

Peace of Paris

The 1781 U.S. victory at the Battle of Yorktown made peace talks where British negotiators were willing to consider U.S. independence a possibility.

After Yorktown, the Continental Congress appointed a small group of statesmen to travel to Europe and negotiate a peace treaty with the British: John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson and Henry Laurens.

Jefferson, however, was not able to leave the United States for the negotiations, and Laurens had been captured by a British warship and held captive in the Tower of London until the end of the war, so the principal American negotiators were Franklin, Adams and Jay.

Franklin, who served as America's first ambassador to France, had been in Paris since the start of the Revolution and was instrumental in securing French assistance during the war. Peace negotiations between British and American diplomats began there in the spring of 1782 and continued into the fall.

Eighteenth-century British parliamentary governments tended to be unstable and depended on both a majority in the House of Commons and the good favor of the King. Thus, when news of Yorktown reached London, the parliamentary opposition succeeded in overthrowing the embattled government led by Frederick North, Lord North.

However, the new government, led by Charles Watson-Wentworth, Marquess of Rockingham, was not much more stable than the previous one. The strong personalities of its ministers led to internal conflicts between them and King George III.

Rockingham died in July of 1782, and he was succeeded by William Petty Fitzmaurice, Earl of Shelburne. Lord Shelburne's government wanted to seek peace, but hoped to avoid recognizing U.S. independence.

However, the war had been expensive, and Britain faced a formidable alliance, fighting the combined forces of France, Spain, and the Netherlands, in addition to the rebellious colonists.

Shelburne and other British diplomats had pursued a strategy of trying to drive the alliance apart by entering negotiations for a separate peace with France's allies.

Although such efforts failed with the Netherlands, US negotiators were receptive to the idea of separate negotiations, because they saw in such negotiations the clearest path to ensuring recognition of US independence in a final peace settlement. The French Foreign Minister, Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes, approved of separate negotiations, though not of a separate peace.

In the meantime, Anglo-American negotiations had been stalled, owing to internal conflicts in the British government and British refusal to recognize U.S. independence as part of the peace settlement.

In July of 1782, Lord Shelburne gave in on the issue of independence, hoping that a generous peace settlement with the United States would bring peace with France, the Netherlands, and Spain. However, John Jay objected to British refusal to acknowledge the United States as already independent during peace negotiations, so the negotiations halted until the fall.

Anglo-American negotiations entered their final stage in October and November of 1782. The United States succeeded in obtaining Newfoundland fishing rights, a western border that extended to the Mississippi with rights of navigation (which the Spanish government would later prevent) and, most importantly, British acknowledgement of U.S. independence along with the peaceful withdrawal of British forces.

In return for these concessions, the agreement contained provisions requiring the U.S. to honor private debts and ensure an end to the seizure of Loyalist property. U.S. negotiators John Jay, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Henry Laurens signed a preliminary agreement with British representative Richard Oswald on November 30, 1782. The agreement would remain informal until the conclusion of a peace agreement between Britain and France.

The Peace of Paris is a collection of treaties concluding the American Revolution and signed by representatives of Great Britain on one side and the United States, France, and Spain on the other.

Preliminary articles (often called the Preliminary Treaty of Paris) were signed at Paris between Britain and the United States on November 30, 1782.

On September 3, 1783, three definitive treaties were signed

- Treaty of Paris - between Britain and the United States in Paris
- Treaty of Versailles - between Britain and France and Spain, respectively
- Treaty of Paris - between Britain and the Netherlands (Dutch Republic) (a preliminary treaty on September 2, 1783, and a final separate peace on May 20, 1784)

Treaty of Paris (September 3, 1783)

