

Quick Facts & Interesting Trivia about Colonial America  
and the Founding of the United States of America

**"Freedom of speech is a principal pillar of a free government;  
when this support is taken away, the constitution of a free society  
is dissolved, and tyranny is erected on its ruins."  
-Benjamin Franklin**



**1) What were the original 13 Colonies?**

There were 13 original settlements that were created by Great Britain in the “New World.” At the establishment of the United States of America they were: Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Virginia.

**2) What does the term "the Signers" refer to?**

“The Signers” refers to the 56 delegates who attended the Second Continental Congress and who signed the United States Declaration of Independence.

**3) What does the term "the Framers" refer to?**

“The Framers” refers to the 55 individuals who attended the 1787 Constitutional Convention, though only 39 of the 55 actually signed that establishment document.

**4) What does the term "Founding Fathers" mean?**

The term Founding Fathers encompasses all those who participated in the creation and/or signing of the above two milestone documents along with those who worked on the Continental Association and the Articles of Confederation. Together the four could be referred to as our Founding Documents.

**5) What was the first of our Founding Documents?**

The first of the four documents was the Continental Association, which was created by the First Continental Congress at Carpenter’s Hall in Philadelphia, PA, on Oct 20, 1774 (effective Dec 1, 1774) in response to the Intolerable Acts. Those acts, which the British Parliament referred to as the Coercive Acts, were specifically designed to punish the Colony of Massachusetts in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party but also affected the freedom and liberty of all of the colonies. There were a total of 56 delegates who ultimately participated in and signed the petition to King George III for redress of their grievances. Of the 13 original colonies, all were represented except for Georgia.

**6) What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?**

Next was the Declaration of Independence, adopted by the Second Continental

## Quick Facts & Interesting Trivia about Colonial America and the Founding of the United States of America

Congress at Independence Hall (formerly the Pennsylvania State House), in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. That document lays out a bill of particulars that spells out the king's "repeated injuries and usurpations" of the Americans' rights and liberties and announced that the 13 American colonies that were at war with Great Britain regarded themselves as 13 independent and sovereign states that would no longer be under British rule. The 13 states thus formed a new nation – the United States of America.



### 7) What was the "Committee of Five"?

The Committee of Five of the Second Continental Congress was formed with the purpose to draft and present to the Congress the document that would become the Declaration of Independence. This committee met from Jun 11, 1776, until Jul 5, 1776, the day it was published. The members were John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston and Roger Sherman.

### 8) Who was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence?

Founding Father and third president Thomas Jefferson is noted as the principal author of the

Declaration of Independence.

### 9) What was the original title of the Declaration of Independence?

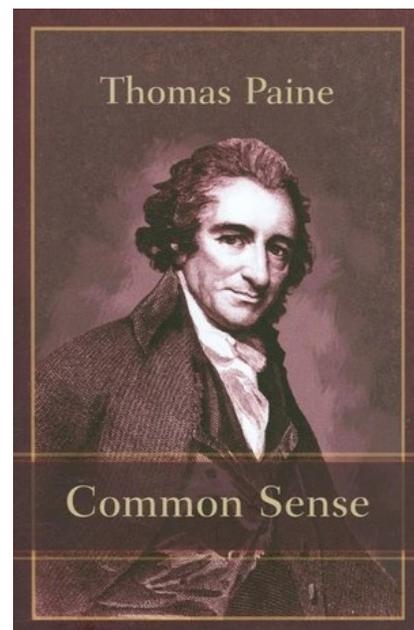
The Declaration of Independence was presented to "The Committee of the Whole" Congress, and was originally titled "A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled." This is the first time that the formal term "The United States of America" was used.

### 10) Who are the only two future presidents who signed the Declaration of Independence?

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson are the only two presidents who signed the Declaration of Independence.

### 11) What was one of Thomas Paine's greatest contributions?

Thomas Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense" was published in Jan 1776, and, in it, he argued in favor of colonial independence, specifically deriding monarchy and hereditary rule. Public support for separating ties with Great Britain grew as Paine's pamphlet spread throughout the colonies.



