

LEQ: What was the name of the constitution created by the Continental Congress?



After the British Army forced the Continental Congress out of Philadelphia, the Congress moved to various locations, such as York, Pennsylvania. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

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The Articles of Confederation



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The Articles of Confederation



Two days after appointing a committee to draft a Declaration of Independence, the Second Continental Congress appointed a committee to draft a constitution for the United States. This constitution was known as the Articles of Confederation. This image is courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol.

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After the British Army forced the Continental Congress out of Philadelphia, the Congress moved to various locations, such as York, Pennsylvania. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

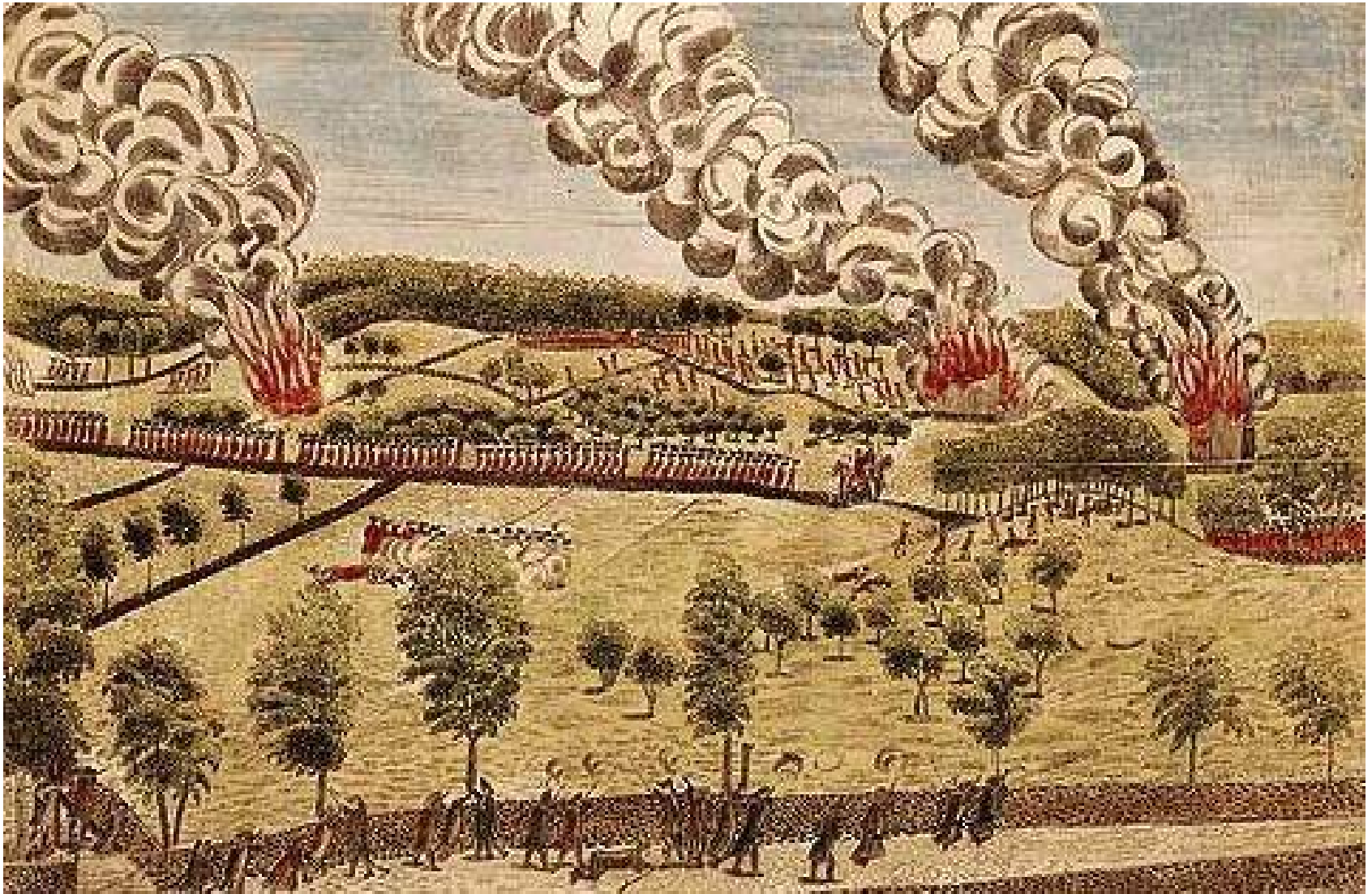
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After the American Revolution began, royal governors throughout the colonies watched their authority collapse.



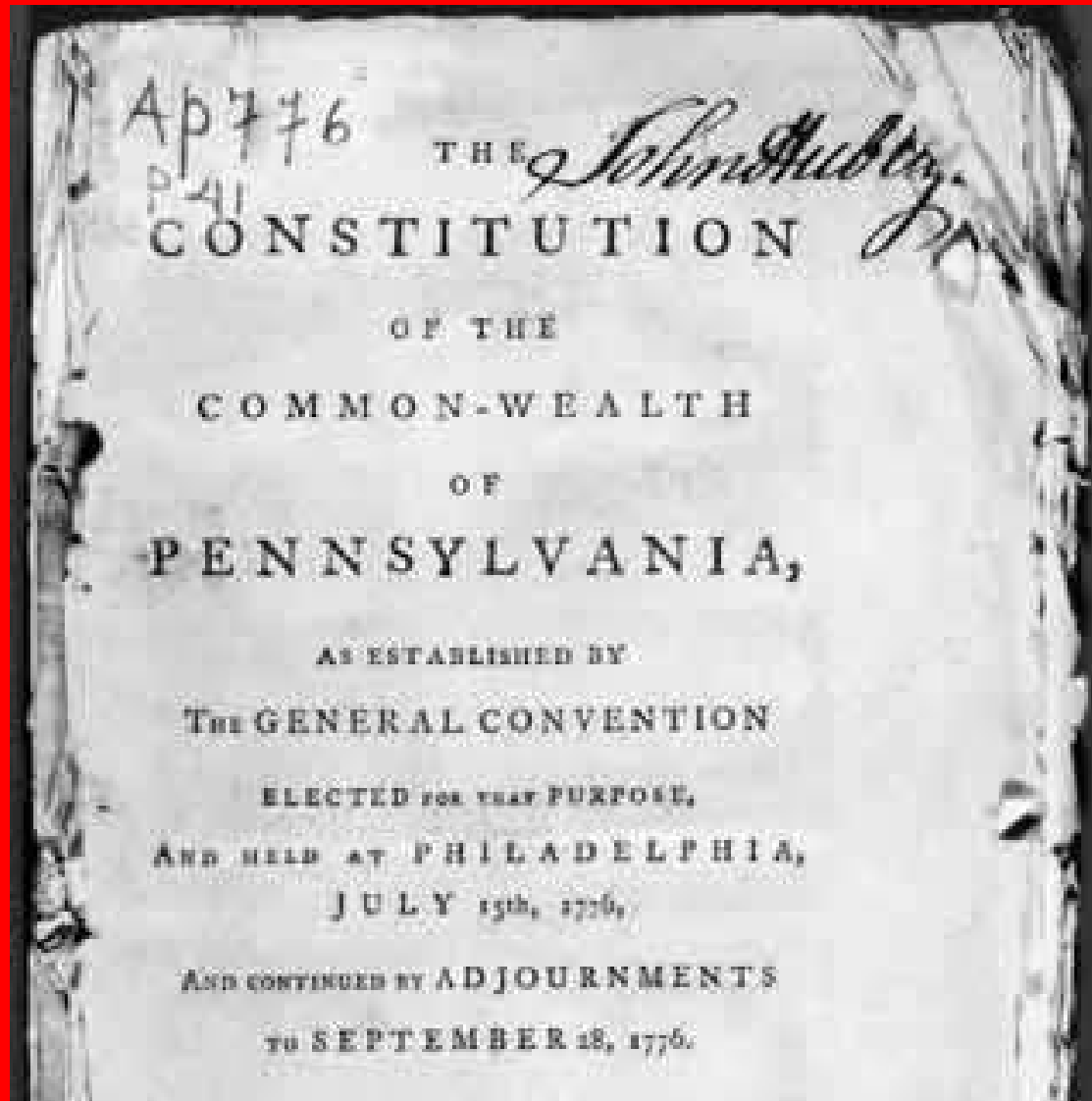
This image shows the reinforcement of British soldiers near Lexington, Massachusetts on April 19, 1775. This image was created in 1775 by Ralph Earl and Amos Doolittle. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

At the beginning of the American Revolution a few governors tried to organize Loyalist resistance, but eventually all royal governors abandoned their offices and fled.



