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Launching the Grand Experiment

The theme of this session of the multi-part seminar you are attending concerns the first post-Revolutionary generation of Americans. We will look at the years leading up to the Constitutional Convention and the first years following the drafting and ratification of the Constitution. In other words, we will be focusing on the 1780s and 1790s, a concentrated “moment” of American history that involved Americans in a supremely important series of events that would test the Revolution during the “Critical Period” of the 1780s, lead many Americans toward redefining and reforming their republic in the late 1780s, and then test the early nation once again during the first years of the new federal system during the 1790s. Because we live in Delaware, I will emphasize events and sources concerning our region, including Philadelphia.

The book you have been asked to read is Billy Smith, *Life in Early Philadelphia, Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Period*. It is a rich collection of sources from which you can extract a number of different teaching tools that illustrate social crises of the era. Below is a short list of terms and questions that will help guide us through the Smith book, as well as some lists of internet, primary, and secondary sources that I will demonstrate and discuss with you during our workshop. I have some ideas about what might be useful and interesting for you to cover, but we can address other topics you may wish to cover concerning this era of American history – just ask.

The following four thematic sets of questions will be addressed in part by the Billy Smith book, in part by your general knowledge of the era, and in part by some new kinds of internet sources you can use for teaching. Think about these questions as you read around in Billy Smith, and we will incorporate other readings and sources during the workshop.

1. What made the **Critical Period (1781-1787) critical?**

Starting points:

a. What were some of the ill effects of waging war?

The paths of destruction;

Occupation: civilians and soldiers together;

Loyalists; confiscations and punishment

Scarcities; Price-fixing

Blockades

The weather; diseases

Spies, the breakdown of trust; prisoners of war

b. How would we identify “recovery” after the Revolution? WAS there recovery? What are the issues that vex Americans the most, and what are the economic and social issues that are discussed at the Constitutional Convention? Examples:

- commerce
- Shays’ Rebellion (Article 4)
- the role of states to each other
- the authority of the federal government (Article 1, sections 8 and 10)
- loyalist property
- slavery

What is NOT discussed at the Constitutional Convention? Think about the documents in Billy Smith (though he writes about just one part of American social life) as a means to answer this question.

2. What was Hamilton’s plan for America in the 1790s? What was achieved, and what was not yet possible? How does Hamilton (or, we should probably say, the Hamiltonians as a large group of Americans) promote what he believes is good for America – what ideas, what vehicles in the press, etc.? How is Hamilton’s interpretation of the Constitution received by even wider layers of Americans – the ones who will become his opponents over the decade? Consider, for example:

- taking care of the Revolutionary debt
- forming a Bank of the United States
- forging a republic with international reputation
- envisioning a republic of manufacturing people

3. I would like us to consider not only political issues, but social and cultural ones as well. “Hamiltonians” and “Jeffersonians” had to confront a number of social crises during the period 1787 to 1800. Consider the following, for example:

- Yellow fever epidemics and the crises of urban poverty
- the Whiskey Rebellion and Indian wars in the West
- the Haitian Revolution and migration of Caribbean people into America
- the French Revolution and its connections to thinking about “luxury,” political dissent, and expansion westward
- the shifting nature of slavery in the North
- the rise of the penny press
- the role of piracy and privateering by both French and British

4. The 1790s: WAS there recovery yet? Or was there still uncertainty?

What is the connection between the Constitution as a document outlining the structure of a federal government, and the needs of Americans involved in enterprise, farming, and commerce?

When thinking about recovery, what was the role of commercial farming, milling, flour manufacturing in this commercial recovery? How do these activities relate to the economic preeminence of the Philadelphia region during this era?

To refine this fourth general issue, let's consider:

1. What role did disease and viral epidemics play in Philadelphia during the years after the Revolution? Documents in Billy Smith will help you understand possible answers; I will also go over websites and books that expand on issues of small pox and yellow fever.