## Quick Facts & Interesting Trivia about Colonial America and the Founding of the United States of America

### 12) Where did General George Washington read the Declaration to a large crowd?

General George Washington read the Declaration of Independence to a large, cheering crowd in front of New York's City Hall. Later that day, several Colonialists toppled a statue of the tyrant British King George III and subsequently melted it, providing enough lead to produce more than 42,000 musket balls for the Continental Army.

### 13) What was our original constitutional document?

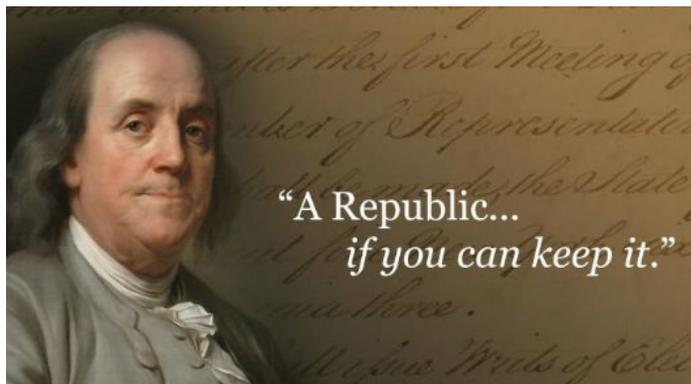
The third document was the first constitutional document of the U.S. The Articles of Confederation (formerly the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union) held, at its core, a guiding principle to preserve the independence and sovereignty of the states. The Second Continental Congress approved it, after five months of debate, on Nov 15, 1777. It came into force on Mar 1, 1781, after being ratified by all 13 states. It formed a confederation of states during war-time and called for an extremely limited central (national) government.

### 14) What was the name of the governing body that created the Articles of Confederation?

The body that created the Articles of Confederation was renamed the Congress of the Confederation (formally referred to as the United States in Congress Assembled), and it existed as the governing body of the states from Mar 1, 1781, until Mar 4, 1789 (the date the U.S. Constitution became effective).

### 15) Why was the Constitutional Convention originally called?

The Confederation Congress that was established by the Articles began to see too many limitations in the Articles in dealing with a growing country and the diversity and arguments between the 13 states. Many states became interested in changing the Articles and a Constitutional Convention was called and scheduled to meet on May 14, 1787, in Philadelphia. Early-on in the nearly four month long convention it became apparent that "fixing" the Articles was not what would be required to meet the demands and so developed the Constitution of the United States, the fourth of our Founding Documents. It was voted on and approved by the delegates on Sep 17, 1787, ratified on Jun 21, 1788, and became effective on Mar 4, 1789.



### 16) How did Benjamin Franklin describe our new form of government?

When Benjamin Franklin left the final meeting of the convention on Sept 17, 1787, he was asked by the Philadelphia mayor's wife what the new government would be. His reply was short and to the point, "A republic, madam. If you can keep it."

Quick Facts & Interesting Trivia about Colonial America  
and the Founding of the United States of America

**17) What prompted the creation of the Bill of Rights?**

During the often-bitter ratification process of the U.S. Constitution the group known as Anti-Federalists continuously called for limitations to be placed on the federal government and that there be guarantees for various individual rights and liberty. The proposed and adopted first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution became known as the Bill of Rights. They were created on Sep 25, 1789 and ratified on Dec 11, 1791.

**18) What cities served as capital during the Congress of the Confederation?**

The Congress of the Confederation did not meet in a fixed capital location. The locations that served as U.S. capitals during that time were: the Old Pennsylvania State House (Independence Hall), in Philadelphia, PA (Mar 1, 1781 - Jun 21, 1783); Nassau Hall, in Princeton, NJ (Jun 30, 1783 - Nov 4, 1783); the Maryland State House, in Annapolis, MD (Nov 26, 1783 - Aug 19, 1784); the French Arms Tavern, in Trenton, NJ (Nov 1, 1784 - Dec 24, 1784); and, City Hall of New York (later Federal Hall), in New York City, NY (Jan 11, 1785 to late 1788).