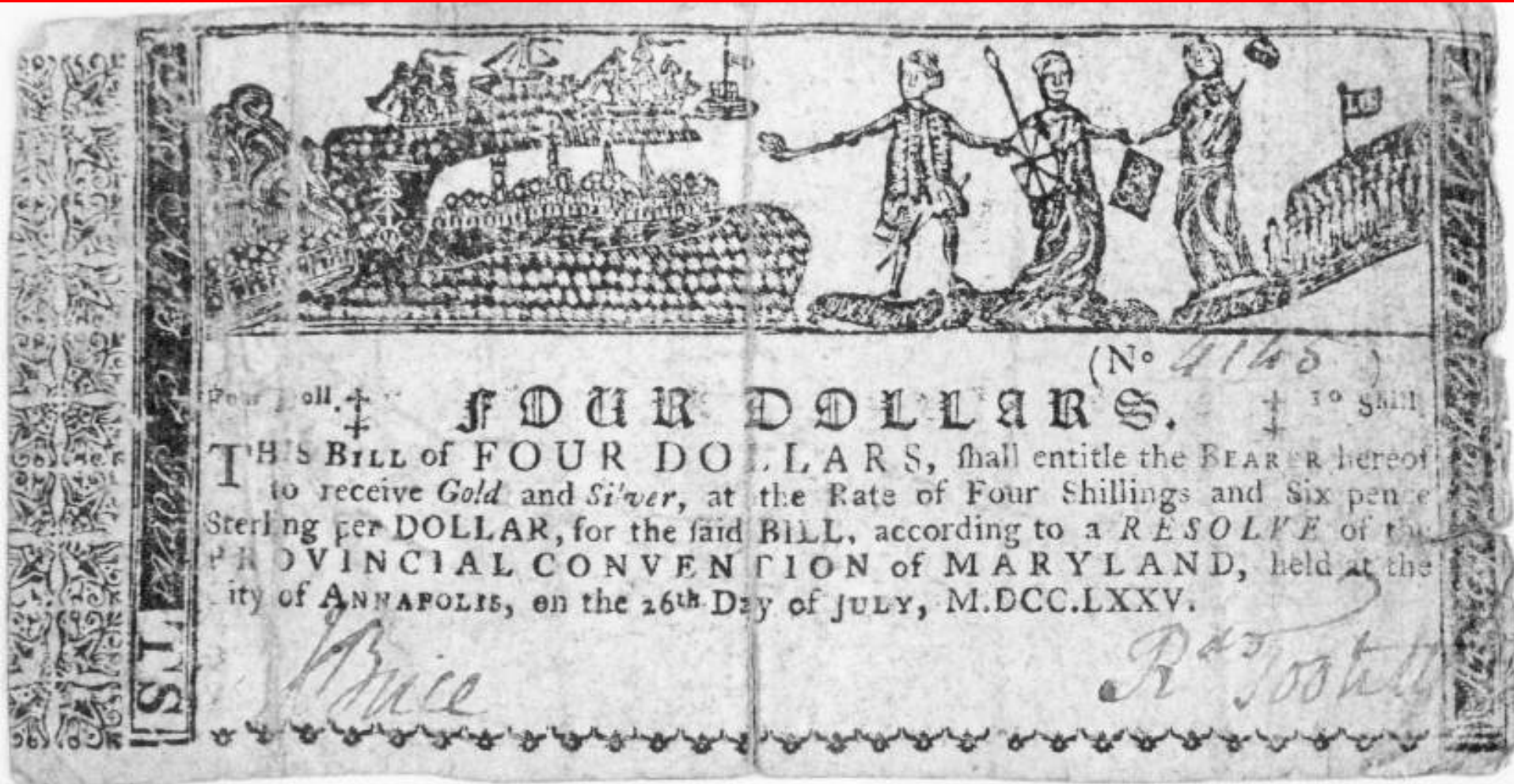
This image shows the arrest of William Franklin, the Royal Governor of New Jersey, by order of the Second Continental Congress. William Franklin was the son of Benjamin Franklin. This image is courtesy of gutenberg.org.

In 1776 Congress urged the colonies to replace their colonial charters with new constitutions, or plans of government.



The Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 created a one house legislature like that of the Continental Congress. This image is courtesy of the philipvickersfithian.com.

Colonists considered written constitutions important because they would spell out the rights of all citizens.



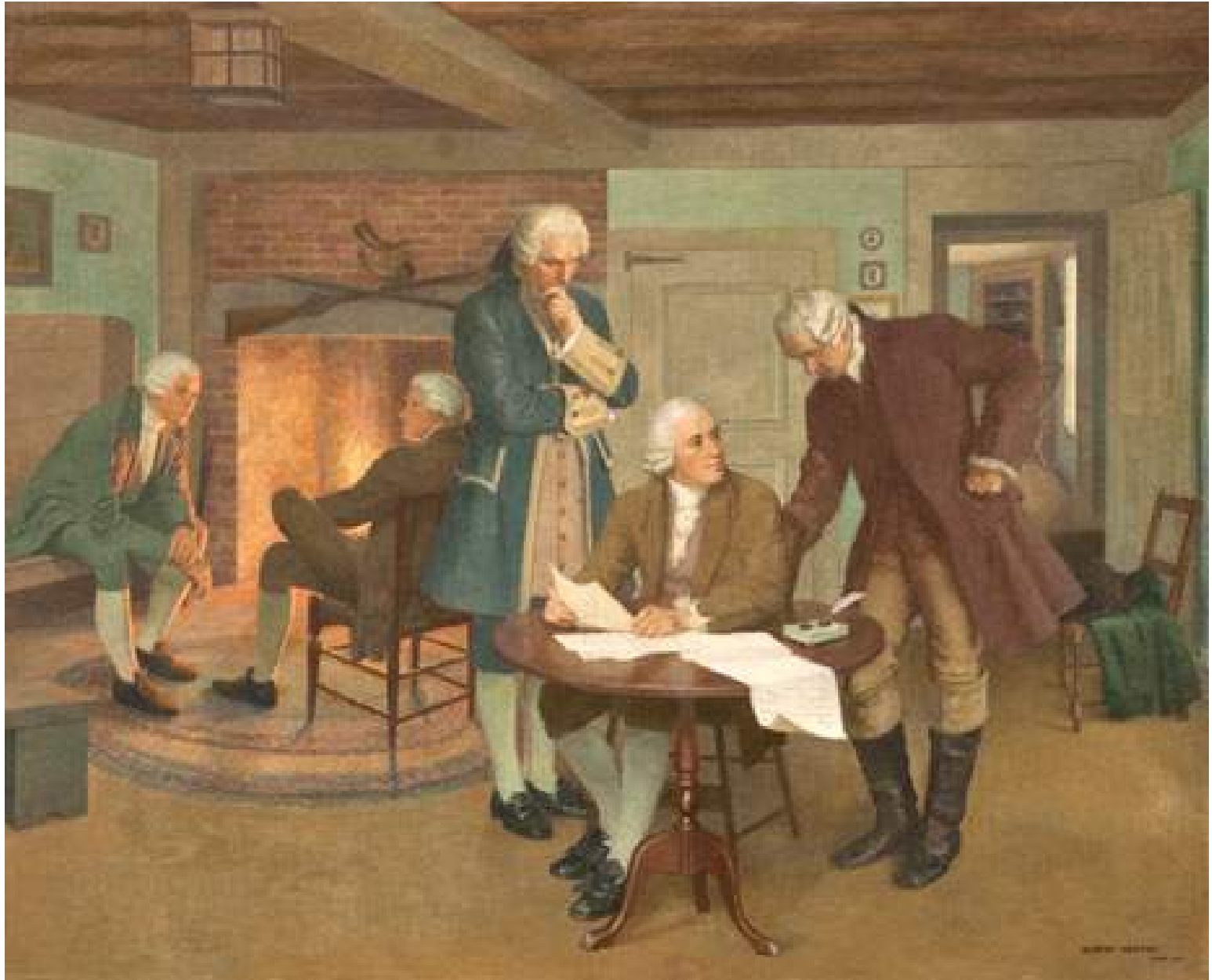
This Maryland \$4 bill from 1775 shows citizens having the right to petition their king. This image is courtesy of maryland.gov.

