



Unit 5: New Hampshire and the American Revolution

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Section 1: Introduction

How did America go from being part of the British Empire to being its own country? For many, many years, Americans were proud to live in a place that was part of Great Britain. But then, starting in the 1760s, Americans began to grow angry with the way the British ruled them. The Americans wanted to govern themselves, but the British wanted to keep making the laws that the Americans had to live by.

As you learn more about New Hampshire and the American Revolution, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why did people in New Hampshire want to become independent from Great Britain?
- How did different voices shape the American Revolution in New Hampshire?



- How did the people of New Hampshire participate in the American Revolution?



Section 2: Britain and America

What was the relationship between Britain and America before the American Revolution?

For almost the first 200 years after Europeans settled here, America was a collection of colonies that were all owned by Great Britain, which is a country in Europe.

For a long time, most Americans were happy to live under British rule. There were lots of advantages to being a British colony:

- **Money:** Britain was a wealthy country, and the British people, both those who lived in Great Britain and those who lived in its colonies, lived better than most people in the world. In general, the British had nicer houses, better food, and more possessions than people in other countries.
- **Defense:** Britain had a very strong army and navy. In fact, the British navy was becoming the largest navy in the world in the 1700s. The British military protected the American colonies from other European countries that might want to take over the colonies in the New World, like France or Spain.
- **Democracy:** British people had some say in what laws were passed and who their political leaders were. People in other countries weren't allowed to participate in their government as much as they could in Britain, although not everyone in Britain was allowed to vote at this time.
- **Freedom:** For the most part, the British government allowed Americans a great deal of freedom to settle the North American continent and build their colonies. The Americans even got in the habit of ignoring British laws they didn't like!



With all this freedom, the Americans got used to making their own decisions.

In the 1760s, though, the attitude of the British government changed. Leaders in Britain decided that they had given the Americans too much freedom. The Americans needed more laws to govern them, and the laws the British had already passed should be enforced.

The American colonists and the British government began to argue about who should make the laws and whether they had to be enforced in America. When the British government insisted that it was their job to make laws for the colonies, Americans began to wonder why they should have to follow laws that they didn't have any say in making.

Should a government be able to make rules without the people's consent?

Let's Review!

What are the big ideas in this section?

1. **13 American Colonies:** For more than 200 years, the American colonies were owned by Great Britain, and the people in the colonies were subjects of the British king.
2. **Americans Proud to be British:** For a long time, Americans were happy to live under British rule and enjoyed the advantages of being part of Great Britain.
3. **Advantages to Being a British Colony:** Positives of being a British colony included being part of a wealthy country with a strong army and navy. The British people also had some say in the laws that governed them. Until the 1760s, the



Americans were able to mostly make their own decisions about how to run their colonies.

4. Changes in the Colonies: In the 1760s, the British changed the way they governed the colonies. Instead of letting the Americans make decisions for themselves, the British government became more involved in making laws. The Americans then started to wonder why they should follow laws they had no say in making.



Section 3: America Moves toward Independence

What happened to convince Americans to declare independence from Great Britain?

It's a big step, though, from being angry with the mother country to declaring independence. In fact, no colony—in all of history—had ever successfully rebelled and created its own country before. So how did the Americans come to take such an extreme step? Did they just wake up one morning and decide to throw off British rule?

Actually, it was a long series of events that convinced Americans that they needed to break off from Great Britain and start their own country.

Video: Mason Explains: Causes of the American Revolution

Why did America rebel? Before the American Revolution, New Hampshire was a colony of Great Britain. What caused New Hampshire and 12 other colonies to decide that they wanted to be their own country? Watch and find out!

After each of these events, more and more Americans began to question British rule. These Americans began to call themselves patriots. Not everyone in America agreed, though. Americans who wanted to remain under British rule were called loyalists or Tories.

Let's Review!

What are the big ideas in this section?

1. Changing Times in the 1760s: For many years, the Americans were happy to be a British colony. However, in



the 1760s the king of Britain changed the way he governed the colonies. He thought his new rules were best for the whole kingdom, but the American colonies wanted laws that were best for them.

2. **New Taxes in the 1760s:** Starting in the 1760s, the British charged the Americans new taxes to help pay for British wars. The British government wanted the American colonists to follow all the laws of Great Britain and not make their own decisions about governing themselves. American colonists were becoming less content with being part of Great Britain.

3. **Arguments with the British:** Because of events like the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, many American colonists started to view the British differently. Some Americans didn't trust the British anymore. Representatives from all the colonies started to meet to talk about how unhappy the colonies were with Great Britain.

4. **Patriots and Loyalists:** Although the Declaration of Independence said the colonies wanted to be independent from Great Britain, not everyone in the colonies felt this way. People who wanted America to be independent from Great Britain were called patriots. People who wanted to stay under British rule were called loyalists.



