

Treaty of Paris (1783)

The **Treaty of Paris**, signed in Paris by representatives of King George III of Great Britain and representatives of the United States of America on September 3, 1783, officially ended the American Revolutionary War and overall state of conflict between the two countries. The treaty set the boundaries between the British Empire in North America and the United States of America, on lines "exceedingly generous" to the latter.^[2] Details included fishing rights and restoration of property and prisoners of war.

This treaty and the separate peace treaties between Great Britain and the nations that supported the American cause—France, Spain, and the Dutch Republic—are known collectively as the Peace of Paris.^{[3][4]} Only Article 1 of the treaty, which acknowledges the United States' existence as a free, sovereign, and independent state, remains in force.^[5]

Contents

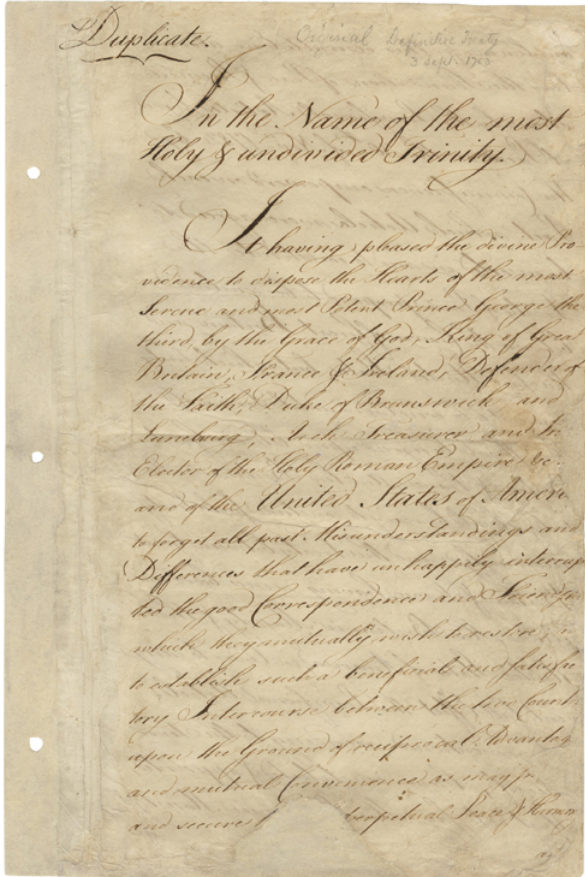
- [Agreement](#)
- [Terms](#)
- [Consequences](#)
- [Notes](#)
- [See also](#)
- [References](#)
- [Further reading](#)
- [Primary sources](#)
- [External links](#)

Agreement

Peace negotiations began in Paris in April 1782 and continued through the summer. Representing the United States were Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Henry Laurens, and John Adams. Representing Great Britain were David Hartley and Richard Oswald. The treaty was drafted on November 30, 1782,^[a] and signed

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The Definitive Treaty of Peace Between the Kingdom of Great Britain and the United States of America




Page of the Treaty of Paris (1783)

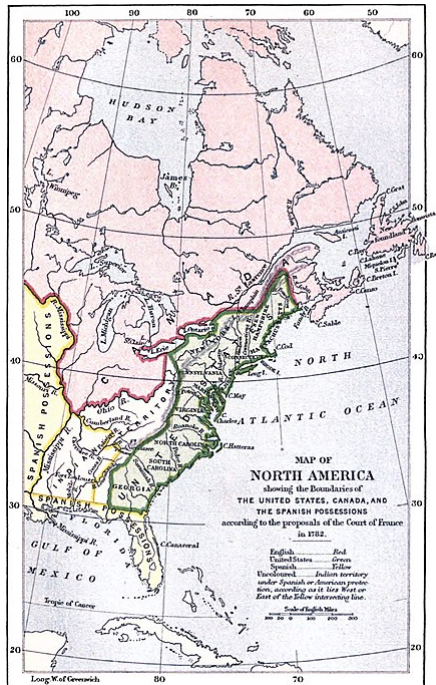
Drafted	November 30, 1782
Signed	September 3, 1783
Location	<u>Paris, France</u>
Effective	May 12, 1784
Condition	Ratification by Great Britain and the United States
Signatories	<div><div><div></div><div>Great Britain</div></div><div><div></div><div>United States</div></div></div>
Depository	<u>United States government</u> ^[1]

at the Hôtel d'York (at present 56 Rue Jacob) in Paris on September 3, 1783, by Adams, Franklin, Jay, and Hartley.^[6]