2. What was manufacturing like during the 1780s and 1790s? How can we relate its development to issues we have been discussing, including commerce, debt/credit, banking, raising capital, mobilizing skills, transforming labor relations? Think, also, about the idea we have been skirting around related to "networks" to the interior, and networks of commerce abroad. Related to this, what changes most rapidly, and what changes most imperceptibly?

What is an industrial revolution? What does it take to begin one, and have it unfold over time? Is America anywhere near this phase? Does the Constitution provide any "pushes" in that direction?

What is a factory? Is it essential for the transformation of labor and manufacturing?

[we will look at images of manufacturing, milling, docks, etc., to investigate these kinds of questions]

3. How is Philadelphia's social structure changing during and just after the Revolution? We have talked about new and old merchants, what happens to craftsmen/journeymen, and somewhat about the changing appearance of the city. Let's add elements such as immigration, epidemics, rising crowding and poverty, the lives of women who enter business and markets.

4. Who favors more -- and who favors less -- government involvement in the economy? Why? Can we begin to think about nationalism, or a national identity that is promoted by certain kinds of Philadelphians? Does the Constitution promote, or facilitate, a particular kind of American people? A particular direction for government to take in the economy? What happens to ideas about custom, tradition, price-fixing, and other cultural economic explanations of social relations once the structure of work and commerce begin to change under the Constitution's influence?

Other questions that are important to address:

What happened to local farms and homes?

What is happening in commerce in the Caribbean and in Europe? What is the impact of the emerging Napoleonic Wars on the people of the mid-Atlantic region?

What was the role of women and did thinking about women change forever?

What is the role of money, banking, credit during this era? Do people think of debts differently? Money? Does this affect social relations?

Teaching Tools:

During our sessions, we will have a look at some of the internet sources you and your students can use to develop a unit based on the themes covered above.

A. WALKING IN THE OLD CITY, PHILADELPHIA

I often take my students on a walking tour of Philadelphia's late-1700s sites, which provides a good feel for the city during this critical period of the nation's formation. There is a terrific a map of old Philadelphia in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century:

<http://www.ushistory.org/tour/philmap>

There are good sites that serve as companions for this exercise as well:

<http://www.citytavern.com/history>

<http://www.ushistory.org/carpentershall/history/congress>

<http://www.elfrethsalley.org>

<http://www.carpentershall.org>

The places chosen for this walking tour are usually:

City Tavern, Walnut and Second streets

Carpenter's Hall, Chestnut, between 3d and 4th

Pemberton House, Chestnut St, between 3d and 4th

The First Bank of the United States, 3rd street between Chestnut and Walnut

Merchants Exchange

The Second Bank of the United States

Bishop White House, Walnut and 3d

The Todd House

Debtors Prison, near Carpenter's Hall

Todd House, 4th and Walnut

The American Philosophical Society, 5th

18th Century Gardens

Footprints of long gone modest homes

*** Elfreth's Alley – my personal favorite

Free Quaker Meeting House

Arch Street Meeting House

Additional places of significance, though often there is not time:

Man Full of Trouble Tavern (see its page on the main web site)

The Bourse
The Mint
The Atheneum
The Constitution Center
Graff House
The Shambles
Christ's Church
St. George's
Fireman's Hall
The Pennsylvania Hospital
The Federal Reserve Bank: <http://www.phil.frb.org> for information about their Money in Motion exhibit.

