



# REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS



HISTORY

OF

PHILIP'S WAR

COMMONLY

THE GREAT INDIAN

# Revolutionary Ideals and the Study of American History

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The causes and events of the American Revolution are interwoven with American identity. Socio-political movements, from mill girls striking in Lowell in the 1830s to the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-twentieth century to activists of all ideologies in the present day, continue to invoke a “fondness for liberty” in their rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> History teachers and librarians play an important role by introducing students to the documentary record.

The American Revolution drew audiences from across the Atlantic world in the late eighteenth century. Some were inspired by the Declaration of Independence’s promise that “all men are created equal,” while others hoped that a handful of colonies could curb the rising power and influence of the British Empire.<sup>2</sup> Since then, scholars have worked to understand the chain of events that led to the founding of the United States as an independent nation. Nevertheless, teaching the American Revolution can also raise questions in the classroom. Students are asked to balance the promise of a government built on the “consent of the governed” with the reality of a nation that legalized slavery and limited voting rights to a privileged few in its founding years. The evolution of scholarship on the revolutionary era demonstrates that these concerns are as central to the study of American history as the soaring rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence. By introducing the collective histories of the American Revolution, we provide teachers with lesson plans on how history is told and shaped while making students part of the process.

## SOURCES ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

History courses often begin with a discussion on the uses of primary and secondary sources when studying the past. Primary sources are created in the moment, such as battle dispatches, court proceedings, letters, or images. They offer first-hand knowledge of the events they describe. And, like newspapers in any generation, they are intended for contemporary audiences. Primary sources rarely provide contextual information, since their intended readers can generally be considered familiar with such details. By contrast, secondary sources are written years, decades, or even centuries later. Their purpose is to contextualize and analyze past events. Authors of secondary sources may not have experienced the events in question, but they often have access to a wide array of perspectives and viewpoints. Distinctions between most primary and secondary sources are clear-cut, and students easily become familiar with such conversations. These discussions are further supported by the vast array of surviving documents and the ever-evolving body of scholarship on the American Revolution.

## TELLING THE REVOLUTION: 1765–1830

A handful of narratives about the American Revolution were begun long before the ink dried on the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Theologian and educator Ezra Stiles documented the story of the Stamp Act crisis in an unpublished notebook in the mid-1760s.<sup>3</sup> Governor Thomas Hutchinson incorporated the early stages of the American Revolution into his *The History of Massachusetts Bay*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Hanson Robinson, *Loom and Spindle or Life Among the Early Mill Girls with a Sketch of “The Lowell Offering” and some of its Contributors* (New York: Thomas Crowell & Co., 1898). <https://archive.org/details/loomspindleorlif0000robi>.

<sup>2</sup> See the Declaration Resources Project for the full text of the Declaration of Independence and suggestions for teaching it at [declaration.fas.harvard.edu](http://declaration.fas.harvard.edu).

<sup>3</sup> Abby Chandler, “‘The Basis of Alienation will never be healed’: The Historicity of Protest in Ezra Stiles’ Stamp Act Notebook” in Yvonne Fuentes and Mark Malin, eds., *Protest in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> See Liam Riordan, “A Loyalist Who Loved His Country Too Much: Thomas Hutchinson, Historian of Colonial Massachusetts,” *The New England Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (2017): 344–84.



Mercy Otis Warren worked on her *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805) throughout the war.<sup>5</sup> Incorporating sources into the discussion can complicate lesson plans on the differences between primary and secondary sources. Stiles, Hutchinson, and Warren all experienced the Revolution firsthand, which suggests that their writings are primary sources. Their intent, however, was to contextualize and analyze the causes and events of the war for future audiences. Stiles and Warren believed that breaking away from Britain was the only way for the American colonists to preserve their rights and liberties, while Hutchinson believed such rights were inherently protected under British law. Writing their histories was a deliberate effort to establish narrative paths for the scholars who would, one day, seek to understand the causes of the American Revolution. Expanded access to the printing press in the eighteenth century created new avenues for commentary on current events in much the same way that access to the internet has transformed communication in our own time. Like us, they were writing in a period of political unrest with an unknown future. Though their language often seems archaic to students in the early twenty-first century, their desire to record their moment in time is instantly familiar.