Constitutions would also set limits on the power of government.



This image shows the Virginia Convention in Williamsburg, Virginia on June 12, 1776. The Constitution of Virginia was adopted on June 29, 1776. This image is courtesy virginiamemory.com.

Most states established governments similar to the colonial governments they replaced.



This image shows John Adams, Samuel Adams, and James Bowdoin drafting the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780. This painting was created by Albert Herter in 1942. This image is courtesy of malegislature.gov.

Colonists felt concerned about giving too much power to a few people.



This image shows the Governor's "Council Chamber" in the Massachusetts State House, now known as the Old State House. This image was taken by Robert Housch on August 12, 2016.

As a result, they divided power between two branches.



1713-1798

First the building houses the colonial government, and after the American Revolution it houses the Massachusetts state government. The government meets on the second floor. The first floor is a merchants' exchange, and the basement is rented for storage. Officials regularly read proclamations from the balcony.

This image shows a view of the interior of the Massachusetts State House or State Capitol during the 1700s. This image was taken by Robert Housch on August 12, 2016.

The legislative branch became the lawmaking branch.



The legislative branch included lawmakers elected by the states' voters. This image shows the old Massachusetts State House in Boston, Massachusetts. This image was taken by Robert Housch on August 11, 2016.

All states except Pennsylvania and Georgia created bicameral, or two-house, legislatures.



Members of each house represented geographic districts. The Court House in New Castle, Delaware, served as the Delaware State Capitol from 1776-1777. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

In nearly all states, voters directly elected the legislative members.



For the most part in 1776, voting was limited to white male property owners over the age of 21 years. This image shows voters at an election in Williamsburg, Virginia. This image is courtesy of history.org.

The second branch of government carried out the laws that the legislature made.



This reproduction of the Royal Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, Virginia was the home of not only Royal Governors, but Colonial Governors, and two governors of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

This branch became known as the executive branch.



The Shirley-Eustis House in Roxbury, Massachusetts, was originally the mansion for the Royal Governor of Massachusetts, and it also served as the home of a federal governor. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

A state governor heads the executive branch.



Elected in 1785, Benjamin Franklin was the sixth governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. At the time, his title was President of the Supreme Executive Council. This image was created by Joseph-Siffrein Duplessis (1725-1802) in 1785. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Although Americans considered individual rights to be important, figuring out what were “American rights” varied from state to state.



This painting by William Hogarth is titled *An Election Entertainment*. This image is courtesy of history.org.

A basic right concerning Colonial Americans was the right to vote.



These images show a colonial ballot box, possibly from the 1700s. Voters would write the name of the person for whom they would like to vote on a piece of paper, and place the paper in the slot at the top of the box. Those in charge of the election would open the box and count the ballots inside. These image are courtesy of [instappraisal.com](https://www.instagram.com/instappraisal.com).

For the most part, laws during this time period restricted citizenship to white male property owners.



This image shows voters in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia on election day, drinking liquor that was freely provided by candidates that wanted their votes. This image is courtesy of history.org.

Neither women nor African Americans could vote in most states.



New Jersey extended the right to vote to “all free inhabitants,” so women could vote there. In 1807, however, the state legislature took the right away. This image is courtesy of history.org.

Although the Revolution did not win full equality for all Americans, it began to move America in that direction.



Only one person in this picture of a Colonial family in Virginia had the right to vote. This image is courtesy of history.org.

It became difficult to claim that “all men are created equal” in a society with slavery.



Americans began to question the institution of slavery. Some states passed laws prohibiting the importation of slaves. This image shows slave catchers attempting to catch an escaped slave. This image is courtesy of history.org.

By 1804 every state north of Maryland had passed laws freeing enslaved African Americans.



The 1780 Abolition Act of Pennsylvania provided for the children of slave mothers to be born free. The last 64 Pennsylvania slaves were listed on the 1840 census. The original image is courtesy of history.org.

Most state constitutions included a bill of rights that spelled out certain rights the states had to recognize and protect.

FRIDAY, }
June 14, 1776. }

POSTSCRIPT.

{ No. 72.

IN CONVENTION.

J U • N E 12, 1776.

A DECLARATION of RIGHTS made by the representatives of the good people of Virginia, assembled in full and free Convention; which rights do pertain to them, and their posterity, as the basis and foundation of government.

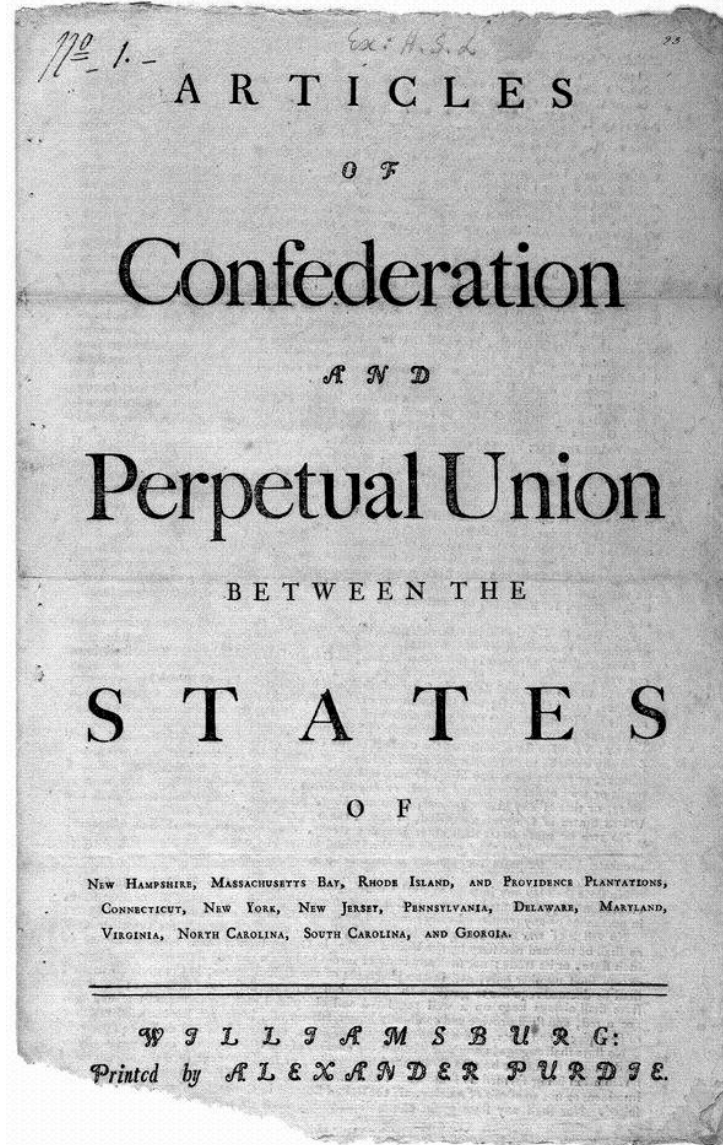
1. **T**HAT all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they can-

consideration of publick services; which, not being descendible, neither ought the offices of magistrate, legislator, or judge, to be hereditary.