B. GOING TO HAGLEY

Hagley is a wonderful place to visit in the context of studying early southeastern Pennsylvania's manufacturing after the American Revolution. While there, see the machine shop of the early nineteenth century. As a complement to this visit, the following places help students think about early manufactures

Wetherill and Bros. White Lead Manufactory:
<http://www.lcpgraphics.org/wainwright/W450.htm>

also search Wolfpac on the Library Company of Philadelphia home page, under Stewart & Jones, and see a copy of the broadside of what they import related to the production of dyes, small tools, and agricultural goods. Go to the following url and click on "view imprint":

<http://opac.newsbank.com/select/evans/26213> *Evans Digital Edition* (if you cannot link directly to this page, you can get to it through the LCP hot link in Wolfpac)

C. GOING TO GREENBANK MILL

The website for the Greenbank Mill is at: <http://www.greenbank.org/history/html>. There are two pages to focus on: one on water power in milling, and one on Oliver Evans. You can see another version of the mill at <http://www.librarycompany.org>, under the link to Exhibits, and then Risky Business exhibit pages – this is a pamphlet I wrote and a set of images I chose for a 2004 exhibit at the Library Company of Philadelphia.

D. VALUABLE WEB SITES ABOUT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION'S AFTERMATH

The list of web sites below does not exhaust the possibilities for you and your students – far from it! But they include many valuable documents, readings, maps, and other materials that you can use to prepare classes on the Revolution, or assign students at various levels.

A. General Sites about the first post-Revolutionary years that include documents, images, and scholarly articles:

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/> -- for some documents and some useful ideas about lesson planning

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/>

A very large site with perhaps the largest existing compilation of documents about the era <http://www.longman.awl.com/nash/> --- a long, good site that gives you maps, quizzes, links to other sites, study guides for your textbook, etc. Has some interesting tables displaying economic information.

<http://www.nara.gov/education/cc/main.html> --- images, including maps

<http://www.americanrevolution.org/>

<http://www.ushistory.org/>

-- numerous links to Valley Forge information, Diary of Albigeance Waldo, occupation of Philadelphia and the social nature of army life and warfare; also the "Touring the Old City" pages.

--also has the Birch illustrations and information about images of the Old City

<http://www.earlyamerica.com/>

Many 18th century newspapers, maps, magazines, portraits.

Also includes a discussion forum and bulletin boards where you can see historians at work, and magazine articles that you can print see, also, "notable women of early America", including short bios.

<http://www.sin.fi.edu/franklin>

this site is constantly changing, but is sponsored by the Franklin Institute in Philly, and highlights Ben Franklin materials – so given that his birthday tercentenary approaches, you will find lots of new material going onto the site

<http://www.clements.umich.edu/spies/>

some good letters from spies are reproduced at this site.

Google "The Avalon Project," and you can find such gems as:

An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, 1780

Paine, The American Crisis

Alien and Sedition Acts

Barbary Treaties

Albany Plan

Constitutions and Charters of all colonies and states

The Federalist Papers

Documents of diplomacy and foreign affairs

Opinions on the Constitutionality of the BUS

Treaties with native Americans

Documents of the Whiskey Rebellion

<http://www.mountvernon.org/>

virtual tour of George Washington's mansion,
archaeological sources, educational resources,
materials about farming and plantations in the era, and grist mills

<http://www.historyplace.com/>

<http://www.memory.loc.gov/> --- Library of Congress collections; some excerpts from
Jefferson and Washington papers, and from other early republic events.

<http://www.fisher.lib.virginia.edu/> -- early census data

<http://www.libertynet.org/>- revolutionary era and its aftermath; esp. from collections of
the David Library of the Amer. Rev.

<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/>

<http://www.oup.usa.org/anb> -- American National Biography

<http://www.digitalhistory.org/>--- good documents on the 7 Years' War and Revolution
beginnings; excellent place to read about daily life of soldier; includes some items related
to life inside a fort on the frontier during the 7 Years' War.

<http://www.lives/gwlife/>--Washington biography; use to link to other bios of the era's
leaders

<http://teachpol.tcnj.edu/> --- excellent trove of graphics and maps covering the post-
Revolutionary generation.

<http://www.angelfire.com/> --- esp. good on the economics of the Rev.

<http://www.plpsd.mb.ca/amhs/history>-- link to many events, and esp. good on Loyalists

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/gwhtml/>.