Language English

Full text

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The 1782 French proposal for the territorial division of North America, which was rejected by the Americans

Regarding the American treaty, the key episodes came in September 1782, when French Foreign Minister Vergennes proposed a solution, which was strongly opposed by his ally, the United States. France was exhausted by the war, and everyone wanted peace except for Spain, which insisted on continuing the war until it could capture Gibraltar from the British. Vergennes came up with a deal that Spain would accept, instead of Gibraltar. The United States would gain its independence, but it would be confined to the area east of the Appalachian Mountains. Britain would keep the area north of the Ohio River, which was part of the Province of Quebec. In the area south of that would be set up an independent Indian barrier state, under Spanish control.^[7]



Treaty of Paris, by Benjamin West (1783), depicts the American delegation at the Treaty of Paris (left to right): John Jay, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Henry Laurens, and William Temple Franklin. The British delegation refused to pose, and the painting was never completed.

Nevertheless, the Americans realized that they could get a better deal directly from London. John Jay promptly told the British that he was willing to negotiate directly with them and thus to bypass France and Spain. British Prime Minister Lord Shelburne agreed. In charge of the British negotiations (some of which took place in his study at Lansdowne House, now a bar in the Lansdowne Club), Shelburne now saw a chance to split the United States from France and to make the new country a valuable economic partner.^[8] The western terms were that the United States would gain all of the area east of the Mississippi River, north of Florida, and south of Canada. The northern boundary would be almost the same as they are today.^[9]

The United States would gain fishing rights off Nova Scotian coasts and agreed to allow British merchants and Loyalists to try to recover their property. The treaty was highly favorable treaty for the United States and deliberately so from the British point of view. Shelburne foresaw highly profitable two-way trade between Britain and the rapidly-growing United States, which indeed came to pass.^[10]

Great Britain also signed separate agreements with France and Spain, and (provisionally) with the Netherlands.^[11] In the treaty with Spain, the territories of East and West Florida were ceded to Spain (without a clear northern boundary, which resulted in a territorial dispute resolved by the Treaty of Madrid in 1795). Spain also received the island of Menorca, but the Bahama Islands, Grenada, and Montserrat, which had been captured by the French and Spanish, were returned to Britain. The treaty with France was mostly about exchanges of captured territory (France's only net gains were the island

of Tobago, and Senegal in Africa), but it also reinforced earlier treaties, guaranteeing fishing rights off Newfoundland. Dutch possessions in the East Indies, captured in 1781, were returned by Britain to the Netherlands in exchange for trading privileges in the Dutch East Indies by a treaty, which was not finalized until 1784.^[12]

The United States Congress of the Confederation ratified the Treaty of Paris on January 14, 1784, in Annapolis, Maryland, in the Old Senate Chamber of the Maryland State House, which made Annapolis the first peacetime capital of the new United States.^[13] Copies were sent back to Europe for ratification by the other parties involved, the first reaching France in March 1784. British ratification occurred on April 9, 1784, and the ratified versions were exchanged in Paris on May 12, 1784.^[14]