5. That the legislative and executive powers of the state should be separate and distinct from the judicative; and that the members of the two first may be restrained from oppression, by feeling and participating the burthens of the people, they should,

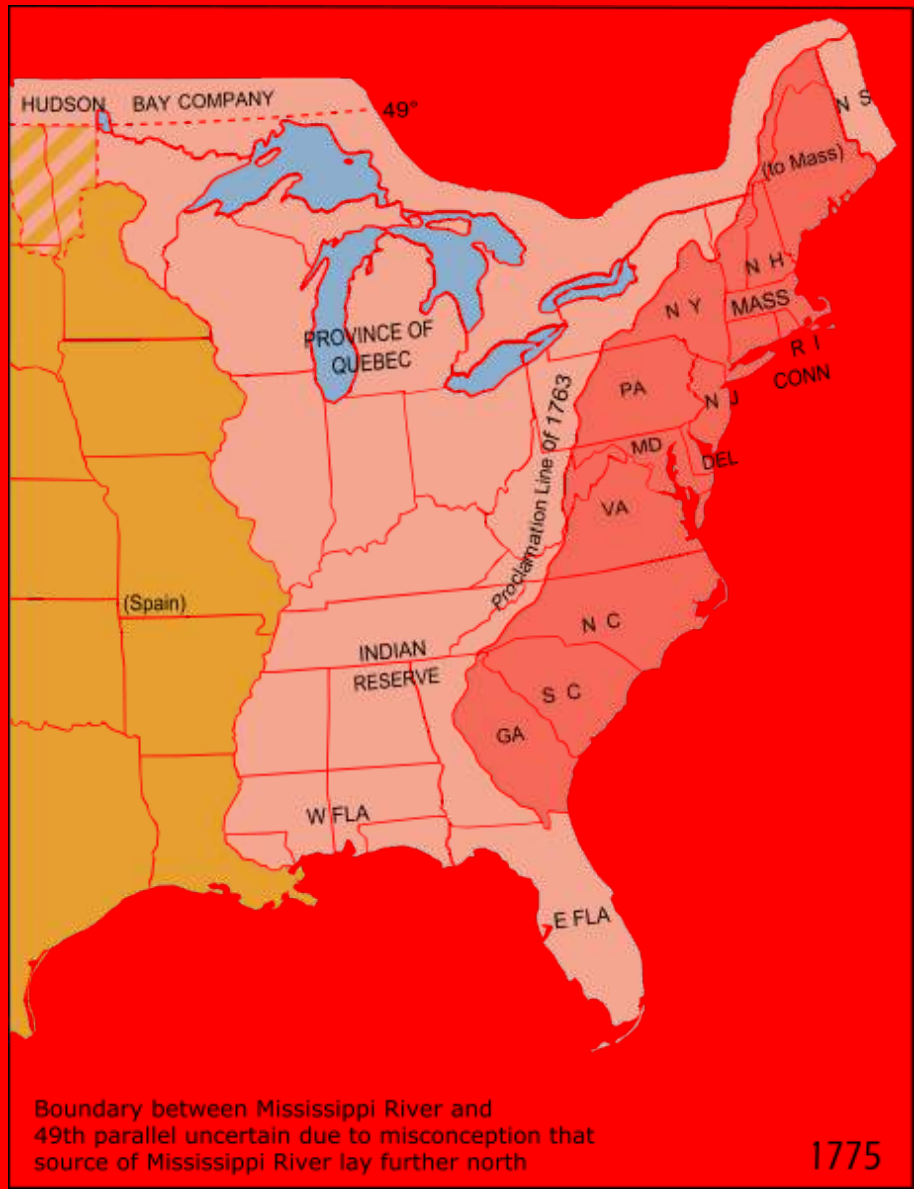
These rights included trial by jury and freedom of the press. This image from the *Virginia Gazette* shows a section from Virginia's Declaration of Rights. The original image is courtesy of gunstonhall.blogspot.com.

Even as the 13 states began to write their constitutions, the Congress drew up its own blueprint for a national government.



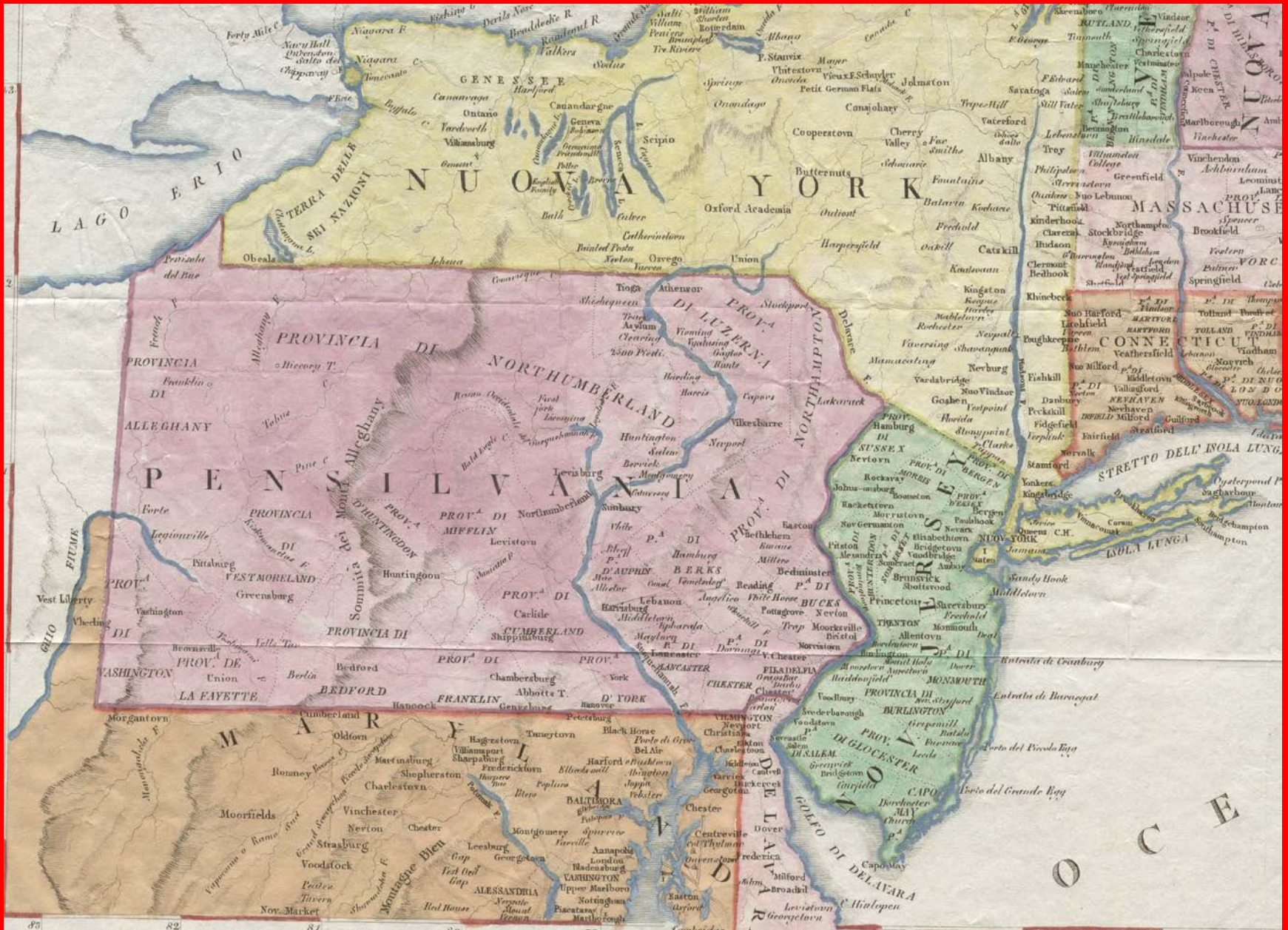
Writing a national constitution proved to be a difficult task. This edition of the Articles of Confederation was printed in Williamsburg, Virginia. This image is courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In 1776 few Americans considered themselves citizens of one nation.



