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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 as 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](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.citytavern.com/history)
[http://www.ushistory.org/carpentershall/history/congress](http://www.ushistory.org/carpentershall/history/congress)
[http://www.elfrethsalley.org](http://www.elfrethsalley.org)
[http://www.carpentershall.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](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 Manufactury:
[http://www.lcpgraphics.org/wainwright/W450.htm](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](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](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](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 Abigail 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.virgina.edu/ -- early census data

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.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 inMaryland
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
- 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
- Benjamin Rush, Writings.
- Peletiah Webster, various
- 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

- Wayne Bodle, The Valley Forge Winer (2001)
- Susan Branson, These Fiery Frenchified Dames . . . National Philadelphia (2001)
- Patricia Cleary, She will be in the shop: Women's Sphere of Trade in Eighteenth-Century Phila. and New York, PMHB (1995).
James Green, Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot, 1985
Brooke Hunter, The Prospect of an Independent America . . . 1780s, Explorations in Early American Culture, 2001
Peggy Liss, Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826 (1983)
Cathy Matson, mss. material on West Indies trade of New York and Philadelphia -- just ask.


John Seymour, The Forgotten Crafts: A Practical Guide to Traditional Skills -- somewhat hard to get, but any large library will have it. (Portland House, NY, 1984).


Stephanie Grauman Wolf, Urban Village: . . . Germantown, Pennsylvania


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

Eric William, Capitalism and Slavery (1944)

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

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


J. Coatsworth, “American Trade with European Colonies in the Caribbean and South
Edward K. Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820 (1971)
Roger Anstey, The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810 (1975)
Peggy Liss, Atlantic Empires (1983)
Paul Clemens, The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore;
Franklin Knight, The Caribbean: Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism (1990)
Michel-Rolph Touillot, Haiti: State Against Nation, 1990
Anthony Pagden, Lords of All the World
Susan Dunn, Sister Revolutions: French Lightening, American Light (1999)
Geggus, Haitian Revolutionary Studies, 2002 (collection of essays written over a few years).