For the complete Library of Congress collection of George Washington Papers; the
original and first part of the released papers included his writings through 1799, a great
source for teaching how to use documents in multiple different ways.

<http://www.maritime-scotland.org.uk/>

For Scottish in the Atlantic World, settling to North America, and links to secondary
scholarship on Scottish

<http://www.coins.nd.edu/ColCoin/ColCoinContents/Contents01.html>

-- a very large site with articles and numerous pictures, colonial, Revolutionary, and early
national money

<http://www.revolution.h-net.msu.edu/essays/wulf.html>

-- a good article about Quakers and indecision, divisions

<http://earlyamerica.com/review/winter2000/loyalists.html>

-- "Why the loyalists lost"

<http://earlyamerica.com/review/fall96/loyalists.html>

-- reply to Paine, and onloyalism in Maryland

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2narr4.html>

-- African-American loyalism – good documents and commentary

<http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/2003>

-- on NYC occupation, spies, warships, and role of runaway slaves and servants in the city

<http://www.plpsd.mb.ca/amhs/history>

United Empire Loyalists – good for reading about where loyalists went, and who might have come back to America in the 1780s-1790s

<http://www.pbs.org>

The third section (Part 3: 1791-1831) of this site includes a chronologically long-range, and rich, series of pages called "Africans in America" or AIA; the section on the Revolutionary Atlantic is quite good; includes numerous pages on Haitian Revolution, Philadelphia refugees, earliest efforts at abolition in Philadelphia, etc.

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/0144039x.asp>

site for the journal *Slavery and Abolition*, which often has articles on the eighteenth century.

<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/>>

site called "The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record" -- has ca. 1000 images

Diary of Martha Ballard online, with a number of pages about how historians work and bibliography related to women's economy:

<http://www.dohistory.org>

D. Websites on French Revolution and Haitian Revolution that are related to American themes:

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/virtual/links.htm>

This is a very large site with many components, including an outline of the core course on the French Revolution at Brooklyn College, many links to articles and documents, etc.

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/chap1a.html>

Another large site with articles, images, documents, etc. Be sure to click on icons that lead to brief explanations of poverty, artisans, Paris, and many other topics. Most important article is "Social Causes of the Revolution."

The web site that Professor John Garrigus keeps at Jacksonville University, Florida has numerous direct links to documents and articles about the Haitian Revolution:

<http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/fac/peabody/>

E. Primary Sources at Your Fingertips:

The Pennsylvania Gazette is available online through the University of Delaware; see me. It was the most important newspaper of the mid-Atlantic region until it ceased publication in 1800.

Early American Imprints is, too.

A few Printed Primary sources:

The American Museum

Thomas Balch, ed., Thomas Willing Letters and Papers, 1922

William Barton, various pamphlets on the BNA

Ann Bezanson, et al., eds., Prices and Inflation During the American Revolution, 1770-1790 (1936)

Mathew Carey

Tench Coxe

Elaine F. Crane, et al, eds., The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker, 3 vols. (1991)

Sarah Logan Fisher, A Diary of Trifling Occurrences: Philadelphia, 1776-1778, ed.

Nicholas B. Wainwright, Pen. Mag. of History and Biography (1958)

Mary Heaton, Bucks County Women in Wartime, Bucks County Historical Society (1926)

Edmund Hogan, The Prospect of Philadelphia, 1795

Francis Hopkinson, An Account of the Grand Federal Procession, Performed at

Philadelphia on Friday, the 4th of July 1788, printed by M. Carey, 1788

Henrietta Liston, A Diplomat's Wife in Philadelphia: Letters of Henrietta Liston, 1779-1880, ed. Bradford Perkins, WMQ, Oct. 1954, 592-632.

Milcah Martha Moore, A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America. Ed.

Courreye Blecki and Karin A. Wulf. Penn State Press, 1997.

Benjamin Rush, Writings.