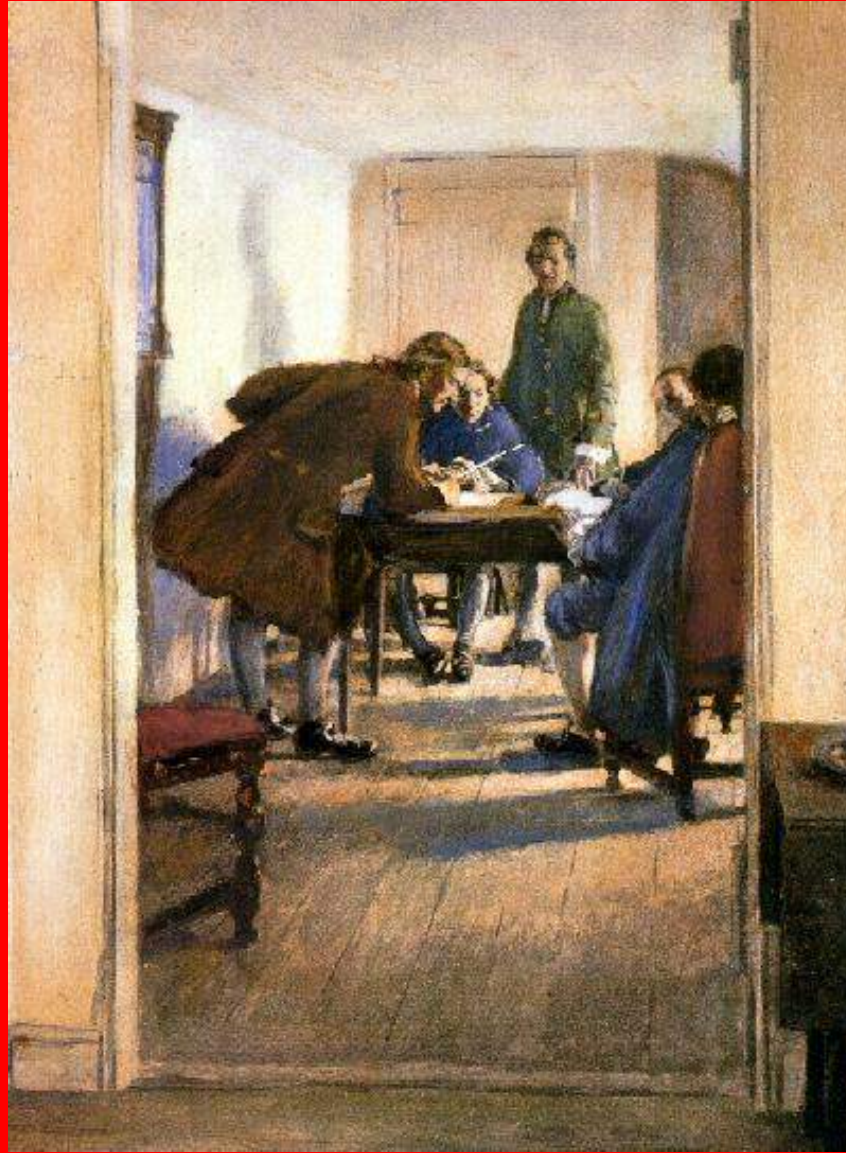
This image shows the eastern section of what is now the United States in 1775. The 13 colonies are in the darker red color. The pink color shows the land set aside of Native Americans. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Instead, many Americans first felt loyalty to their own states.



This map shows parts of the Mid Atlantic states in 1800. This image is courtesy of mapsofpa.com.

Although the states seemed unwilling to turn over power to the national government, the Congress finally drafted a constitution.



This image shows Americans in the 18th century creating a government document. This image is courtesy of hermes-press.com.

On November 15, 1777, the Continental Congress completed and passed the Articles of Confederation.



Because the Second Continental Congress had been driven out of Philadelphia by the British during the American Revolution, they were meeting in the Courthouse in York, Pennsylvania (this building is a reconstruction) when they approved the Articles of Confederation. The Continental Congress proposed that the Articles of Confederation should go into effect after every state had approved it, but that wouldn't be until 1781. This image is courtesy of yorkheritage.org.

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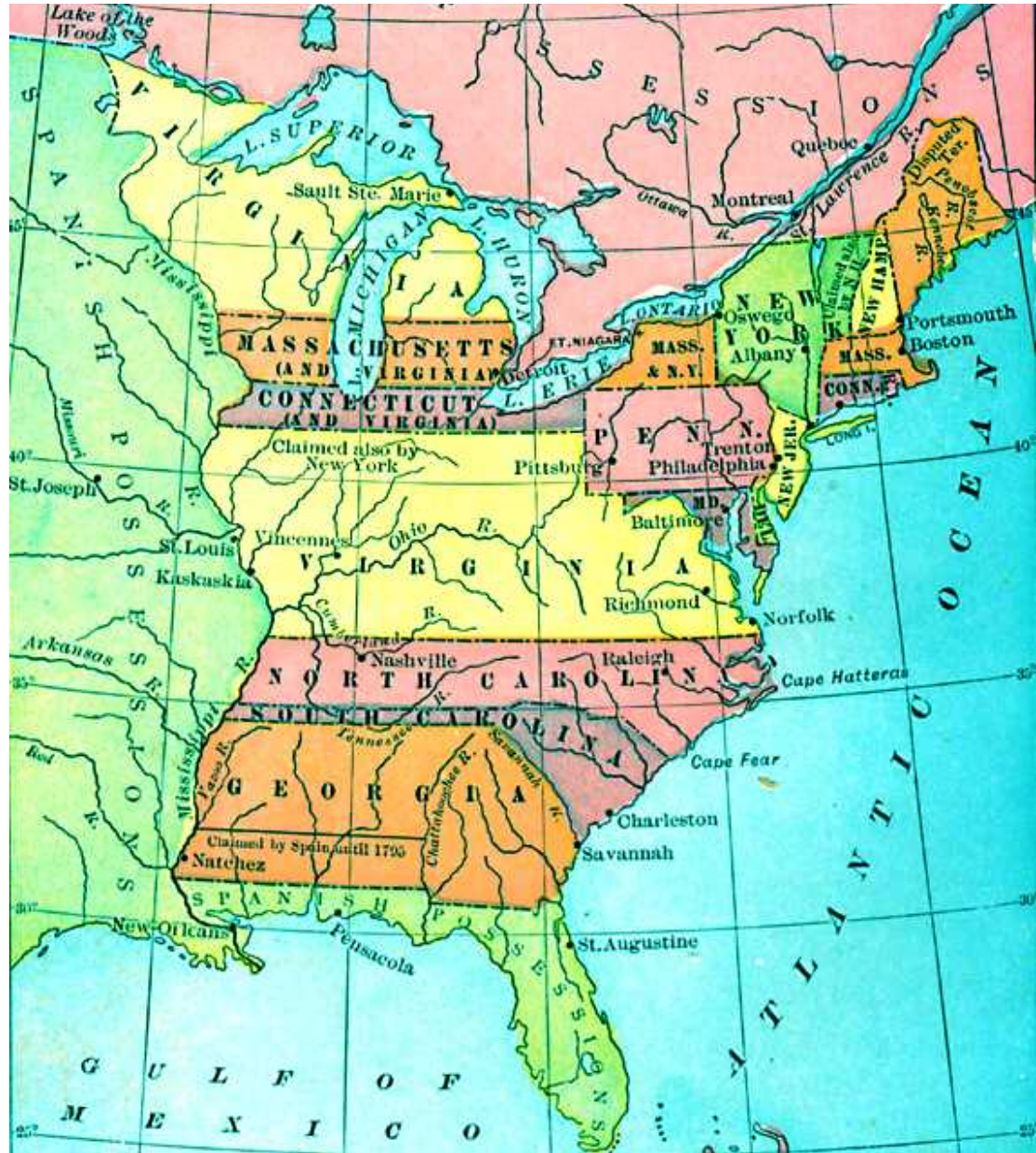
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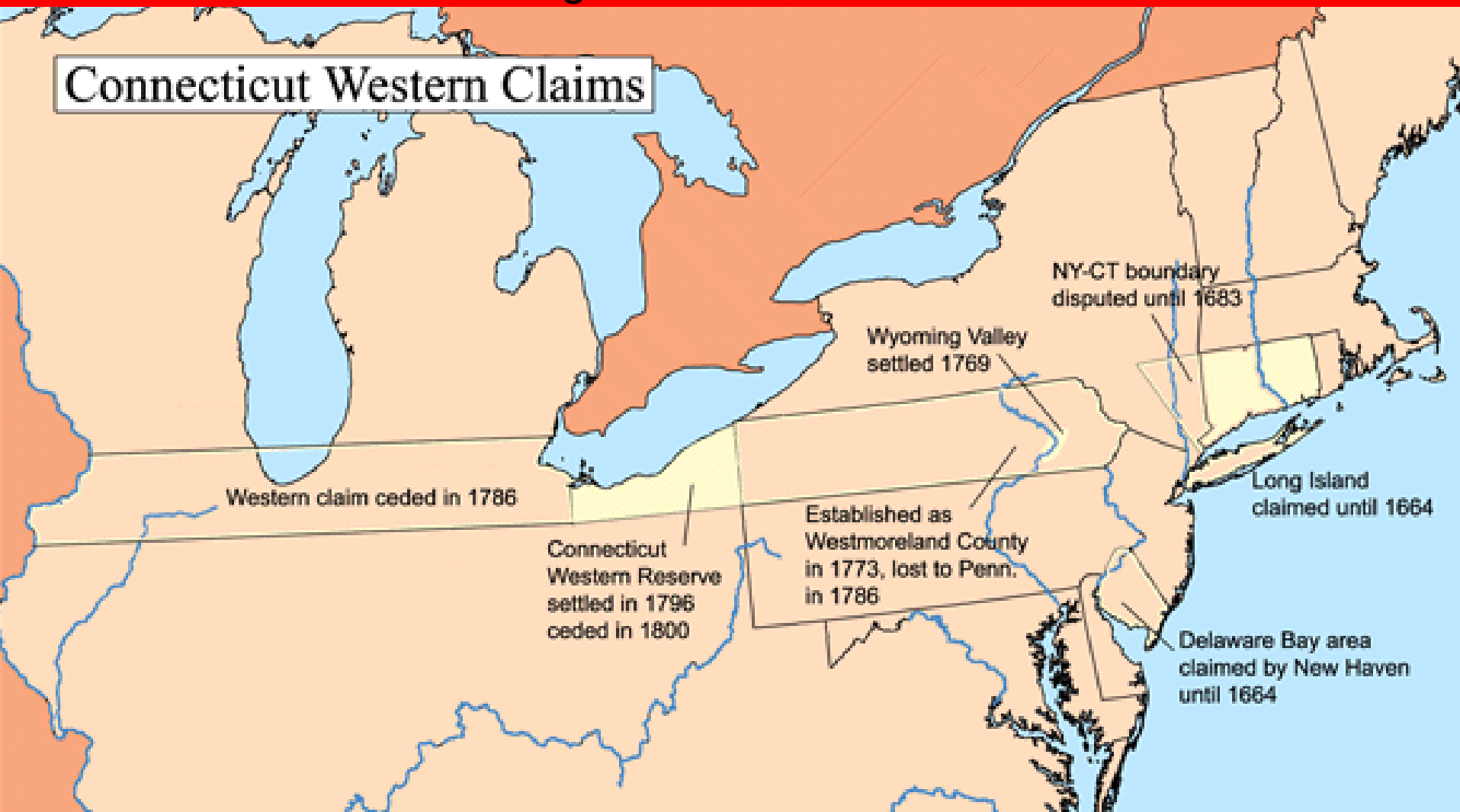
After the British Army forced the Continental Congress out of Philadelphia, the Congress moved to various locations, such as York, Pennsylvania. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

