

HOLIDAYS & HEROES

Let's Celebrate
**CONSTITUTION
DAY**



BY **Barbara deRubertis**

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Every year on September 17 we celebrate the signing of the Constitution of the United States of America. The Constitution is our nation's most important document. It lays out the basic rules for how our government works. And it protects our rights and freedoms as citizens.

No wonder we Americans are so proud of our Constitution!

But writing the Constitution was not easy. . . .

The writers of the Constitution worked hard—and argued about many things. But on one point the writers all agreed: they did *not* want an all-powerful king. They had had enough of that when they were British colonists. They all felt strongly that power should rest in the hands of the *people*.

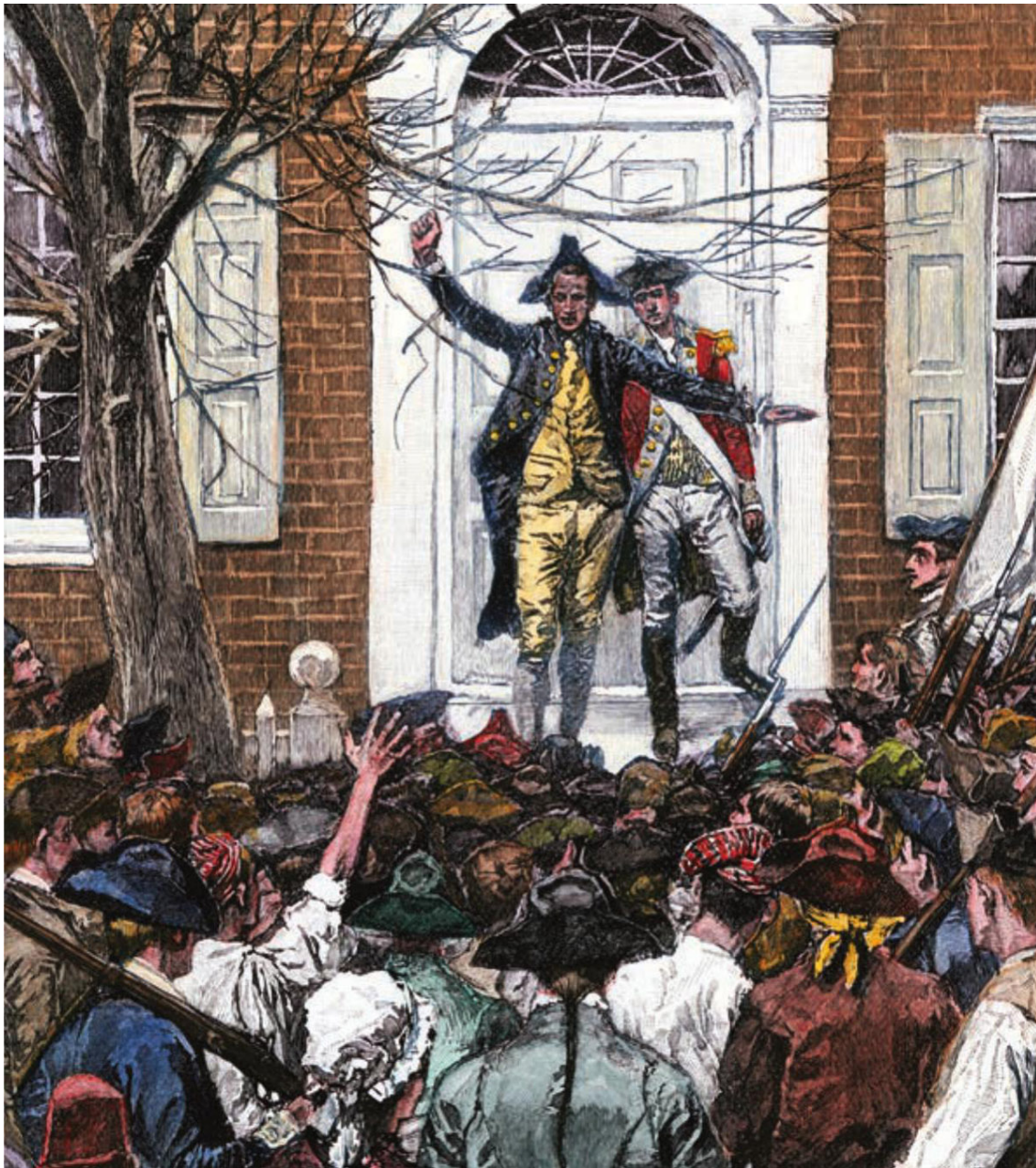


King George III was the ruler of Great Britain during the American Revolution.

When and why did Americans decide they needed a constitution? What led up to the writing of this important document?



American colonists in Boston in the 1700s



To answer these questions, we need to go back to the time before America declared its independence.

