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## Preface

*Famous First Facts About American Politics* follows H.W. Wilson's tradition of their *Famous First Facts* series by providing comprehensive, authoritative, and accessible sources of significant "firsts" in all fields of human endeavor. This new edition covers, in over 4,000 entries, the far-ranging political history of the United States. From the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy by Hainhwat'ha and Deganawidah around 1550, to the first Supreme Court Justice to be born outside of the United States in 1790, to the first women to argue for women's suffrage before a major committee of Congress in 1884, to the first president to visit Europe while in office in 1918, to the first grand jury testimony delivered by a sitting president in 1999, to the first campaign by a First Lady for election to public office in 2000, to the first woman to be nominated by a major party for the office of President in 2016, *Famous First Facts About American Politics* covers the memorable elections, public figures, political parties, legislation, and administrations that have contributed to the history of the United States.

This second edition is organized in 41 broad categories, from **American Revolution** to **Women** (a new category), arranged alphabetically. All related entries under each category are listed chronologically. Four indexes—Subject, Year, Personal Name, and Geographic Location—make it easy to access information, carry out research, and find answers to specific questions.

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## How to Use This Book

The entries in this edition of *Famous First Facts* are grouped into 42 main subject categories, which are arranged alphabetically. When necessary, the main categories are divided into subcategories, likewise alphabetically arranged. For example, the main category **Presidential Elections** contains a large section of general entries, followed by the subcategory **Candidates**. The subcategory **Candidates** is further divided into the subcategory **Parties**. Within this structure of classification, the entries are arranged chronologically (For a complete list of chapters and their sections, please refer to the Expanded Contents.)

History is a complicated subject, and classification is an inexact science. In the many cases in which an entry could potentially be placed in more than one chapter, priorities were established that will quickly become evident to the reader. To find a specific entry, the reader may turn to one of the four indexes printed at the back of the volume: The comprehensive **Subject Index**, which alphabetically lists entries that have been indexed under one or more keywords; **Years**, in which entries are arranged chronologically by year; **Personal Name**, which lists the names of all the persons mentioned in the book; and **Geographical**, which indexes all locations by city and nation. All indexes refer to the page number of the entry.

# Famous First Facts

## About American Politics

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### A

#### AMERICAN REVOLUTION

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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."

**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.

**Local government to refuse to obey the Stamp Act** was Frederick County, MD. On November

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### AMERICAN REVOLUTION—*Continued*

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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Public call for independence to be published** was *Common Sense*, published on January 9, 1776,

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### AMERICAN REVOLUTION—*Continued*

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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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 Mifflin (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.

**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.

**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.

**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. 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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

**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.)

**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.

**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

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