**19) Which two states were the first to show up for the Constitutional Convention?**

On May 14, 1787, only delegates from Virginia and Pennsylvania were present for what was to be the start of the Constitutional Convention. It began on May 25, after five more states arrived. A total of 12 of the 13 states were represented.

**20) Who is the Father of the Bill of Rights?**

George Mason, plantation owner and one of three Virginia delegates to the U.S. Constitutional Convention, is deemed the Father of the United States Bill of Rights. It was he who principally authored the Virginia Declaration of Rights and that document became the basis for the Bill of Rights.



**21) Where was George Washington sworn in as our first president?**

After the U.S. Constitution was ratified the capital of the United States was New York, at the NY City Hall, where George Washington was sworn in as our first president. It was the capital from Mar 4, 1789 through Aug 12, 1790.

**22) Who is the only person to have signed all four Founding Documents?**

There was only one person who signed all four of our Founding Documents, Connecticut delegate Roger Sherman.

**23) Who is considered as the Father of the Constitution?**

James Madison is considered the "Father of the Constitution" as he was instrumental in drafting the document and he also had a pivotal role in drafting and promoting the Bill of Rights.

Quick Facts & Interesting Trivia about Colonial America  
and the Founding of the United States of America

24) Which two Founding Fathers are the only to have signed the Constitution and were then later elected president?

George Washington and James Madison were the only Founding Fathers who signed the U.S. Constitution and later were elected presidents.



25) Why did Patrick Henry oppose ratification of the U.S. Constitution?

Patrick Henry, who led the opposition to the Stamp Act 1765, is best remembered for his dynamic "Give me liberty, or give me death!" speech. He refused appointment to the Constitutional Convention due to various actions taken by the national government under the Articles of Confederation, making him fear we were creating too strong of a federal government. After the Convention Washington sent him a copy and he opposed ratification of the document as written. He

declared that the Constitution, proposed without a Bill of Rights, did not protect individual rights.

26) How many delegates signed the Constitution?

Thirteen of the 55 original delegates to the Constitutional Convention were absent at the time the document was signed and three (Edmund Randolph, George Mason, and Elbridge Gerry) refused to sign it because it contained no Bill of Rights to protect individual freedom and liberty. The remaining 39 all signed.

27) Who were the oldest and youngest delegates to sign the Constitution?

The oldest person to sign the Constitution was Pennsylvania delegate Benjamin Franklin at 81, while the youngest was Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey, who was 26.

28) Why didn't Thomas Jefferson attend the Constitutional Convention?

Thomas Jefferson did not attend the Constitutional Convention because he had been appointed as Minister to France, serving from Jul 1784 through Sep 1789. Upon his return he was appointed as the first Secretary of State by President Washington.



Quick Facts & Interesting Trivia about Colonial America  
and the Founding of the United States of America

29) Why didn't John Adams attend the Constitutional Convention?

Likewise, John Adams did not attend. He was in the United Kingdom, serving as the first American Ambassador to Great Britain, from Apr 1, 1785 until Mar 30, 1788. After his return, he became the first vice president, under George Washington.

30) How long did it take to construct the White House?

Construction of the White House in Washington DC commenced on Oct 13, 1792, and was completed on Nov 1, 1800.

31) Who was the first president to occupy the White House?

John Adams was the first President to occupy the White House, beginning in Nov, 1800. However, he only lived there for four months because he lost the 1800 election to Thomas Jefferson.



32) Which two Founding Fathers both died on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence?

Founding Fathers and presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Presented by IC Liberty Films, an independent movie company,  
distributing and marketing the award-winning Constitution movie:



[www.insearchofliberty.com](http://www.insearchofliberty.com)



CC Attribution-Non-Commercial-NoDerivatives 4.0