The 13 American colonies belonged to Great Britain. But by 1775, people in the colonies were becoming more and more unhappy with rule by the British king. The colonists had no voice in their government—none at all. The Revolutionary War broke out between the American colonists and the British.



The colonists signed a Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The next year, these newly “united states” drew up the Articles of Confederation, or rules, for their new government.

During this time, General George Washington served as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army. The Revolutionary War lasted eight long years, from 1775 until 1783. But at last, the United States won its freedom.



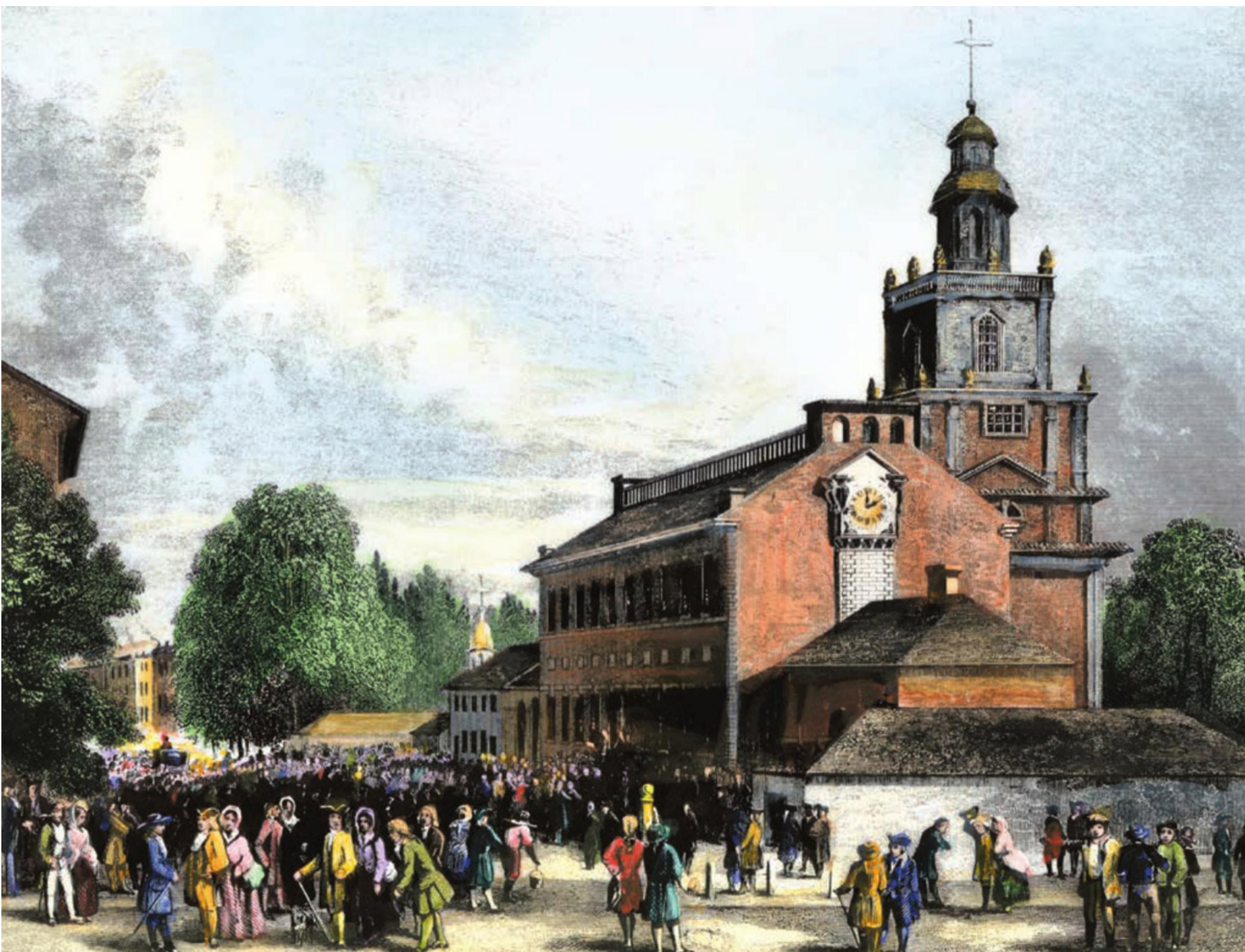
Left: George Washington

Above: A battle at sea during the Revolutionary War

By 1787, the new government of the United States of America was having a lot of problems operating under the Articles of Confederation. No one was “in charge” of running the government. Decisions were not being made. Money was needed to run the country—but the government had no way to collect taxes.

So a convention was called to solve these problems.

The Constitutional Convention took place at the State House in Philadelphia, PA, which was later renamed Independence Hall.



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