### THE CENTENNIAL GENERATION: 1830–1876

The writings of Stiles, Warren, and others became the first histories of the American Revolution in the early nineteenth century. During this period, accounts from Loyalist historians were relegated to an abandoned British past. Also ignored were post–Revolutionary War political revolts like Shays’ Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion, whose participants questioned whether the right to representative government was intended only for the wealthy in the newly formed United States. Instead, memoirs from veterans like Joseph Plumb Martin and George Robert Twelve Hewes in the 1830s emphasized their authors’ firsthand experiences during the war.<sup>6</sup> Parson Weems and William Wirt created biographies of George Washington and Patrick Henry that drew equally from written records and half-remembered anecdotes.<sup>7</sup> Historians like George Bancroft and John Fiske crafted a triumphant narrative of fortitude in the face of adversity for the centennial of the American Revolution in 1876.<sup>8</sup> Like Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address some 12 years earlier, they invoked a “new birth of freedom” for the United States. The Civil War ended slavery, and the Fifteenth Amendment granted suffrage to African American men, though not to women or other people of color.



A portrait of Mercy Otis Warren (c. 1763) by John Singleton Copley and the cover page of her book, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, 1805. The book was included in Thomas Jefferson’s Library, and donated to the Library of Congress. The portrait is from the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (31.212).

Questions about freedom and equality in the United States still lingered, though it would be decades before they became part of a national conversation.

### POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND THE BICENTENNIAL: 1915–1990

New generations of scholars began work on the American Revolution as the United States approached its bicentennial in 1976. Scholars before 1900 had largely agreed on the motivations and outcomes of the war. The twentieth century, however, saw the first major interpretive dissents among scholars of the American Revolution. Charles Beard and Arthur Schlesinger argued that the Revolution was the product of economic factors and the business interests of merchants in the British North American colonies.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Eileen Hunt Botting, “Women Writing War: Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Mather Crocker on the American Revolution,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 18 (2016): 88–118.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary War Soldier: Some Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier* (Hallowell: Glaziers, Masters & Co., 1830) and B. B. Thatcher, *Traits of the Tea Party: Being a Memoir of R. T. Hewes, One of the Last of its Survivors; With a History of that Transaction; Reminiscences of the Massacre, and the Siege, and Other Stories of Old Times* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835).

<sup>7</sup> M. L. Weems, *The Life of Washington* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) and William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: James Webster, 1817).

<sup>8</sup> George Bancroft, *History of the United States of America: From the Discovery of the American Continent*, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1870–1875) and John Fiske, *The American Revolution: Two Volumes in One* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891).

<sup>9</sup> Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1941) and Arthur Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (New York: F. Ungar, 1966).

By contrast, Bernard Bailyn and Pauline Maier argued that the Revolution was the product of new conversations about the ideals of freedom and equality rooted in eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought and the older traditions of (limited) democracy from ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>10</sup>

Working at much the same time, Edmund Morgan argued that the freedom claimed by some eighteenth-century writers was rooted in the oppression of others.<sup>11</sup> His *American Slavery, American Freedom* (1975) was intended to examine the central paradox at the heart of the American experiment, but it reads now as a nod toward the next generation of scholarship on both the colonial period and the American Revolution.

Teaching the concept of historiography—the study of how history is written—can be challenging regardless of the students' grade level. The sharp contrasts between the arguments made by Charles Beard and Arthur Schlesinger and the arguments made by Bernard Bailyn, Pauline Maier, and Edmund Morgan are clear-cut examples of scholars working on the same area who came to very different conclusions about the causes of the American Revolution. In addition, tracing the paths of individual scholars from research to interpretation helps students acquire the skills needed to conduct their own analyses of historical documents.

## SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States experienced multiple political and social movements in the second half of the twentieth century. As these movements have expanded, so has their broader impact on American society. Greater access to higher education brought new scholars and new perspectives to the history profession in the late twentieth century. Histories written in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were largely focused on military and political events, often through the lens of the men who led them. The actions of the Civil Rights Movement echoed those of the Abolition Movement of the nineteenth century, as do the actions of the dual Women's Rights Movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and many activists followed these stories into the archives. The first histories these scholars wrote became the building blocks for graduate education in the 1990s, but each rising generation of scholars has continued to ask new questions.



