

**KILLING THE KING:
UNINTENDED
CONSEQUENCES OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

HISTORY 1100.3
NOVEMBER 6-8, 2007

I. IDEOLOGICAL ESCALATION: FROM HOME RULE TO REVOLUTION

- ◆ **A. Continuing crises during the 1760s and 1770s caused progressive escalation of American rhetoric and ideas.**
 - -- Patriot elite needed to recruit supporters among the common people, arguing that Americans fought for liberty itself, not just against particular taxes.
- ◆ **B. Implications of the escalation**
 - 1. All coercive authority/sovereignty, all social & political superiority, came under suspicion.
 - 2. American leaders reconsidered the basis of their rights. "Rights of Englishmen" Americans were once proud of came to seem limited and insufficient.
 - 3. New basis would be "natural rights": identified by reason, possessed in state of nature, universal, eternal & absolute.

II. WAR, INDEPENDENCE, & REPUBLICANISM, 1775-77

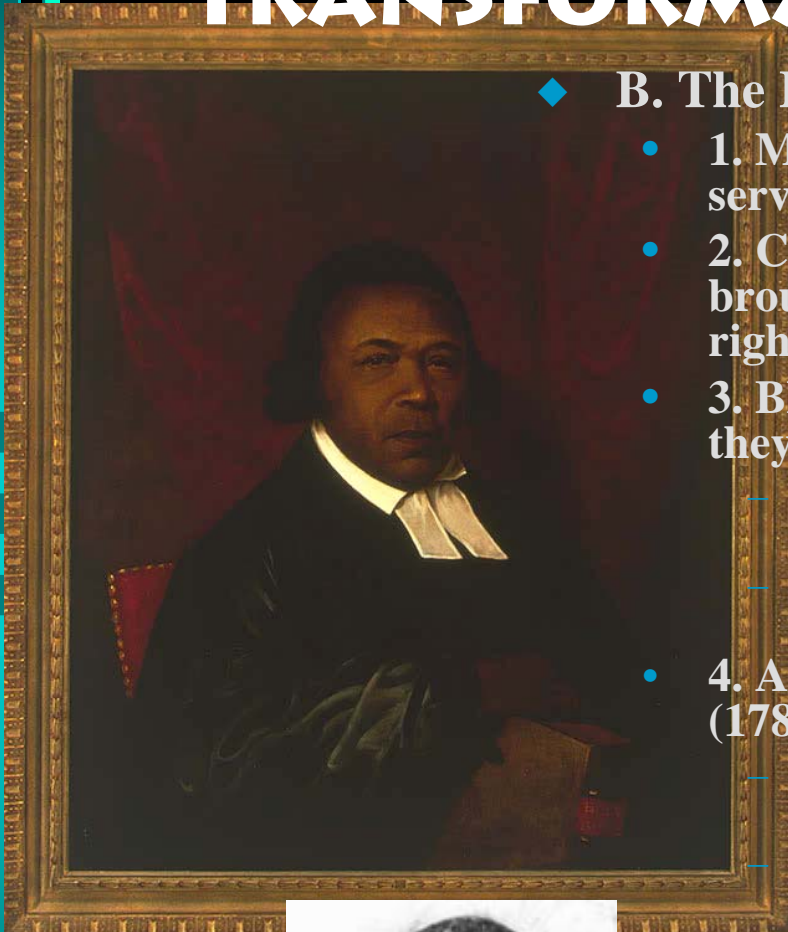
- ◆ A. With Americans already controlling everything outside Boston, British tried to seize American arms and leaders & war begins, 19 April 1775.
 - 1. Major battles & actions before independence: Lexington & Concord, Ft. Ticonderoga (May 1775), Bunker Hill (June 1775), invasion of Canada (May-Dec. 1775), Dorchester Heights (March 1776).
 - 2. Second Continental Congress convened (May 1775-) & began to act like a national government, organizing army, making foreign policy, etc.
- ◆ B. Slow movement toward independence spurs more escalation.
 - 1. Thomas Paine and Common Sense, 1776, appealed to common people & defined the rebellion's goals: against monarchy, for political liberty and equality.
 - Americans knew what they were against, but Paine gave them something to be for: an entirely new form of government (a republic), defined by constitutions.
 - Paine's shockingly democratic ideas about how the new governments should be structured: Annually-elected national legislature, w/o an upper house or a permanent executive.
 - 2. Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence: invoked right of revolution, installed natural rights & Paine's ideas as founding principles of new nation.
 - 3. As Declaration spread, mobs tore down the statues of the king and real revolution began.
- ◆ C. War Update: The French saved us, not George Washington.
 - Key battles: Brooklyn Heights (Aug. 76), Trenton (Dec. 76), Saratoga (Oct. 77), occupations of New York City & Philadelphia