John Swanwick, Some Observations on the State of the Commerce of U.S. in General in 1796.

Paul Smith, ed., Letters of Delegates to Congress, 12 volumes to 1982.

Theodore G. Tappert, The Journals of Henry M. Muhlenberg. 3 vols. Phila: 1942-58.

John Fanning Watson, Annals of Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time, 3 vols. (1809).

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William Young, Journal of Sergeant William Young, PMHB, 1884.

F. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF USEFUL AND IMPORTANT SECONDARY SOURCES FOR STUDYING THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION IN THE ERA FOLLOWING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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Wayne Bodle, The Valley Forge Winer (2001)

Susan Branson, These Fiery Frenchified Dames . . . National Philadelphia (2001)

Richard Buel, In Irons: Britain's Naval Supremacy and the American Revolutionary Economy (1998)

Edward Carter, II, A Wild Irishman Under Every Federalist's Bed: Naturalization in Philadelphia, 1789-1806, PMHB, 94 (1970), 331-46.

Patricia Cleary, She will be in the shop: Women's Sphere of Trade in Eighteenth-Century Phila. and New York, PMHB (1995).

John E. Crowley, The Sensibility of Comfort, American Historical Review, June 1999.

Thomas Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise, 1986.

Thomas Doerflinger, "Farmers and Dry Goods in the Philadelphia Market Area, 1750-1800," in Hoffman, et al., *Economy of Early America*, p. 166-95 (1988).

Marc Egnal, *The Changing Structure of Philadelphia's Trade with the British West Indies, 1750-1775* PMHB, 99 (April 1975), 156-179.

Eugene Ferguson, *Oliver Evans: Inventive Genius of the American Industrial Revolution*, 1980.

Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*. 1990.

Ritchie Garrison et al., eds., *After Ratification: Material Life in Delaware, 1789-1820* (1988).

David Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 2002.

James Green, *Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot*, 1985

Sheryllynne Haggerty, *The Structure of the Philadelphia Trading Community on the Transition from Colony to State*. Working Paper. Harvard Seminar . . . 2002.

Brooke Hunter, *The Prospect of an Independent America . . . 1780s*, *Explorations in Early American Culture*, 2001

Catherine Hutchins, ed., *Shaping a National Culture: The Philadelphia Experience, 1750-1800* (1994).

Cyril James, *The Bank of North America and the Financial History of Philadelphia*, PMHB, 44 (1940), 56-96.

Arthur Jensen, *The Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia*, 1963.

Susan Klepp, *Philadelphians in Transition: A Demographic History of the City and Its Occupational Groups, 1720-1830* (1989).

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Susan Klepp, *Rough Music on Independence Day: Philadelphia, 1778*, in William Pencak and Roger Abrahams, eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America*, 2002, pp. 156-178.

Franklin Knight and Peggy Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* (1991).

John McCusker and Russell Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (1985).

Bruce Mann, *Republic of Debtors, Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence*. (2002)

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Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*.

Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (1979).

Gary Nash and Jean Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath* (1991)

Debra Newman, *They Left With the British: Black Women in the Evacuation of Philadelphia, 1778*, *Penna. Heritage* (1977), 20-23.

Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (1980)

Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (1996).

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Linda Salvucci, *Anglo-American Merchants and Strategems for Success in Spanish Imperial Markets, 1783-1807*, in Jacques Barbier and Allan Kuethe, eds., *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy, 1760-1819*, (1984).

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idem., *The Lower Sort: Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (1990).

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Anthony Wallace, *Rockdale* (1978).

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Michael Zakim, *Sartorial Ideologies: From Homespun to Ready-Made*, American Historical Review, December 2001.

Carl L. Lokke, *London Merchant Interests in the St. Domingue Plantations of the Emigres, 1793-1798*, AHR, 1938

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Robert R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolutions . . .* (1959)

R. A. Humphreys, *Tradition and Revolt in Latin America* (1969)

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