Section 4: New Hampshire Moves toward Independence

What was New Hampshire's role in the events leading up to independence?

Like Americans in the other colonies, most of the people in New Hampshire gradually came to the decision that America should be independent of Great Britain because the British government was not treating them fairly. Americans were especially unhappy that the British government was putting new taxes on many things Americans needed, like paper and tea.

Through a series of events, the Americans stepped closer and closer to revolution.

The Stamp Act

One of these events was a new law called the Stamp Act, which the British passed in 1765. The Stamp Act placed a tax on nearly every piece of paper in the colonies, even things like newspapers and playing cards.

Americans sent petitions to the British government, asking them to change its mind about the tax, but the British government didn't listen to them. Riots broke out in many American cities, including Portsmouth, New Hampshire. In fact, there were two Stamp Act riots in Portsmouth, one in September 1765 and one in November.

Several months after the riots in America, the British government repealed the Stamp Act so the Americans didn't have to pay the tax they hated so much. Americans were worried that the British hadn't originally listened to them, though.

The Sons of Liberty



The Sons of Liberty were clubs that had begun to form all over America, including in New Hampshire, in the mid-1760s.

These clubs were created to organize protests against the Stamp Act, but after the Stamp Act was repealed, the Sons of Liberty believed that they would need to keep a close watch on the British government to make sure it didn't ignore the Americans again. They promised to organize more protests against the British government if the government passed any more laws the Americans didn't like.

Many New Hampshire towns had Sons of Liberty clubs, and these became the center of the patriot movement.

Pine Tree Riot

One of New Hampshire's most valuable resources at this time was its white pine trees, which were so strong and tall that they made perfect ships' masts. (Masts are poles on ships that hold up the sails.) In the 1700s, Britain needed thousands of ships' masts for the British navy, so the British Crown claimed all white pine trees over a certain size, even if those trees were on private land.

British officials carved all the large trees with a mark called the King's Broad Arrow. If a tree was marked with the King's Broad Arrow it meant colonists were not allowed to cut it down or use it. Instead, the colonists had to turn their white pine trees over to the government, even though they needed the white pine trees themselves to build houses and bridges.

For many years, the people of New Hampshire thought this law was very unfair and resented the British government taking their trees. In 1772, several men living in Goffstown and Weare were caught taking white pine trees to a local sawmill. They were going



to use the trees on their farms illegally. After they were caught, some of the men paid the fine for having cut down the trees. But the rest of the men refused to pay the fine and ran the British official out of town in the middle of the night. Eight of the men involved were arrested and put on trial. However, they only had to pay a small fine as punishment instead of serving time in jail.

The event became known as the Pine Tree Riot, and it encouraged the people of New Hampshire to stand up to British rule if it went against the American colonists' interests.

New Hampshire Committee of Correspondence

In 1772, patriots in New Hampshire formed what was called a committee of correspondence to exchange letters with patriots in the other colonies. Other colonies already had these committees, which shared information about what the British government was doing throughout America.

Through their letters to one another, the committees talked about how the patriots were starting to protest what the British were doing. By keeping in such close contact with one another through the committees of correspondence, the colonies were taking an important first step toward joining together to stand up to the British.

Fort William and Mary

In December 1774, patriot leaders in Boston found out that the British were sending two ships to Fort William and Mary in Portsmouth Harbor. The British wanted to put more soldiers in the fort, and they wanted to take the gunpowder that was stored there because they didn't want the patriots to use it.

The patriot leaders in Boston sent Paul Revere to ride to



Portsmouth and warn the patriot leaders there that a British force was on its way. After getting Revere's message, patriot leaders in Portsmouth, led by a man named John Sullivan, stormed Fort William and Mary before the British ships arrived. They tied up the few British soldiers already stationed at the fort, and they took all the gunpowder stored there and moved it in case they ever needed it to fight the British.

King George described the raid as a "flagrant outrage," which means he thought it was a terrible insult to the British Crown. Though local officials investigated the leaders of the raid, no one was charged with a crime because the authority of the British had been weakened by the attack. The British later abandoned the fort during the war.

The Wentworth Family

Throughout these years when New Hampshire was coming closer to rebelling against British rule, the royal governor was John Wentworth. He came from an old New Hampshire family, and his uncle Benning Wentworth had been governor before him for many years. The Wentworths represented the British government in New Hampshire, and Governor John Wentworth tried to enforce British laws, which made people angry.

By the spring of 1775, the people of New Hampshire were so angry at the British government that they started ignoring Governor Wentworth. He no longer had any authority over the government in New Hampshire. In the summer of 1775, he fled from Portsmouth with his wife and baby. He never came back to New Hampshire.