All of the states did not ratify, or approve, the Articles of Confederation until 1781.



The ratification process was delayed because of a dispute among the states over land. This image is courtesy of northwesternordinance.org.

Several states claimed large tracts of land to the west of their states.



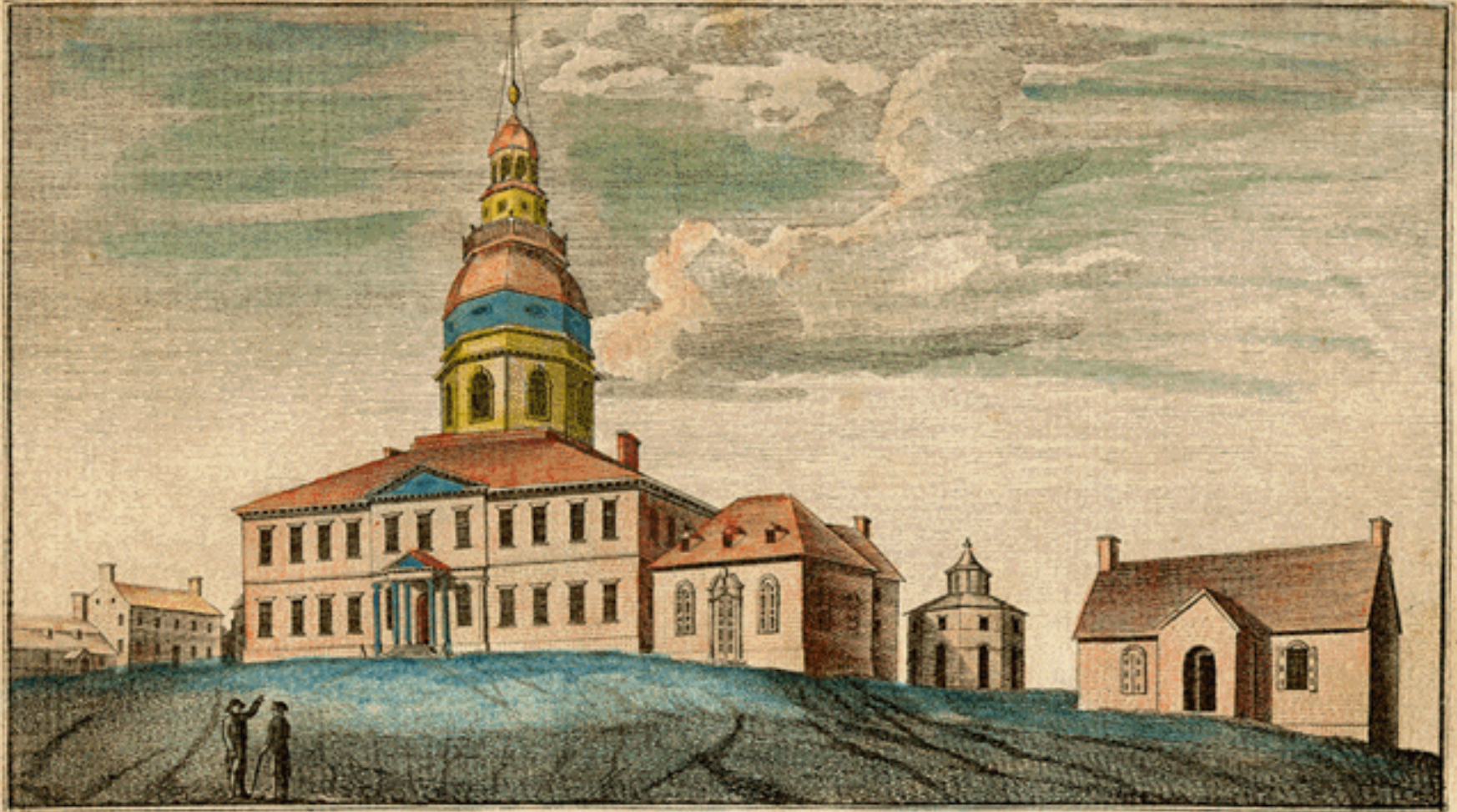
These claims among the states frequently conflicted with each other because colonial charters had granted land "from sea to sea." This image shows Connecticut claims going to the Mississippi River, which was the western boundary of the United States at this time. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

In addition, the six states without western land claims argued that the West should become public land, or land belonging to the national government.