III. THE REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICA

- ◆ **A. "The Contagion of Liberty"** (from historian Bernard Bailyn)
 - **1. A process began of making every aspect of American life consistent with Revolution's stated republican & egalitarian ideals.**
 - **2. Key change was the new absolutism of the American concept of liberty.**
 - **Previously, colonists had accepted the reality that almost no one had total liberty. Freedom existed only in degrees.**
 - **Examples of partial liberty: indentured servitude, "binding out," and apprenticeship**
 - **In a hierarchical society, slavery itself was only a matter of degree, the lowest degree of liberty.**
 - **American revolutionaries denounced the idea that there could be any such thing as "partial liberty."**
 - **3. "Outgroups" and reformers developed their own interpretations of Revolutionary ideals, took Revolutionary changes much further than the protesters of the 1760s had ever dreamed.**

III. THE REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICA (CONT.)

- ◆ B. The Revolution and the Problem of Slavery
 - 1. Masters into “bosses,” servants into “help,” the decline of servitude in all forms, including apprenticeship.
 - 2. Colonial claims that British meant to make them "slaves" brought out the contradiction between equality/natural rights, and chattel slavery.
 - 3. Blacks petitioned for freedom or otherwise showed that they did not want to be enslaved.
 - Lord Dunmore's Proclamation (Dec. 1775): Royal governor of VA freed slaves who joined the British.
 - During war, British freed or confiscated thousands of slaves. Many northern blacks fought on the American side.
 - 4. Abolition of slavery in the North, led by Pennsylvania (1780) & Massachusetts (1783)
 - New England: slavery economically was insignificant, abolition was quick
 - Middle States: slavery was relatively important, so abolition was slower to come, & gradual.
 - 5. Growth of an independent free black community in the North, especially Philadelphia.
 - Example of Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, & the AME Church.
 - 6. Huge secondary consequence: Revolution created the sectional difference that brought the Civil War.



III. THE REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICA (CONT.)



JUDITH SARGENT MURRAY

◆ C. The Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority

- 1. Decline of deference in daily social life and styles.
- 2. “Remember the Ladies”: Women’s revolutionary experience, rise of companionate marriage.
- 3. New attitudes regarding women: “Republican motherhood,” early feminism and the revolution in female education.
- 4. The children of the Revolution rebel: world-renowned as least obedient
 - Parents lost much of their economic ability to control behavior & choices of youth.
 - Post-revolutionary epidemic of premarital pregnancy
 - “Bundling” was apparently not enough. [Sketch of bundling bag.]
 - Rise of relatively unsupervised social activities for young people, bringing first youth culture & peer groups.
 - Collapse of discipline, riots on college campuses

III. THE REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICA (CONT.)

◆ D. The Revolutionary Transformation of Criminal Justice

- 1. Extensive rights for the accused was a central part of controversy with British. Mason's [Virginia Declaration of Rights](#) (1776) set the list later included in Bill of Rights: speedy trial by jury; knowledge of charges and accuser; searches only by specific warrant; no detention without charge, excessive bail, or cruel & unusual punishment.
- 2. Laws & procedures revised, by Jefferson and others, according to principles of Enlightenment theorist Beccaria.
- 3. End of judicial torture, corporal punishment (whipping), mutilation, public humiliation as part of criminal justice system.
- 4. Restriction of death penalty to only the most serious crimes: treason, premeditated or aggravated murder & arson. Prisons built instead.

◆ E. The Attack on Political Authority: The Democratic Revolution in Politics

- 1. *Written* state constitutions (world's first) put tight, publicly-stated limits on government authority. Emergence of "constitutions" as we now define them.
- 2. Typical features of early state constitutions: weak governors, weak judiciaries, broad suffrage. Most radical was the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, inspired by Paine.
- 3. Confiscation of Loyalist property.
- 4. Democratic state politics: [new men in power](#), laws protecting debtors, localism, little cooperation with Congress.
- 5. Common people (including soldiers) rebelled, rioted, and mutinied when they thought their rights were violated.