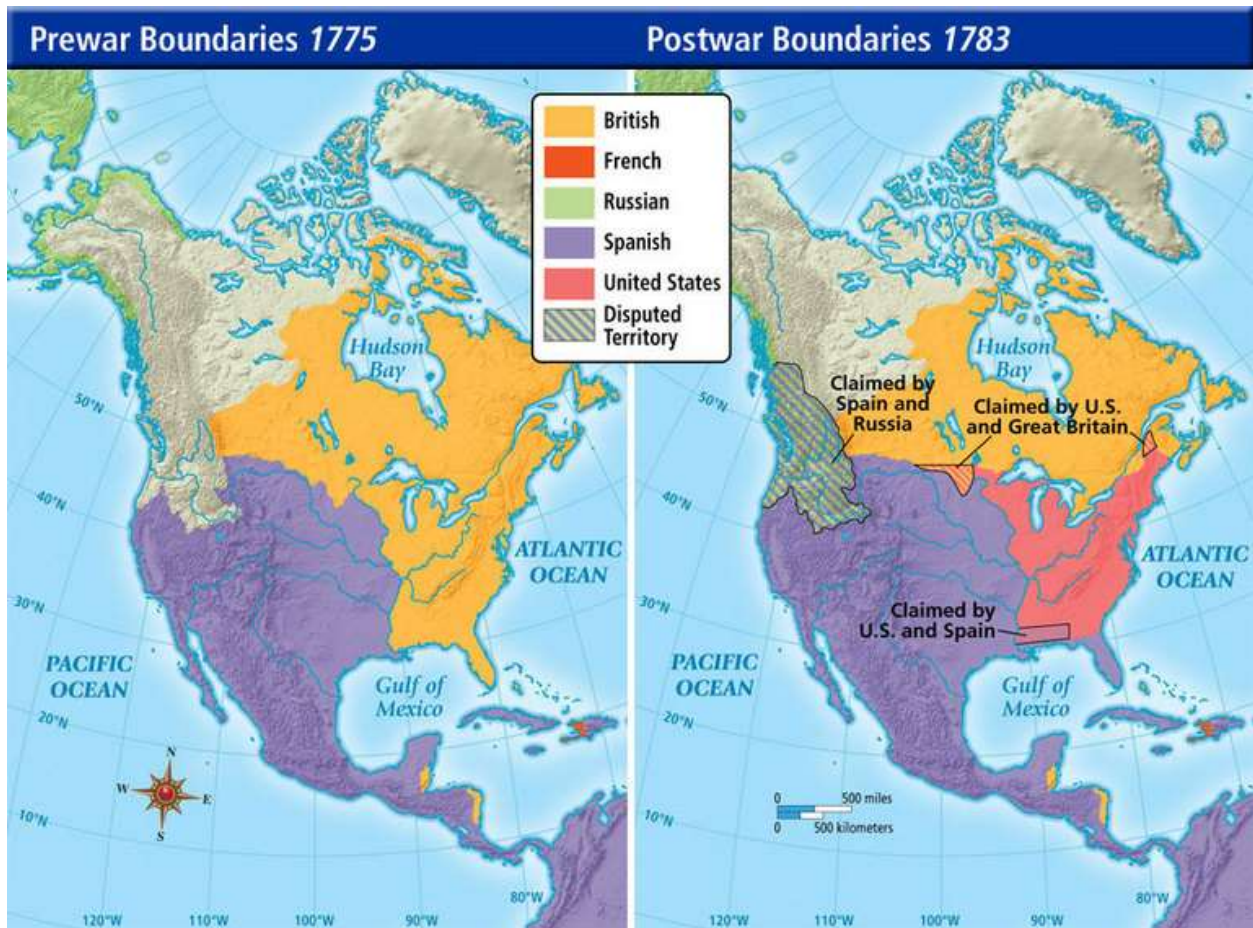
This treaty, signed on September 3, 1783, between the American colonies and Great Britain, ended the American Revolutionary War and formally recognized the United States as an independent nation.

Article 1st:

His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States, viz., New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, to be free sovereign and Independent States; that he treats with them as such, and for himself his Heirs & Successors, relinquishes all claims to the Government, Propriety, and Territorial Rights of the same and every Part thereof.

The American War for Independence (1775-1783) was actually a world conflict, involving not only the United States and Great Britain, but also France, Spain, and the Netherlands. The peace process brought a nascent United States into the arena of international diplomacy, playing against the largest and most established powers on earth.

The three American negotiators – John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay – proved themselves ready for the world stage, achieving many of the objectives sought by the new United States. Two crucial provisions of the treaty were British recognition of U.S. independence and the delineation of boundaries that would allow for American western expansion.



By the terms of the U.S.-Britain treaty, Britain recognized the independence of the United States with generous boundaries to the Mississippi River but retained Canada. (National Archives)

On January 14, 1784, the Treaty of Paris was ratified by the Congress of the United States, while they met in the Senate Chamber of the Maryland State House.

Here are a few key terms of the Treaty of Paris:

- Great Britain finally gave formal recognition to its former colonies as a new and independent nation: the United States of America.
- Defined the US border, with Great Britain granting the Northwest Territory to the United States (this included the present-day states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and parts of Minnesota – doubled the land area of the United State).
- Secured fishing rights to the Grand Banks and other waters off the British-Canadian coastline for American boats.
- Opened up the Mississippi River to navigation by citizens of both the United States and Great Britain.
- Resolved issues with American debts owed to British creditors.
- Provided for fair treatment of American citizens who had remained loyal to Great Britain during the war.