A 1778 political cartoon from Germany showing a perspective on the American Revolution. Library of Congress (97515166)

## EXPANDING EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY: 1990–PRESENT DAY

The following examples from scholars of early American history are representative rather than a complete summary. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Good Wives* (1991) and Kathleen Brown's *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs* (1996) both considered the lives of women in the British North American colonies.<sup>12</sup> Like the mid-twentieth century historians who questioned whether the Revolution was the result of economic or ideological forces, Brown's work is another example of historiography in action. Her examination of the lives of African American women in Virginia was a deliberate response both to Ulrich and to Morgan—whose *American Slavery, American Freedom* (1975) focused on white British colonists. Working concurrently with Ulrich and Brown, Richard White's *The Middle Ground* (1991) and Daniel Richter's *The Ordeal of the Longhouse* (1992) highlighted Indigenous people's efforts to navigate a rapidly changing world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765–1776* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Knopf, 1975).

<sup>12</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) and Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).





A 1776 British political cartoon depicting a woman whose hair contains cannon, fortifications, and battle flags. Library of Congress (97514668)

Bicentennial celebrations in the 1970s revived interest in the revolutionary era. Just as Ulrich and Brown brought the lives of colonial women to life in the early 1990s, so did Holly Mayer's work on the women who followed their husbands and fathers to war during the Revolution.<sup>14</sup> Rather than the traditional image of camp followers as prostitutes, Mayer demonstrated that both armies, British and American, heavily depended on paid female labor as cooks, laundresses, and seamstresses. Another source on women's lives in an army camp is the diary of Friederike Charlotte von Riedesel, a German woman who accompanied her husband during his military campaigns with the British Army in North America.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the *Women Waging War in the American Revolution* essay collection (2022) highlights current research on women during the Revolution and offers a wide range of topics for discussion in the classroom.<sup>16</sup>

On November 7, 1775, months before the Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, 1776, John Murray, the last royal governor of Virginia, signed a proclamation offering freedom to African Americans who ran away from Patriot families to join the British Army.<sup>17</sup> "Dunmore's Proclamation" immediately raised questions on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean about Patriot enslavers who demanded political freedom for the British North American colonies. A starting place for this discussion in the classroom is the story of Boston King, who was born into slavery in South Carolina in the early 1760s but ran away to join the British Army in the hope of becoming free. After the war, King and his family moved first to Canada, then to Sierra Leone, and finally, to London, where he published an account of his experiences in 1798.<sup>18</sup> The majority of African Americans who fled their enslavers during the war joined the British Army, but the Continental Army did make an equivalent offer to enslaved people in the late 1770s, and research has been done on both these groups.<sup>19</sup>

This same time period also saw Britain offering land to Native Americans who joined the fight against the United States. Most Indigenous peoples chose to ally with Britain, but some tribes fought with the Continental Army while others struggled to remain neutral. Colin Calloway's *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (1995) examines these decisions.<sup>20</sup> The Revolution was particularly consequential for the long-standing Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, which consisted of six tribes who had been allied with one another for centuries when the war began in 1776. The Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Seneca tribes continued their long-standing alliance with Britain, but the Oneida and Tuscarora tribes gambled on an alliance with the newly formed United States.<sup>21</sup> The sudden break between the tribes of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy can be used as a starting place for classroom discussions about why these tribes made their respective decisions and the resulting consequences for the Haudenosaunee peoples as a whole.

<sup>14</sup> Holly Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community During the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Marvin Brown, ed., *Baroness von Riedesel and the American Revolution: Journal and Correspondence of a Tour of Duty, 1776–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

<sup>16</sup> *Women Waging War in the American Revolution*, Holly Mayer, ed. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> *The Africans in America* series created by PBS has multiple resources for teaching Dunmore's Proclamation at [pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h42.html](https://pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h42.html).

<sup>18</sup> The Black Loyalists: Our History, Our People website is a repository for memoirs from African Americans who fought with the British Army during the American Revolution: [blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm](https://blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm).