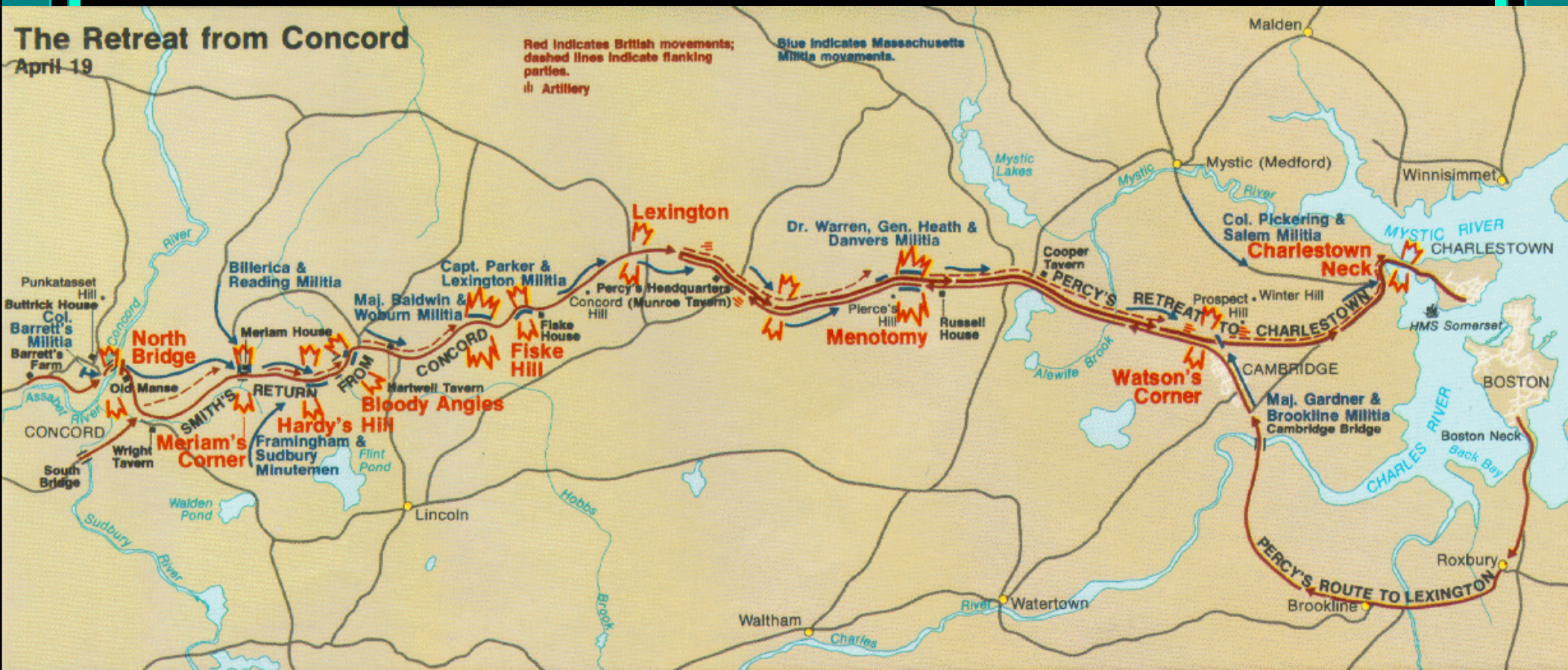
◆ F. "Disestablishment" of the churches in the South and the Middle States: Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom (1779)

- Increased sectional differences – New England does not disestablish its churches.

IV. A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WITHOUT SOVEREIGNTY: THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

- ◆ **A. Confederation represented the states, not people at large.**
- ◆ **B. Dismembering the King: National government a major victim of Revolutionary ideas**
 - **1. People wanted very direct representation, feared/hated authority. Suspicion/fear of coercive authority prevented giving any real power to the US government.**
 - **Underlying problem: only states were representative republican governments that could legitimately have powers like taxation.**
 - **2. Confusion: Despite state sovereignty, Congress had many sovereign-like powers.**
 - **3. Practical problems with the Articles: Congress elected by states, each state had one vote; Confederation had no taxing power or ability to compel states; there was a “President” but no executive; unanimous vote needed to amend.**
- ◆ **C. Economic crisis of the Confederation**
 - **1. Confederation had to pay for war by requisitioning money from the states or printing or borrowing it.**
 - **2. New democracy in the states made taxation difficult.**
 - **3. States’ failure to pay Congress or manage their own finances correctly led to hyperinflation & bankruptcy.**
- ◆ **D. International Weakness of the Confederation**
 - **1. Could not force states to comply with Treaty of Paris (1783) ending war.**
 - **2. British kept their western forts open and restricted American commerce.**
 - **3. Spanish closed New Orleans and the Mississippi River (1784).**

LEXINGTON AND CONCORD, APR. 1775



THOMAS PAINE & COMMON SENSE

- ◆ Paine's background: uneducated, working-class perspective; a trouble-making staymaker & tax collector who had recently fled political repression in Great Britain
- ◆ Dr. Benjamin Rush, a radical afraid to jeopardize his practice, suggested that Paine, a Philadelphia bookstore clerk, write a pamphlet urging common people to support independence.
- ◆ Key quotations:
 - “Everything that is right or natural pleads for separation . . . The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, TIS TIME TO PART.”
 - "The Royal Brute" had "sunk himself below the rank of animals, and contemptibly crawls through the world like a worm."
 - Attacked the patriarchal theory of monarchy: King only “the pretended Father of his people”
 - In Britain, the “King was the law.” In America, “the law was King.”
 - “A new era for politics is struck; and a new method of thinking hath arisen . . . We have every opportunity . . . to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth. We have it in our power to begin the world again.”