New Hampshire Constitution



Once Governor Wentworth left New Hampshire, the government was no longer considered to be under British control, but there wasn't officially any system of government to replace it. The colony's political leaders decided to create their own governing body, which they called the Provincial Congress. They held their meetings in Exeter, and they elected a president of the congress named Meshech Weare.

In January 1776, the Provincial Congress adopted a written constitution that outlined a new system of government for New Hampshire. The state of New Hampshire would be governed by a legislature that had been elected by the people, and there would be no governor.

New Hampshire was the first of the American colonies to form a new government during the American Revolution, one that didn't include the British. Since the New Hampshire constitution did not mention Great Britain at all or give Great Britain any role in the new government, the people of New Hampshire were declaring their independence. They were now an independent state.

America Declares Independence

Six months later that all the colonies followed New Hampshire's lead and adopted the Declaration of Independence, which announced that they were no longer British colonies but a new, independent country—the United States of America. Three men from New Hampshire signed the Declaration of Independence: Josiah Bartlett, Matthew Thornton, and William Whipple.

The colonies were now states, and each state again followed New Hampshire's lead and wrote a constitution to list the powers of its government. The United States would also write a constitution, although not until several years later.



Let's Review!

What big ideas are in this section?

1. Independence for America: The idea that America should be independent from Great Britain was a gradual decision made over many years because of many events.
2. Supporting Independence in New Hampshire: The Pine Tree Riot helped encourage the people of New Hampshire to stand up to the British. The storming of Fort William and Mary was another important event leading up to the war that showed people they could resist the British.
3. Organizing for Freedom: After the Stamp Act, the Sons of Liberty organized and became the center of the patriot movement. The New Hampshire Committee of Correspondence communicated with other colonies about how to protest what the British were doing.
4. New Hampshire Becomes a State: After the royal governor John Wentworth left New Hampshire, the colony's political leaders created their own government. They wrote the New Hampshire State Constitution and became the first colony to become independent from Great Britain.



Section 5: New Hampshire Fights

What did the British think about the Americans wanting to be independent?

Even before the Americans declared their independence from Great Britain in July 1776, the two sides had begun fighting because the British were not willing to let the Americans go. The Revolutionary War began in April 1775, and the fighting lasted until October 1781. A peace treaty between Britain and America wasn't signed until September 1783.

Four months after the attack at Fort William and Mary, Paul Revere made his famous ride to warn the people of Concord and Lexington, Massachusetts, that the British were coming. Hundreds of Americans went to fight the British, including men from New Hampshire. Although the battle was over by the time the New Hampshire soldiers got there, they stayed in the area for months afterward and helped the Americans form an army. From then on, New Hampshire soldiers served in every major battle of the Revolutionary War, from upstate New York to South Carolina. They served in the military throughout the eight years that the war lasted.

Video: Mason Explains: Fighting the American Revolution

What happened in the Revolutionary War? Many of the events that brought about the Revolutionary War happened in New England. But after the war started, the fighting spread to all of the 13 colonies. Learn about the places the war was fought and how people from New Hampshire helped win America's independence.

There were two battles in which the New Hampshire soldiers played a particularly important part.



The Battle of Bunker Hill

The first was the Battle of Bunker Hill, which was fought on June 17, 1775, outside of Boston. More than half of the American soldiers were from New Hampshire, and they were under the command of a man who became New Hampshire's most famous Revolutionary War general, John Stark.

The New Hampshire troops faced down three waves of attack by a much larger number of British soldiers. The British eventually won the battle, mainly because the Americans ran out of bullets and gunpowder. But the British lost far more men than the Americans had. British leaders began to realize that the Americans might not be as easy to beat as they thought.

The Battle of Bennington

The second was the Battle of Bennington, which was fought on August 16, 1777, outside of Bennington, Vermont.

John Stark was again in command of the New Hampshire men, who made up most of the American force. They surprised a group of British soldiers who had been sent out to gather food and supplies for a large British army. The Americans won a complete victory over the British troops, which weakened the larger British force.

Two months later, the main British army suffered a massive defeat at the Battle of Saratoga in New York. Stark and his men were at that battle as well, part of a large American army. The British loss at the Battle of Saratoga was the turning point of the war, which means that after that point it looked more and more like the Americans would win the whole thing.



The war went on for several more years, though, before the Americans finally won.

Building Ships

New Hampshire also contributed to the Americans' military success by building ships.

Portsmouth had a very deep harbor, which allowed skilled craftsmen to build large, oceangoing ships for the new American navy. In fact, the very first ship of the new American navy, the U.S.S. *Raleigh*, was built in Portsmouth. It is the ship on the New Hampshire state seal.

Let's Review!

What are the big ideas in this section?

