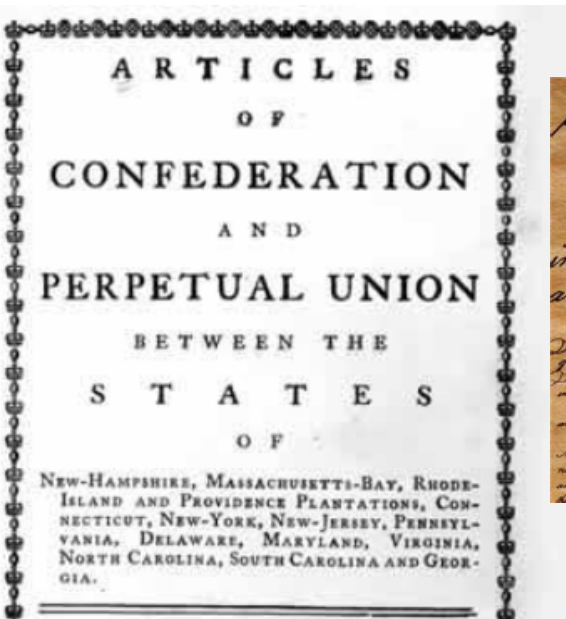


# Chapter 7: Creating a Republic 1776-1790



# Chapter 7 Section 1: A Loose Confederation

(pages 194-204 in text)

In this section, we will:

- explain why state governments wrote constitutions.
- list the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.
- Describe the process the Articles created for admitting new states.
- Explain why many Americans called for changes in the Articles.

Key vocabulary this section

- constitution
- bill of rights
- Articles of Confederation
- cede
- currency
- Land Ordinance of 1785
- Northwest Ordinance
- depression
- Shay's Rebellion



## The States Write Constitutions

- Most new states wrote their own constitutions.
- A **constitution** is a document that sets out the laws, principles, organization and processes of a government.
- States wrote constitutions for **TWO MAIN REASONS.**

1) A written document would spell out the rights of all citizens.

2) It would limit the power of government.

- Virginia's constitution included a **bill of rights**, which is a list of freedoms the government promises to protect.
- Virginia's bill of rights guaranteed trial by jury, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press. **SOUND FAMILIAR???**
- new state governments were similar to colonial governments in structure.
- States divided power between an executive & a legislature. Legislature was elected by the voters to pass laws.
- to vote, a person had to be white, male and over age 21.
- Also had to own certain amount of property or pay a certain amount of taxes.

# The Articles of Confederation

- While citizens formed state governments, the Continental Congress was busy drafting a plan for the nation as a whole.
- Delegates had believed that the colonies had to be united by a national government in order to win independence.
- the Continental Congress approved the first American constitution in 1777- called the **Articles of Confederation**. (see page 201)



Articles of  
Confederation  
video clip  
1:30



## Under the Articles of Confederation:

- National government had **LIMITED POWERS**.
- states sent delegates to Congress.
- Congress could declare war, appoint military officers and coin money.
- Congress was responsible for foreign affairs.
- Congress could pass laws, but 9 states (2/3) had to approve a law before it could go into effect.
- Congress had no power to tax. (Very important; we'll see why shortly)
- Articles included no president to execute the laws. It was up to the states to enforce laws passed by Congress.
- there was also no system of courts to settle conflicts between the states.

- An argument arose before the Articles of Confederation went into effect.
- Maryland refused to ratify, or approve the Articles unless Virginia and other states **ceded**, or **gave up** their claims to lands west of the Appalachian Mountains.
- Maryland feared states with much land would become too powerful.
- One by one, each state began to "cede" their western land claims to Congress.



## Weaknesses of the Confederation

- Conflicts between states erupted. New York and New Hampshire both claimed Vermont!! The Articles did not give the federal government the power to resolve such conflicts.
- Congress had no power to tax; no ability to pay debts associated with the war. (let's read about money problems on page 202)
- Nations took advantage of the confederation's weakness. Britain refused to withdraw troops from the Ohio Valley and Spain closed its port in New Orleans to American shipping.



## Admitting New States

- Congress did pass laws establishing how territories would be governed and how they would become states.
- The **Land Ordinance of 1785** set up a system for settling the Northwest Territory.
- law called for the land to be surveyed and divided into townships.
- Each township would be further divided into 36 sections of 1 square mile each.
- Congress planned to sell sections to settlers for \$640 apiece.
- one section in every town was set aside to support public schools



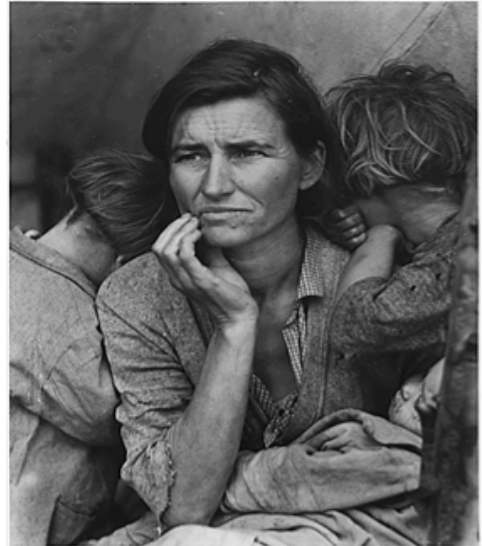
Northwest Territory

In 1787, Congress passed the **Northwest Ordinance**, which set up a government for the Northwest Territory.

- guaranteed basic rights to all settlers.
- outlawed slavery there.
- provided that the vast region would be divided into separate territories in the future.
- provided a formal way to admit new states to the nation. Once a territory had a population of 60,000 **free settlers** it could ask Congress to be admitted as a new state.
- In time, the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin were created from the Northwest Territory.

## A Call for Change

- After the Revolution the nation suffered an economic depression. A **depression** is a period when business activity slows, prices and wages fall, and unemployment rises.
- Depression hit farmers hard as they could not repay loans. They had borrowed heavily for land, seed, animals and tools.
- In Massachusetts, matters got worse when the state raised taxes. Courts seized the farms of those that could not pay their loans or their taxes.
- Daniel Shays was a Massachusetts farmer who fought at Saratoga and Bunker Hill. He organized an uprising in 1786. Along with 1000 other farmers, he attacked courthouses and prevented the state from seizing farms. This was called **Shay's Rebellion**.
- militia had to be sent in to quell the rebellion.



- Many Americans saw Shay's Rebellion as a sign the Articles of Confederation did not work.
- Leaders from several states called a convention to revise-or fix the Articles of Confederation.
- They met in Philadelphia in May 1787.
- However, much more would be done than a revising of the Articles of Confederation.

To be continued.....