Terms

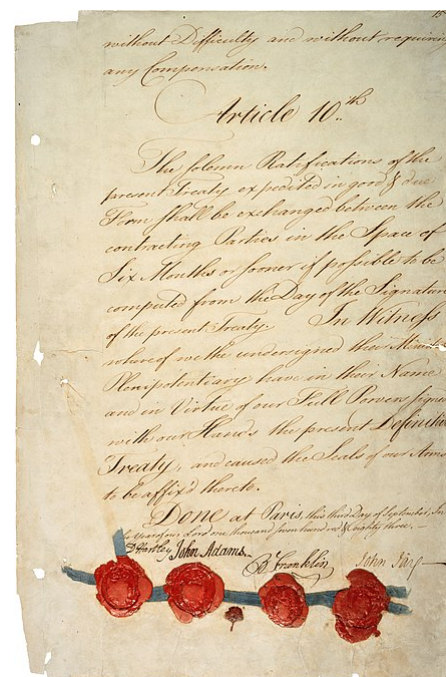
The treaty and the separate peace treaties between Great Britain and the nations that supported the American cause (France, Spain, and the Dutch Republic) are known collectively as the Peace of Paris.^{[3][4]} Only Article 1 of the treaty, which acknowledges the United States' existence as free sovereign and independent states, remains in force.^[5] The US borders changed in later years, which is a major reason for specific articles of the treaty to be superseded.

Preamble. Declares the treaty to be "in the Name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity" (followed by a reference to the Divine Providence)^[15] states the *bona fides* of the signatories, and declares the intention of both parties to "forget all past misunderstandings and differences" and "secure to both perpetual peace and harmony."

1. Britain acknowledges the United States (New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia^[16]) to be free, sovereign, and independent states, and that the British Crown and all heirs and successors relinquish claims to the Government, property, and territorial rights of the same, and every part thereof,
2. Establishing the boundaries of the United States, including but not limited to those between the United States and British North America from the Mississippi River to the Southern colonies. Britain surrenders their previously owned land,
3. Granting fishing rights to United States fishermen in the Grand Banks, off the coast of Newfoundland and in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence;
4. Recognizing the lawful contracted debts to be paid to creditors on either side;
5. The Congress of the Confederation will "earnestly recommend" to state legislatures to recognize the rightful owners of all confiscated lands and "provide for the restitution of all estates, rights, and properties, which have been confiscated belonging to British subjects" (Loyalists);



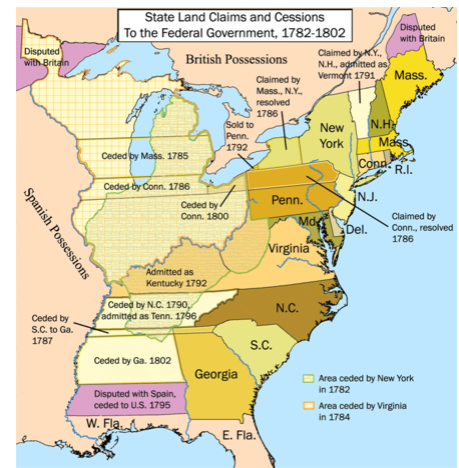
Commemorative plaque located on the site at which the treaty was signed, 56 Rue Jacob, Paris



Last page of the Treaty

6. The United States will prevent future confiscations of the property of Loyalists;
7. Prisoners-of-war on both sides are to be released. All British property now in the United States is to remain with them and to be forfeited;
8. Both Great Britain and the United States are to be given perpetual access to the Mississippi River;
9. Territories captured by either side subsequent to the treaty will be returned without compensation;
10. Ratification of the treaty is to occur within six months from its signing.

Eschatocol. "Done at Paris, this third day of September in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three."



Map of the United States and territories after the Treaty of Paris

Consequences

Historians have often commented that the treaty was very generous to the United States in terms of greatly-enlarged boundaries. Historians such as Alvord, Harlow, and Ritcheson have emphasized that British generosity was based on a statesmanlike vision of close economic ties between Britain and the United States. The concession of the vast trans-Appalachian region was designed to facilitate the growth of the American population and to create lucrative markets for British merchants without any military or administrative costs to Britain.^[8] The point was that the United States would become a major trading partner. As French Foreign Minister Vergennes later put it, "The English buy peace rather than make it."^[2] Vermont was included within the boundaries because the state of New York insisted that Vermont was a part of New York although Vermont was then under a government that considered Vermont not to be a part of the United States.^[17]