1. **The Revolutionary War:** The Revolutionary War lasted from April 1775 to October 1781. The peace treaty between the Americans and British was signed in 1783.
2. **New Hampshire Soldiers:** There were no battles in New Hampshire during the Revolutionary War. However, New Hampshire soldiers served in every major battle of the war.
3. **Important Battles:** New Hampshire soldiers especially played a big role in two important battles. The Battle of Bunker Hill was one of the war's first battles. The second battle was the Battle of Bennington, when John Stark led New Hampshire soldiers and helped turn the tide of war in the Americans' favor.



4. Portsmouth Navy Yard: New Hampshire also made important contributions to the war by building ships. The Portsmouth Navy Yard has a very deep harbor, which allowed craftsmen to build large ships for the new American navy.



Section 6: New Hampshire on the Homefront

What happened in New Hampshire while the war was going on elsewhere?

With so many men from New Hampshire serving with the American military, the people who stayed at home had even more work to do to keep their farms and businesses going. Throughout the war, New Hampshire sent supplies to the American army, things like food, clothing, blankets, bandages, and weapons.

These efforts were organized by committees of safety, which were started in every New Hampshire town and run by the townspeople. The committees of safety also made sure that the soldiers' families had some support during the war, especially for the families of soldiers who were killed.

Committees of safety were also in charge of making sure that everyone in the towns supported the war. Although most Americans were patriots, there were loyalists throughout the country, who believed that America would be better off to stay under British rule. Many loyalists fled to Canada when the war started, but some stayed and were often treated badly.

In New Hampshire, there were fewer loyalists than elsewhere in America, and they were treated fairly well as long as they didn't openly support the British.

Freedom Petition

Loyalists weren't the only ones who questioned the American fight for independence.

In 1779, a group of 20 enslaved people in Portsmouth sent a petition to the state legislature, asking for their freedom.



Although slavery was more common in the American South, it existed even in northern states like New Hampshire at this time.

The petition was written by an enslaved man named Nero Brewster, who was a leader in Portsmouth's African-American community. Brewster argued that if Americans really believed that all men were created equal, as the Declaration of Independence says, then they could not allow slavery to continue and the people enslaved in New Hampshire should be freed.

One of the men who signed the petition was named Prince Whipple. The man who owned him, William Whipple, had signed the Declaration of Independence, representing New Hampshire. But even after signing the Declaration, William Whipple didn't free people he had enslaved until many years later. Lots of people had a hard time believing that African Americans really were equal at that time. Slavery had never been popular in New Hampshire, though, so there were very few enslaved people in New Hampshire by the American Revolution. The legislature did not want to consider the petition by the enslaved people. Instead, they ignored it.

Although some of the enslaved people did gain their freedom eventually, most of the people who signed the petition remained enslaved for the rest of their lives, even though slavery gradually died out in New Hampshire.

Let's Review!

What are the big ideas in this section?

1. On the Homefront: People who stayed at home during the war had a lot of work to do to keep farms and businesses going while soldiers were away. They contributed to the war effort in many ways.



2. Committees of Safety: Committees of safety were organized in all towns in New Hampshire. They sent supplies to soldiers and supported soldiers' families during the war.

3. Supporting the War: Committees of safety also made sure everyone supported the war, even if all people didn't agree with it.

4. Enslaved People Petition for Freedom: 20 enslaved people in New Hampshire petitioned the state government for their freedom in 1779. They used the same arguments to argue for their freedom that the colonists used against Great Britain when they declared their freedom. The state government ignored their request.



Section 7: War's End

How did the Revolutionary War finally end?

The Americans won a great victory over the British at the Battle of Yorktown in October 1781. After that, most of the fighting stopped. The British were tired of the war and no longer wanted to fight. They decided to let America go. For the first time in history, a group of colonies successfully rebelled against their mother country and formed a new country of their own, the United States of America.

Representatives from the American government and the British government met in Paris, France, in 1783 to agree on terms for peace. The two governments wrote the Treaty of Paris, which stated that Britain no longer claimed America as its own.

The 13 colonies had already come together to declare independence and fight the British, but now they had to form a new government for their country. What kind of government would it be?

Let's Review!

What are the big ideas in this section?

1. The Battle of Yorktown: The Battle of Yorktown in October 1781 was a great victory for the Americans. After it, most of the fighting stopped and the war ended.
2. Successful Rebellion: For the first time in history, a group of colonies fought for its freedom and won the right to create a new country.



3. **The Treaty of Paris:** The Treaty of Paris was signed in Paris by the Americans and the British in 1783. It said Great Britain no longer owned the 13 colonies in America.

4. **A New Government:** The 13 colonies had united to declare independence and fight the war. Now, they would form a new government for their new country.