Treaty of Versailles (September 3, 1783)

Being on the winning side, the French government had the upper hand in the negotiation of the treaty, but had to recognize that Britain remained a powerful military and economic rival.

The French foreign minister, the Comte de Vergennes, did not seek to reverse the gains Britain had made in North America during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). So far as Newfoundland was concerned, he wanted to negotiate an enhanced, improved version of what France had obtained in the Treaty of Paris (1763).

Vergennes proposed that the French Shore should be extended, and that French subjects should have the exclusive right to fish there — a seasonal monopoly. He also indicated that the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon were not satisfactory as a fishing base, and asked for a better location to be granted without any conditions attached.

The two sides eventually reached a deal. So far as the French Shore was concerned, the boundaries were changed to Cape St. John and Cape Ray, and a declaration appended to the treaty defined French rights there — using words which Vergennes thought prevented British fishers from using that coast.

Unable to suggest anywhere else which the French might find acceptable, Britain reluctantly agreed to return St. Pierre and Miquelon to France.

There were no conditions stipulated in the actual treaty, but the declaration voiced the British concern that the islands should never become a military threat — in the words of the declaration, "an object of jealousy" — which France accepted.

This treaty, and the declarations attached, governed the French Shore issue until 1904, and form the basis of France's possession of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

The King of Great Britain, in ceding the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon to France, regards them as ceded for the purpose of serving as a real shelter to the French fishermen, and in full confidence that these possessions will not become an object of jealousy between the two nations; and the fishery between the said Islands, and that of Newfoundland, shall be limited to the middle of the channel.

After two years of vacillation and delay, Great Britain and the future United States of America signed, on September 3, 1783, the Treaty of Versailles, which also involved France, Spain, and the Netherlands and officially marked the end of the War of American Independence. Britain surrendered Tobago and Senegal to France. Spain retained Minorca and East and West Florida.

Under the Treaty, the southwest border of the colony of Québec was redrawn so as to bisect the Great Lakes, except for Lake Michigan, which was ceded to the Americans in its entirety. Further south, Great Britain lost Florida, which was handed over to Spain. Several border disputes remained to be resolved, in particular in Nova Scotia (on the territory of present-day New Brunswick).

These new Québec borders meant that the Canadians who lived in the area south of the Great Lakes instantly became American citizens. Most of the inhabitants were Amerindians, French Métis, and French-speaking Whites. All of them became English speakers over the next few decades. (University of Ottawa)

Treaty of Paris (May 20, 1784)

Anglo-Dutch Wars, also called Dutch Wars, Dutch Engelse Oorlogen, four 17th- and 18th-century naval conflicts between England and the Dutch Republic. The first three wars, stemming from commercial rivalry, established England's naval might, and the last, arising from Dutch interference in the American Revolution, spelled the end of the republic's position as a world power.

The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) was a conflict between the Kingdom of Great Britain and the Dutch Republic. By the 1770s, unrest was growing in the Netherlands. The government tried to resolve internal conflicts by uniting the people against a common enemy.

Though Great Britain and the Republic had been allies since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Dutch had become very much the junior partner in the alliance, and had slowly lost their erstwhile dominance of world trade to the British. London had replaced Amsterdam as the world's leading financial capital.

Initially the British considered the Dutch allies in their attempt to stamp out the rebellion in their American colonies. They unsuccessfully attempted to hire Dutch soldiers for use in the Americas, in a similar manner to the Hessian and Brunswicker contingents they hired and deployed.

The English declared war on December 20, 1780, and in the following year quickly took key Dutch possessions in the West and East Indies while imposing a powerful blockade of the Dutch coast. In the only significant engagement of the war, a small Dutch force attacked a British convoy in an indecisive clash off Dogger Bank in August 1781.

The Republic was never able to assemble a proper fleet for combat. When the war ended, the Dutch were at the lowest point of their power and prestige. (Dutch naval power had been in decline since 1712. The Dutch navy, now having only twenty ships of the line, was no match for the British Royal Navy.)

The Republic joined a cease fire between Britain and France in January 1783. On April 19th 1783 the Dutch Republic recognized the independence of the United States. The Netherlands and Britain also signed a preliminary treaty on September 2, 1783, and a final separate peace on May 20, 1784.

The 1784 Treaty put an end to the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. England received the right of free navigation in the East Indies and the Dutch Republic had to give up Negapatnam, an important port on the east coast of India. (Britannica; Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias)

Information here is primarily from National Archives; Library of Congress; Britannica; Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the American Revolution, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young