Privileges that the Americans had received from Britain automatically when they had colonial status (including protection from pirates in the Mediterranean Sea; see: the First Barbary War and the Second Barbary War) were withdrawn. Individual states ignored federal recommendations, under Article 5, to restore confiscated Loyalist property, and also ignored Article 6 (such as by confiscating Loyalist property for "unpaid debts"). Some, notably Virginia, also defied Article 4 and maintained laws against payment of debts to British creditors. Several Loyalists attempted to file for a return for their property in the US legal system after the war but mostly unsuccessfully.^[18]

The actual geography of North America turned out not to match the details used in the treaty. The treaty specified a southern boundary for the United States, but the separate Anglo-Spanish agreement did not specify a northern boundary for Florida. The Spanish government assumed that the boundary was the same as in the 1763 agreement by which it had first given its territory in Florida to Great Britain. While the West Florida Controversy continued, Spain used its new control of Florida to block American access to the Mississippi, in defiance of Article 8.^[19] The treaty stated that the boundary of the United States extended from the "most northwesternmost point" of the Lake of the Woods (now partly in Minnesota, partly in Manitoba, and partly in Ontario) directly westward until it reached the Mississippi River. However the Mississippi does not in fact extend that far northward, and the line going west from the Lake of the Woods never intersects the river. Additionally, the Treaty of Paris did not explain how the new border would function in terms of controlling the movement of people and trade between British North America and the United States. The American diplomats' expectation of

negotiating a commercial treaty with Great Britain to resolve some of the unfinished business of the Treaty of Paris failed to materialize in 1784. The United States would thus wait until 1794 to negotiate its first commercial agreement with the British Empire, the Jay Treaty.^[20]

Great Britain violated the treaty stipulation that it should relinquish control of forts in United States territory "with all convenient speed." British troops remained stationed at six forts in the Great Lakes region and at two at the north end of Lake Champlain. The British also built an additional fort in present-day Ohio in 1794, during the Northwest Indian War. They found the justification for their actions during the unstable and extremely tense situation that existed in the area following the war, in the failure of the US government to fulfill commitments made to compensate loyalists for British losses, as well as in the British need for time to liquidate various assets in the region.^[21] All of the posts were relinquished peacefully through diplomatic means as a result of the Jay Treaty:

Name	Present-day location
<u>Fort au Fer</u>	Lake Champlain – <u>Champlain, New York</u>
<u>Fort Dutchman's Point</u>	Lake Champlain – <u>North Hero, Vermont</u>
<u>Fort Lernoult</u> (including <u>Fort Detroit</u>)	<u>Detroit River</u> – <u>Detroit, Michigan</u>
<u>Fort Mackinac</u>	<u>Straits of Mackinac</u> – <u>Mackinac Island, Michigan</u>
<u>Fort Miami</u>	<u>Maumee River</u> – <u>Maumee, Ohio</u>
<u>Fort Niagara</u>	<u>Niagara River</u> – <u>Youngstown, New York</u>
<u>Fort Ontario</u>	<u>Lake Ontario</u> – <u>Oswego, New York</u>
<u>Fort Oswegatchie</u>	<u>Saint Lawrence River</u> – <u>Ogdensburg, New York</u>

Notes

- a. The same day as the lopsided American loss at the Battle of Kedges Strait in Chesapeake Bay, one of the numerous ongoing engagements with the British and Loyalist forces throughout 1782 and 1783.

See also

- Ratification Day (United States)
- List of United States treaties
- Confederation Period, the era of United States history in the 1780s after the American Revolution and prior to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution
- History of the United States (1776–1789)
- Diplomacy in the American Revolutionary War

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External links

- [Treaty of Paris, 1783; International Treaties and Related Records, 1778–1974; General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11; National Archives. \(https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=6\)](https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=6)
 - [Approval of the American victory in England \(http://www.parlington.co.uk/structures.lasso?process=3\)](http://www.parlington.co.uk/structures.lasso?process=3) Unique arch inscription commemorates "Liberty in N America Triumphant MDCCLXXXIII"
 - [The Paris Peace Treaty of September 30, 1783 \(http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/paris.asp\)](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/paris.asp) text provided by Yale Law School's Avalon Project
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The Treaty of Paris 1783