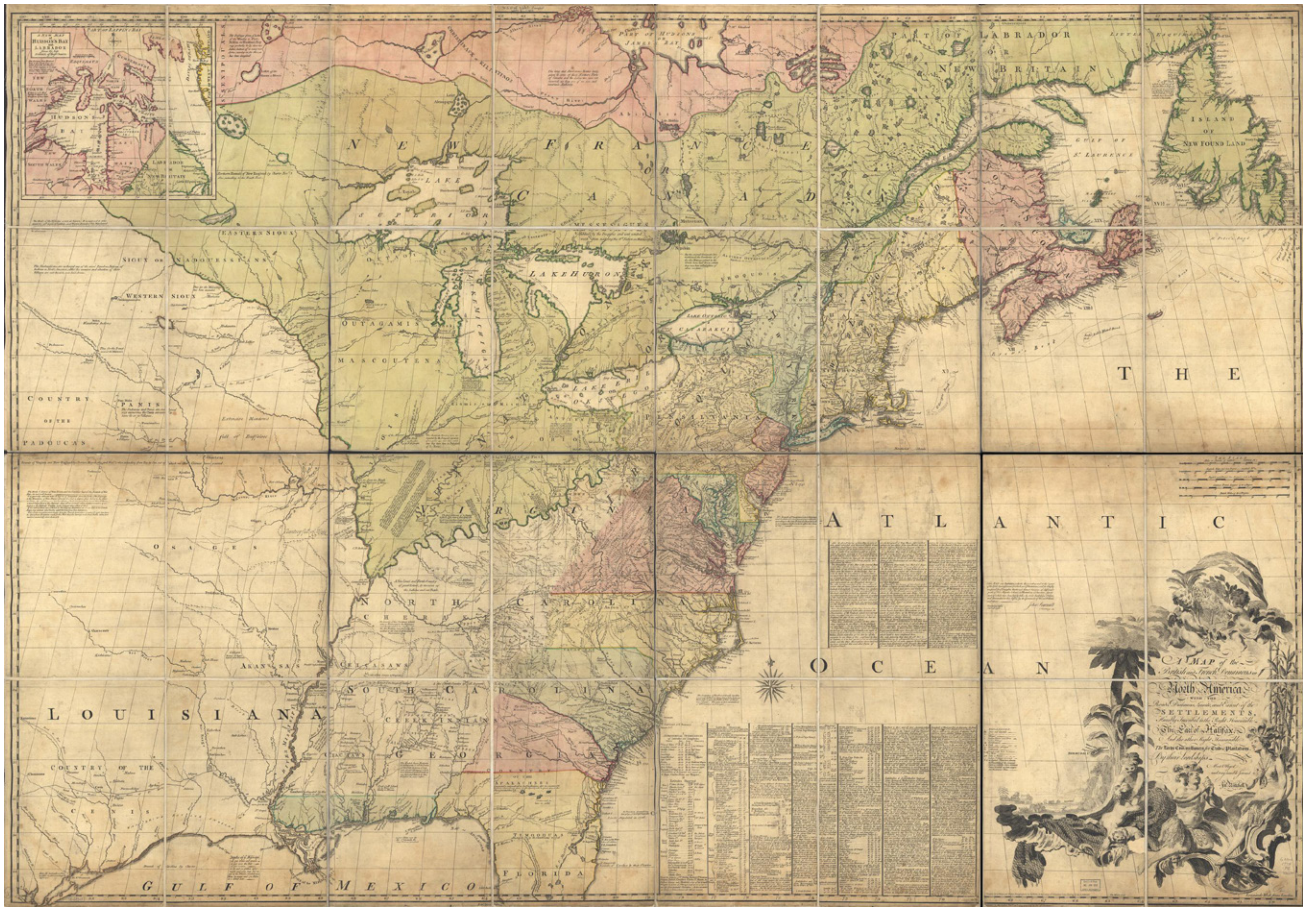
<sup>19</sup> Gary Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Douglas Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); and Judith Buskirk, *Standing in Their Own Light: African American Patriots in the American Revolution* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006); Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007).

