. It is this action that is commemorated on the Colors of the Corps and in the Marine Corps' hymn with the words "to the shores of Tripoli." For his bravery in battle, O'Bannon was presented with the "Mamaluke sword" by Hamet Karamanli, the deposed brother of the pasha of Tripoli. A replica of this sword is carried by every Marine officer today.