This image shows the land that would eventually be given up by the eastern states to become the Northwest Territory. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Although most states ratified the Articles of Confederation, Maryland would not ratify it until all lands between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River became public land.



A Front View of the State-House &c. at ANNAPOLIS the Capital of MARYLAND.

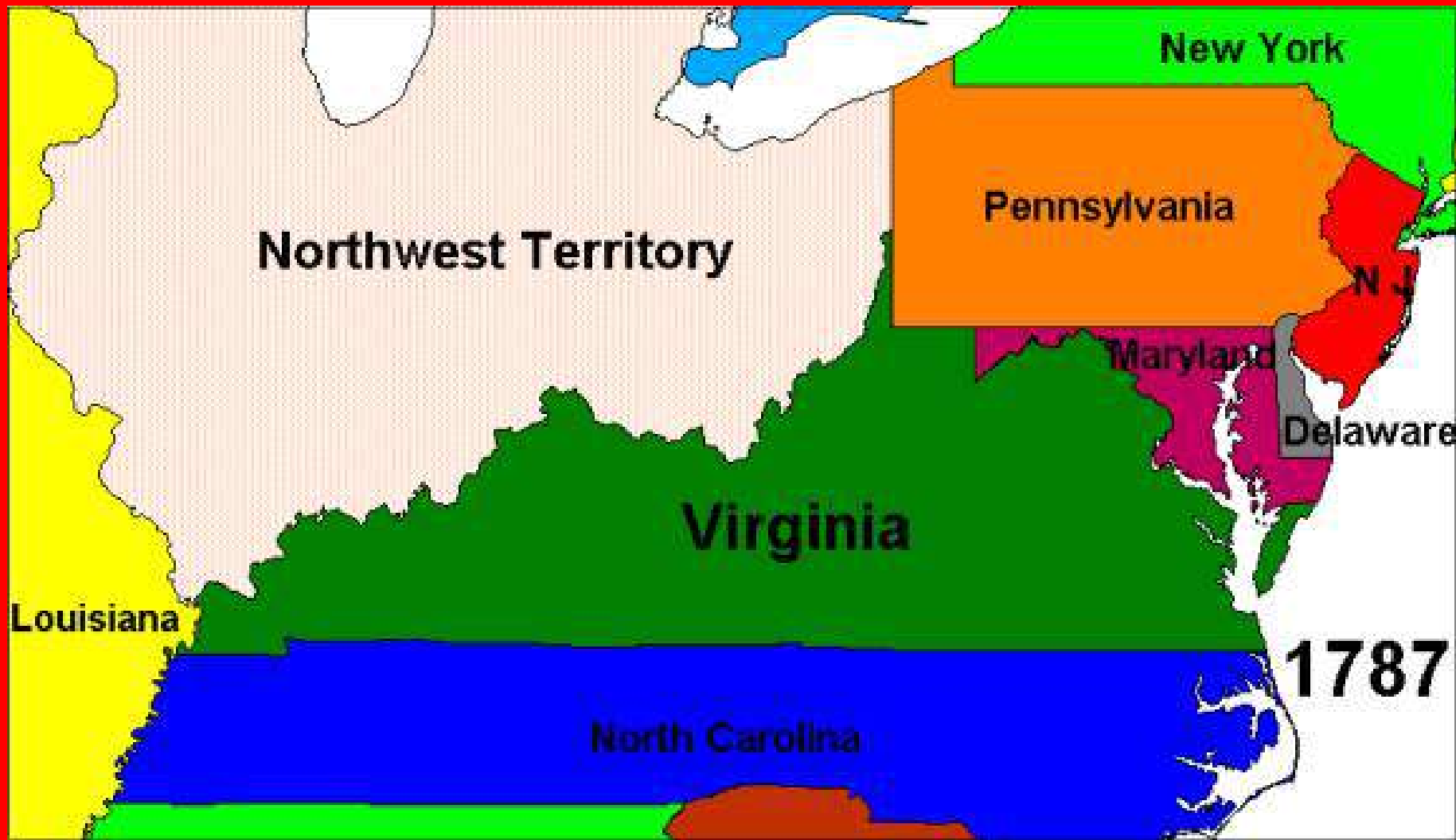
This image shows the Maryland State House or State Capitol as it appeared in Annapolis, Maryland. This image is courtesy of the Maryland State Archives.

Virginia, which had huge claims—the present-day states of Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin—refused to do what the small states wanted.



This map shows that Virginia's land claims are in yellow, and stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. This image is courtesy of northwesternordnance.org.

Maryland worried that states like Virginia would become too powerful if they were allowed to keep their western lands.



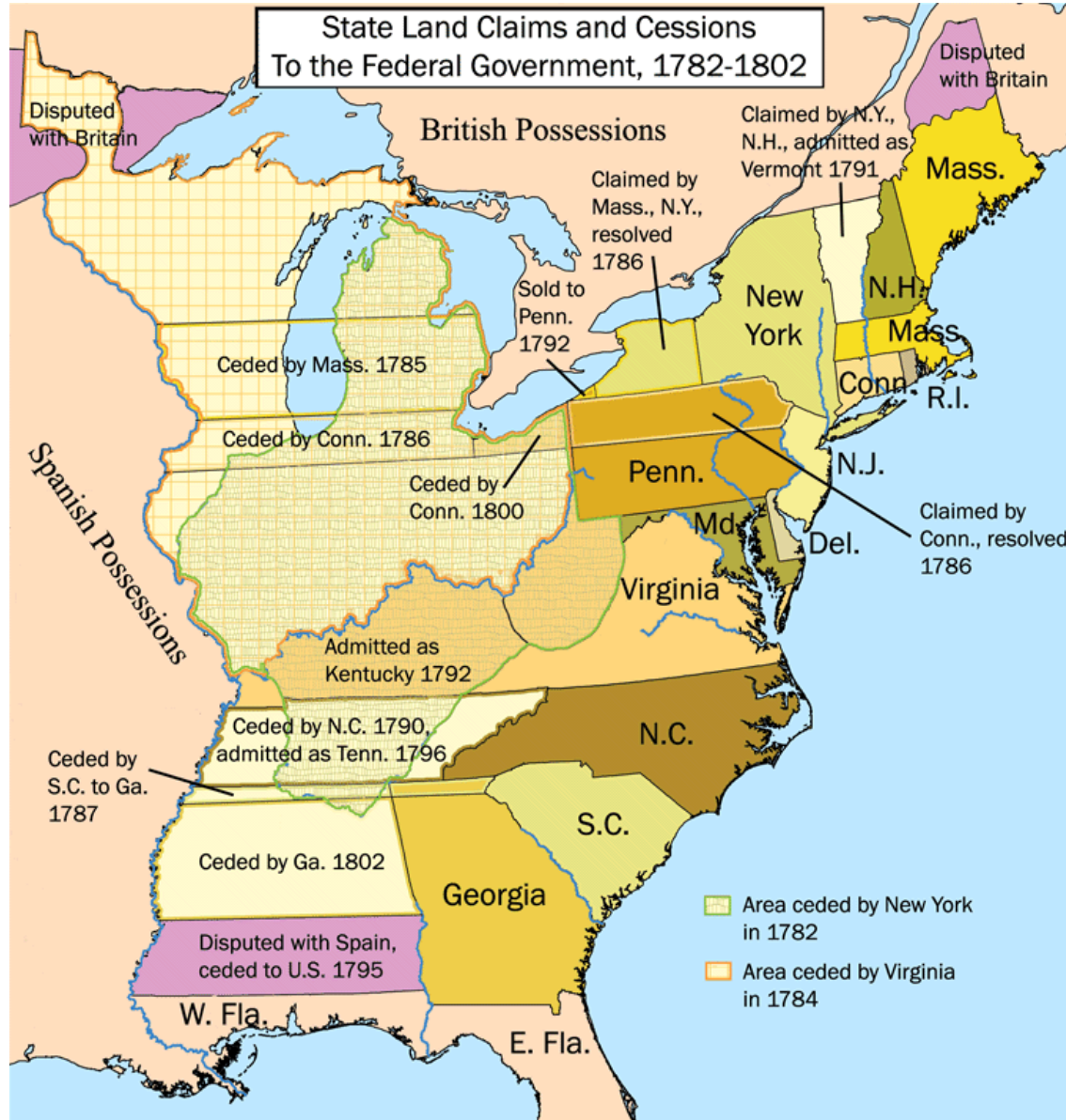
This image shows states with western land claims, and a landlocked Maryland in 1776. This image is courtesy of virginiaplaces.org.

