

Political, social, and economic change after the american revolution

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



The American Revolution instigated much change within the newly independent nation, particularly political and social, and to a lesser extent, economically. After breaking away from what appeared to be a corrupt government in England, American leaders formed the concepts of their ideal society. Although to them it seemed that these ideas would help them break away from the British style of government, in reality they reverted to one that was much more centralized, much like that of England's. The uneducated population of America did not experience as much change, though the ideas behind the revolution itself pushed many to seek economic prosperity for themselves.

Women, and slaves experienced change in society as women gained more freedoms and many slaves were set free. Overall, our nation experienced the majority of its change in politics, and social issues, but change was still seen to a lesser extent economically. Politically, when America first separated itself from Britain, the founders attempted to form it to have the least amount of similarities with Britain's as possible. To achieve this they ratified the Articles of the Confederation. The ideas that made up the Articles of the Confederation ended up turning the founders' dream of a functioning government into somewhat of a nightmare.

The state and federal governments had no authority to tax citizens, not to mention that there was no concept of an executive branch. These flaws caused many issues which are highlighted in a letter written by Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson in 1787 [Document G]. The letter stated that there was serious civil unrest within many areas of the United States, and

that the government may not have been strong enough to suppress rebellions, and guarantee stability. This indicated to the founders that they would be in need of a stronger, more centralized government and for that reason, they began the drafting of the Constitution. Many ideas were proposed during the drafting of the constitution but perhaps none as important as that of checks and balances.

This idea is exemplified in James Madison's *The Federalist*, number 51 [Document I]. He illustrates the concepts behind checks and balances by showing that checks on both the government and the people were necessary for a functional society. He also does this by showing that the government must have necessary measures to control itself. Both of the ideas he supports in his paper indicate that he was a great supporter of the ratification of the constitution. Also, this spurred the first American party system, being the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, along with the concepts of loose and strict constructionism. These ideas are still fought over today where republicans take the side of strict constructionists, believing that the Constitution should be followed word-for-word, and democrats take the side of loose constructionists, believing that there must be room for interpretation.

Overall, the American Revolution incited these great political revelations, and gave the founders concepts included in the Constitution that they would not have become aware of otherwise. Economically, Americans did not experience great amounts of change. The Philadelphia society for the promotion of agriculture, handed out a medal which said, " Venerate the

Plough" [Document F]. This is a large example of how the rich were still "rewarding" the common-people who weren't necessarily better off after the revolution. This medal acted as a form of encouragement in the sense that it promoted the idea that the United States was filled with abundance, fertility, and freedom. Also, it supports Jeffersonian ideal of agrarian republicanism based on virtuous yeoman farmers where the common-people and the planters would have priority, and would experience equality, and political opportunity.

Similarly to this, Shay's rebellion farmers, lead by the ex-military officer who "...[stopped] the courts of justice in several counties..

. crying out for a paper currency, [or] for an equal distribution of power" [Document G]. Shay's Rebellion was a representation of the economic troubles faced by the majority of people in the United States. With respect to social changes, while the lives of white men remained virtually the same, women and slaves both experienced varying amounts of change after the revolution ended.. The change for women was rather minimal because they would not win the fight over suffrage for another 140 years, but this was the beginning of the recognition of gender equality.

One example of this beginning is a woodcut of a woman holding a rifle and a gunpowder horn [Document A]. This portrays the life that was lived by women during that era of war, showing that they fought alongside the men . After the war had ended, it was not the same for women, because they did not necessarily want to go back to their old life of household chores after

playing a part in the fight for independence. Another example of the beginnings of the fight for gender equality is a valedictory address by Molly Wallace at the Young Ladies' Academy of Pennsylvania [Document J]. She infers that discussion of educational opportunities for women was on the rise as women began to challenge the concept of "separate spheres." Another example of women's participation in society was Debora Sampson.

Sampson disguised herself as a man during the American Revolutionary War so that she would be able to fight in the Continental Army. She is one of a small number of women with a documented record of military combat during the revolution. Although for the women they felt that after the war they would return and things would be different for them, they weren't. The American Revolution had in fact, not greatly altered society's perception of the role of women. It is clear that this is true when the comparison of the wishes of the women of that time, and what actually materialized. The women wanted to become equal with the men, but in reality, this concept would not be accepted for another 140 years.

On the other hand, slaves, depending on the region, experienced great amounts of change during this time. For example, in a Pennsylvania Packet Editorial [Document B], the ideas of America being a land of free men began to emerge. Although this is not directly related to slavery, it shows that the ideas behind universal freedom were beginning to show themselves. The largest example from the time period of this emergence is an Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States Northwest of the Ohio

River [Document H]. This ordinance, when put in place, banned slavery in all U.

S. territory north of the Ohio River. This is evidence of fundamental social change during the time period. Also, this directly relates to the 3/5 Compromise because the 3/5 Compromise was the first time that slaves were actually being counted as people, not just objects that were owned. Overall, politically, Americans experienced larger amounts of change when they forged a new government even with the revisions made.

Economically, the common-people still lived in a society where they were lesser people than the elites. However changes did occur involving women and slaves. In these ways, American society experienced change in respect to political and social life, but not economically.