Research on the experiences of peoples of color during the American Revolution is also part of a growing field of Loyalist studies. The first Loyalist histories of the Revolution were written by colonists who were forced to flee to Britain during the war. Like Thomas Hutchinson, Peter Oliver, and Joseph Galloway who began their histories in the 1770s, their accounts occupy that same middle ground between primary and secondary sources.<sup>22</sup> These histories were disregarded for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in favor of the less critical assessments of the Patriot cause from George Bancroft and others. Scholars did, however, become interested in Loyalist perspectives on the American Revolution in the late twentieth century. This research has produced a number of edited collections that are helpful for introducing students to a broad range of scholarship in a particular area. Like the histories of the Revolution from the mid-twentieth century, Robert Calhoun, Timothy Barnes, and Robert Davis' *Tory Insurgents: the Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (2010) is primarily focused on the political side of the war.<sup>23</sup>

Two essays from Calhoun and Davis on “Loyalist hinterlands” in northern New England and the southern frontier stand out for their emphasis on people at the geographic peripheries of the American Revolution. The essays in Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan’s *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (2012) takes a broader approach, both geographically and demographically.<sup>24</sup> Closely detailed essays written in the 1990s regarding the experiences of the Abenaki tribe in Maine and Africans in the Caribbean add greatly to the scholarship on people of color during the Revolution. In addition, the final essays assess the long-term effects of the American Revolution on nineteenth-century Canadian politics.



A map showing British and French holdings in North America on the eve of the American Revolution. Library of Congress (74693177).

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Galloway, *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion* (London: G. Wilkie, 1780); Peter Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961).

<sup>23</sup> *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays*, Revised and expanded edition, Robert Calhoun, Timothy Barnes, and Robert Davis, eds. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).



## THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE WORLD: 2000–PRESENT DAY

Karin Wulf, then the director of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, published an essay in 2016 inviting scholars to take part in a “Vast Early America” approach to the field.<sup>25</sup> She called for histories that pushed beyond the thirteen British colonies to encompass the Spanish, French, and Dutch colonies that would also become nations in the Americas. This turn toward a “Vast Early America” is apparent in recent scholarship on the revolutionary era. Claudio Saunt’s *West of the Revolution* explores the rest of the North American continent in the opening year of the war.<sup>26</sup>

Maya Jasanoff’s *Liberty’s Exiles* traces the paths of Loyalist refugees and the messages of liberty and equality that traveled with them around the globe.<sup>27</sup> *The American Revolution: A World War* details the alliances between the United States and various European nations, which made the eventual American victory possible.<sup>28</sup> By drawing on this research, teachers of American history can link their classes with world history classes, thereby encouraging their students to see connections across the curriculum.

The American Revolution is a continual wellspring in our collective memory, easily claimed by each new generation. Colonists tossing tea overboard in Boston Harbor and the minutemen in Lexington and Concord have always been part of the Revolution. However, new research has contributed many additions to their ranks: the women who followed their husbands to the battlefield; the people of color who struggled to decide which side might best support their own paths to freedom; the thousands more people whose lives were touched by the Revolution. By making the story of the Revolution a story of all Americans, we also make it a story with space for all our students to follow their own paths into the archives.

### Students interested in the Revolutionary Era might consider the following topics for an NHD project:

- › Experiences of African Americans, both Patriot and Loyalist
- › Experiences of Native Americans, both Patriot and Loyalist
- › Maps from the American Revolution
- › Newspaper Coverage for the American Revolution
- › Political Cartoons from the American Revolution
- › Involvement of European Allies in the American Revolution
- › Women and Families in Military Encampments
- › Material Culture from the American Revolution

<sup>25</sup> Karin Wulf, “For 2016, Appreciating #VastEarlyAmerica,” Uncommon Sense—The Blog, January 4, 2016, <https://blog.oieahc.wm.edu/for-2016-appreciating-vastearlyamerica/>. Resources to help teachers explore “Vast Early America” in their classrooms can be found at [blog.oieahc.wm.edu/researching-and-teaching-vastearlyamerica/](http://blog.oieahc.wm.edu/researching-and-teaching-vastearlyamerica/) and [guides.library.yale.edu/vastearlyamerica](http://guides.library.yale.edu/vastearlyamerica), though many of these source materials are behind paywalls.

