

This Day in History... September 3, 1783

Treaty Of Paris Ends Revolutionary War

After more than eight years of fighting, the American Revolutionary War came to an end on September 3, 1783, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

Two years earlier, the British suffered a disastrous defeat at Yorktown, leading to the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and the capture of over 7,000 of his men. This loss dramatically lowered British support for the war, leading their prime minister to resign the following spring. That April, the House of Commons voted to end the war in America and agreed to enter into peace talks.

Negotiations between Britain and America (as well as Britain and America's allies France and Spain) lasted through that summer. David Hartley and Richard Oswald represented Great Britain, while Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Henry Laurens, and John Adams represented the United States. On November 30, both countries signed a preliminary agreement.

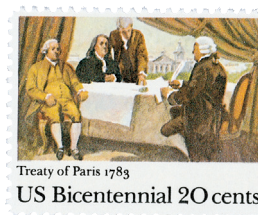
Though representatives were settling on peace agreements, fighting continued intermittently during this time. In February 1783, as both governments reviewed the terms of the agreement, King George III issued the Proclamation of Cessation of Hostilities to end the fighting.

The representatives met once again, at the Hotel d'York in Paris on September 3, 1783 to sign the peace agreement, officially ending the war. The same day, Britain also signed peace agreements with France and Spain.

In the treaty's preamble, both countries agreed to "forget all past misunderstandings and differences" and "secure to both perpetual peace and harmony." Britain agreed to acknowledge America as a free, sovereign country, and that all future British rulers would relinquish claims there. The agreement established boundaries between the US and British North America, and granted fishing rights, among other things.

Many historians agree that the terms were particularly favorable to the United States. This was likely because the British believed America could become a major trading partner.

The treaty was then taken before the US Congress, which ratified it in January 1784. The British ratified it that April and representatives exchanged ratified versions on May 12.



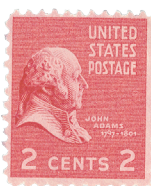
This stamp image was based on an unfinished painting by Benjamin West that was created a year before the actual signing.



John Jay later negotiated the Jay Treaty, which averted another war and settled issues that went unresolved following the Treaty of Paris.



Hoping to gain control of all of North America, Franklin nearly got Britain to cede eastern Canada, but they later rejected the proposal.



One of Adams's major contributions to the treaty was obtaining fishing rights for America.

The Bicentennial Series

The US Bicentennial was a series of celebrations during the mid-1970s that commemorated the historic events leading to America's independence from Great Britain. The official events began on April 1, 1975, when the American Freedom Train departed Delaware to begin a 21-month, 25,338-mile tour of the 48 contiguous states. For more than a year, a wave of patriotism swept the nation as elaborate firework displays lit up skies across the US, an international fleet of tall-mast sailing ships gathered in New York City and Boston, and Queen Elizabeth II made a state visit. The celebration culminated on July 4, 1976, with the 200th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

The USPS issued 113 commemorative stamps over a six-year period to mark the US bicentennial, beginning with the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission Emblem stamp. As a group, the Bicentennial Series chronicles one of our nation's most important chapters. It includes several stamps with classic artwork and a US postage first – the first sheet to feature 50 face-different stamps, honoring each of the state flags.

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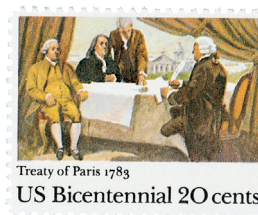
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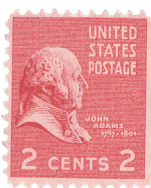
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