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By **Kennedy Hickman**

Updated on January 20, 2020

Following the British defeat at the Battle of Yorktown in October 1781, leaders in Parliament decided that offensive campaigns in North America should cease in favor of a different, more

limited approach. This was spurred by the widening of the war to include France, Spain, and the Dutch Republic. Through the fall and following winter, British colonies in the Caribbean fell to enemy forces as did Minorca. With anti-war forces growing in power, Lord North's government

Learning that North's government had fallen, Benjamin Franklin, the American ambassador in Paris, wrote to Rockingham expressing a desire to begin peace negotiations. Understanding that making peace was a necessity, Rockingham elected to embrace the opportunity. While this pleased Franklin, and his fellow negotiators John Adams, Henry Laurens, and John Jay, they made it clear that the terms of the United States' alliance with France prevented them from making peace without French approval. In moving forward, the British decided that they would not accept American independence as a precondition for beginning talks.

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This reluctance was due to their knowledge that France was experiencing financial difficulties and a hope that military fortunes could be reversed. To begin the process, Richard Oswald was sent to meet with the Americans while Thomas Grenville was dispatched to begin talks with the French. With negotiations proceeding slowly, Rockingham died in July 1782 and Lord Shelburne became the head of the British government. Though British military operations began to have success, the French stalled for time as they were working with Spain to capture Gibraltar.

In addition, the French sent a secret envoy to London as there were several issues, including fishing rights on the Grand Banks, on which they disagreed with their American allies. The French and Spanish were also concerned about American insistence on the Mississippi River as a western border. In September, Jay learned of the secret French mission and wrote to Shelburne detailing why he should not be influenced by the French and Spanish. In this same period, Franco-Spanish operations against Gibraltar were failing to leave the French to begin debating ways for exiting the conflict.

Advancing to Peace

Leaving their allies to bicker amongst themselves, the Americans became aware of a letter sent during the summer to George Washington in which Shelburne conceded the point of independence. Armed with this knowledge, they re-entered talks with Oswald. With the issue of independence settled, they began hammering out the details which included border issues and discussion of reparations. On the former point, the Americans were able to get the British to agree to the borders established after the French & Indian War rather than those set by the Quebec Act of 1774.

By the end of November, the two sides produced a preliminary treaty based on the following points:

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Great Britain recognized the Thirteen Colonies to be free, sovereign and independent states.

- The borders of the United States would be those of 1763 extending west to the Mississippi.
- The United States would receive fishing rights on the Grand Banks and Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- All contracted debts were to be paid to creditors on each side.
- The Congress of the Confederation would recommend that each state legislature provide restitution for property taken from Loyalists.
- The United States would prevent property from being taken from Loyalists in the future.
- All prisoners of war were to be released.
- Both the United States and Great Britain were to have perpetual access to the Mississippi.
- Territory captured by the United States subsequent to the treaty was to be returned.
- Ratification of the treaty was to occur within six months of signing. With the British relief of Gibraltar in October, the French ceased to have any interest in aiding the Spanish. As a result, they were willing to accept a separate Anglo-American peace. Reviewing the treaty, they grudgingly accepted it on November 30.

Signing & Ratification

With the French approval, the Americans and Oswald signed a preliminary treaty on November 30. The terms of the treaty provoked a political firestorm in Britain where the concession of territory, abandonment of the Loyalists, and granting of fishing rights proved particularly unpopular. This backlash forced Shelburne to resign and a new government was formed under the Duke of Portland. Replacing Oswald with David Hartley, Portland hoped to modify the treaty. This was blocked by the Americans who insisted on no changes. As a result, Hartley and the American delegation signed the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783.

Brought before the Congress of the Confederation at Annapolis, MD, the treaty was ratified on January 14, 1784. Parliament ratified the treaty on April 9 and ratified copies of the document were exchanged the following month in Paris. Also on September 3, Britain signed separate