<sup>26</sup> Claudio Saunt, *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary War* (New York: Knopf, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> David Allison and Larrie Feirrer, eds., *The American Revolution: A World War* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2018).

## OPEN-SOURCE DATABASES FOR THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

› **American Archives: Documents of the American Revolution** | [amarch.lib.niu.edu/](http://amarch.lib.niu.edu/)

This database, hosted by Northern Illinois University, has documents from the years 1774–1776. While this is a very limited time frame, it includes documentation on Parliamentary debates during this period.

› **The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr** | [masshist.org/dorr/](http://masshist.org/dorr/)

This digital collection is helpful for anyone interested in looking at newspapers in Boston as well as studying Massachusetts history. Its website describes the collection as the “Revolutionary-era Boston newspapers and pamphlets collected, annotated, and indexed by Harbottle Dorr, a shopkeeper in Boston.”

› **Atlantic Canada Virtual Archives** | [atlanticportal.hil.unb.ca/acva/en/](http://atlanticportal.hil.unb.ca/acva/en/)

The Atlantic Canada Virtual Archives (ACVA) features collections of digitized documents and images, accompanied by learning activities and commentary of interest to a wide range of readers.

› **The Avalon Project** | [avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/amerrev.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/amerrev.asp)

The Avalon Project is an ongoing project hosted by the Yale University Law Library, which provides “digital documents relevant to the fields of Law, History, Economics, Politics, Diplomacy and Government.” The project’s documents can be accessed by searching by century and also by topic. It has an American Revolution page which includes links to documents from 1764 through 1783.

› **Barbados Mercury and Bridge-town Gazette** | [dataverse.fiu.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34703/gzx1-9v95/WZZIWR](http://dataverse.fiu.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34703/gzx1-9v95/WZZIWR)

This database from Florida International University has the full print run of “the *Barbados Mercury and Bridge-town Gazette* [which] was established in 1762 in Bridgetown and depicted daily colonial life under British control. In addition to local news, the *Gazette* described news and events from throughout the British colonies in the Caribbean.”

› **Black Loyalists** | [blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm](http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm)

Part of the Atlantic Canada Virtual Archives, this database collects documents connected to the African American Loyalists who came to Canada during and after the American Revolution.

› **British History Online** | [british-history.ac.uk/catalogue/colonial](http://british-history.ac.uk/catalogue/colonial)

British History Online is described as a “digital library of key printed primary and secondary sources for the history of Britain and Ireland, with a primary focus on the period between 1300 and 1800 . . . our collection currently contains over 1,280 volumes and is always growing.”

› **Colonial and State Records of North Carolina** | [docsouth.unc.edu/csr/](http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/)

This website is jointly hosted by the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina State Archives. It has thousands of digitized documents from colonial North Carolina, including the few surviving copies of the *North Carolina Gazette*.

› **Colonial North America at Harvard** | [colonialnorthamerica.library.harvard.edu/spotlight/cna](http://colonialnorthamerica.library.harvard.edu/spotlight/cna)

Colonial North America at Harvard Library provides access to digitized manuscripts and archives documenting a wide range of topics related to seventeenth and eighteenth-century North America. These documents—written by the famous and the infamous, the well-known and unknown—reveal a great deal about the changing Atlantic world over two centuries.

› **Colonial Williamsburg Foundation** | [colonialwilliamsburg.org/](http://colonialwilliamsburg.org/)

Colonial Williamsburg’s digitized colonial manuscripts collection. [colonialwilliamsburg.org/locations/john-d-rockefeller-jr-library/](http://colonialwilliamsburg.org/locations/john-d-rockefeller-jr-library/)

*The Virginia Gazette* and other colonial newspapers can be found here. [research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/](http://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/)



› **Declaration Resources Project** | [declaration.fas.harvard.edu/](http://declaration.fas.harvard.edu/)

This is a project hosted by Harvard University with the intent of documenting all the different versions of the Declaration of Independence.

› **Founders Online** | [founders.archives.gov](http://founders.archives.gov)

Hosted by the National Archives and Records Administration, this database contains over 178,000 searchable documents for the papers of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams (and family), Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison. Franklin's papers are especially helpful because he corresponded with hundreds of people.

› **Georgian Papers** | [gpp.royalcollection.org.uk](http://gpp.royalcollection.org.uk)

This is a new project jointly hosted by Royal Archives, Royal Library, and King's College London in England and the Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture in the United States. The project's goal is to digitize all material dating from the reigns of George III to William IV, including personal letters, diaries, account books, and records of the Royal Household. Some of the George III papers include a discussion of the American Revolution.

› **Library of Congress** | <https://www.loc.gov/collections/?q=%22American+Revolution%22>

The Library of Congress has many digitized collections and research guides on the American Revolution.

Digital Collection, *American Revolution and its Era: Maps and Charts of North America and the West Indies, 1750–1789*  
[loc.gov/collections/american-revolutionary-war-maps/about-this-collection/](http://loc.gov/collections/american-revolutionary-war-maps/about-this-collection/)

Research Guide, *American Revolution: A Research Guide*  
[guides.loc.gov/american-revolution](http://guides.loc.gov/american-revolution)

Digital Collection, *Rochambeau Map Collection*  
[loc.gov/collections/rochambeau-maps/about-this-collection/](http://loc.gov/collections/rochambeau-maps/about-this-collection/)

Digital Collection, *British Cartoon Prints*  
[loc.gov/collections/british-cartoon-prints/about-this-collection/](http://loc.gov/collections/british-cartoon-prints/about-this-collection/)

Digital Collection, *George Washington Papers*  
[loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/about-this-collection/](http://loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/about-this-collection/)

› **Loyalist Collection** | [loyalist.lib.unb.ca/home](http://loyalist.lib.unb.ca/home)

The Loyalist Collection “holds primary documents pertaining to the experiences of those supportive of the British cause during the American Revolution, including post-war resettlement. Predominantly, the material dates from 1750 to 1850 from the British Atlantic World: eastern parts of both present-day Canada and the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies.”

› **Massachusetts Historical Society** | [masshist.org/collections/online](http://masshist.org/collections/online)

The Massachusetts Historical Society is an amazing resource that has been building up its online collections. The site will introduce you to some of the sources available for studying the American Revolution.

› **National Archives (United Kingdom)**

The UK National Archives is in the process of digitizing its complete document collection.

American Revolution Resources  
[nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/american-revolution/](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/american-revolution/)

Foreign and Colonial Colonial Records (partially digitized)  
[nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=foreign-and-colonial-history](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=foreign-and-colonial-history)

› **National Archives and Records Administration (United States) | [archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution](https://www.archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution)**

› **Naval Documents of the American Revolution | [ndar-history.org](http://ndar-history.org)**

The Naval Documents of the American Revolution “contain the authentic words of actors in the drama of the Revolution, through diaries, letters, petitions, and ships’ logs, as well as muster rolls, orders, official reports, and newspaper accounts. The collection includes American, British, French, and Spanish points of view and gives voice to common seamen, civilians, women, and slaves as well as policy makers, political leaders, and naval and military officers.”

› **New York Public Library | <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/lane/early-american-manuscripts-project>**

The New York Public Library is in the process of digitizing its manuscript collection. This is a link to access their Early American Manuscripts Project.

› **On-Line Institute for Loyalist Studies | [royalprovincial.com/index.htm](http://royalprovincial.com/index.htm)**

“The material we have chosen to include here represents a sampling of manuscripts relating to the Loyalist military, including muster rolls, orderly books, regimental documents, courts martial and memorials. You will find genealogical information including links, sources of information, land petitions and post war settlement documents.”

› **Parliamentary Record | [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/cobbetts-parliamentary-history/](http://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/cobbetts-parliamentary-history/)**

The Oxford University Library has digitized Cobbett’s *Parliamentary History*, which includes parliamentary debates and votes before 1803.

› **The Revolutionary War in Rhode Island: An Introduction | [rihs.org/the-revolutionary-war-in-rhode-island-introduction/](http://rihs.org/the-revolutionary-war-in-rhode-island-introduction/)**

This is a collection of Revolutionary War manuscripts from the Rhode Island Historical Society focusing on Rhode Island Continental and state regiments from 1775 to 1783.