Virginia finally agreed to give up its western lands in 1781 during the American Revolution when Lord Cornwallis and his British army were moving towards Virginia.



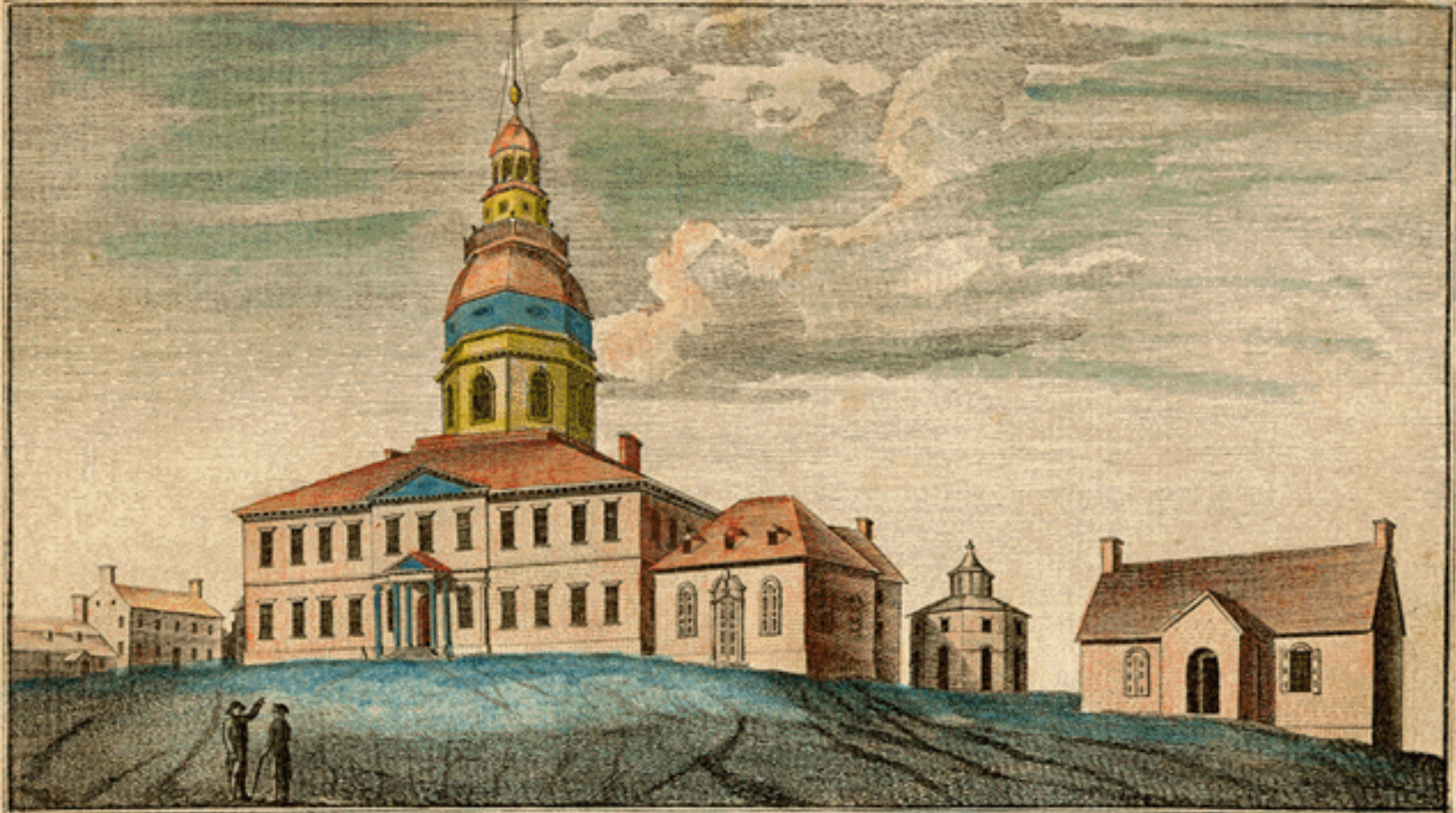
Cornwallis' route to Yorktown, Virginia was not a direct one. He first chased Nathaniel Green's American Army, then marched to Virginia in an attempt to live off the land. Finally he marched to Yorktown in an attempt to be resupplied by the British navy. This image is courtesy of the National Park Service.

Virginia agreed to give up their western lands if the other states helped them against Cornwallis, and the other states agreed to help Virginia.



This image shows the years that the states ceded their western lands to the federal government. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

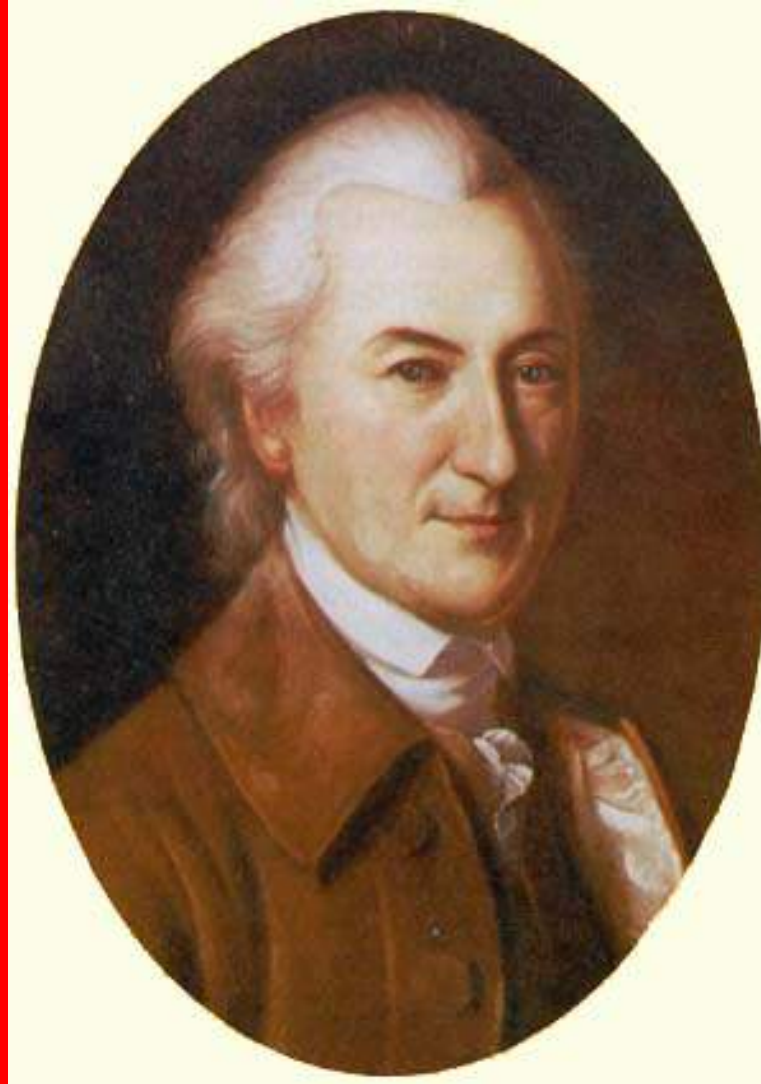
Maryland approved the Articles of Confederation in 1781, and it became the first Constitution of the United States of America.



A Front View of the State-House &c. at ANNAPOLIS the Capital of MARYLAND.

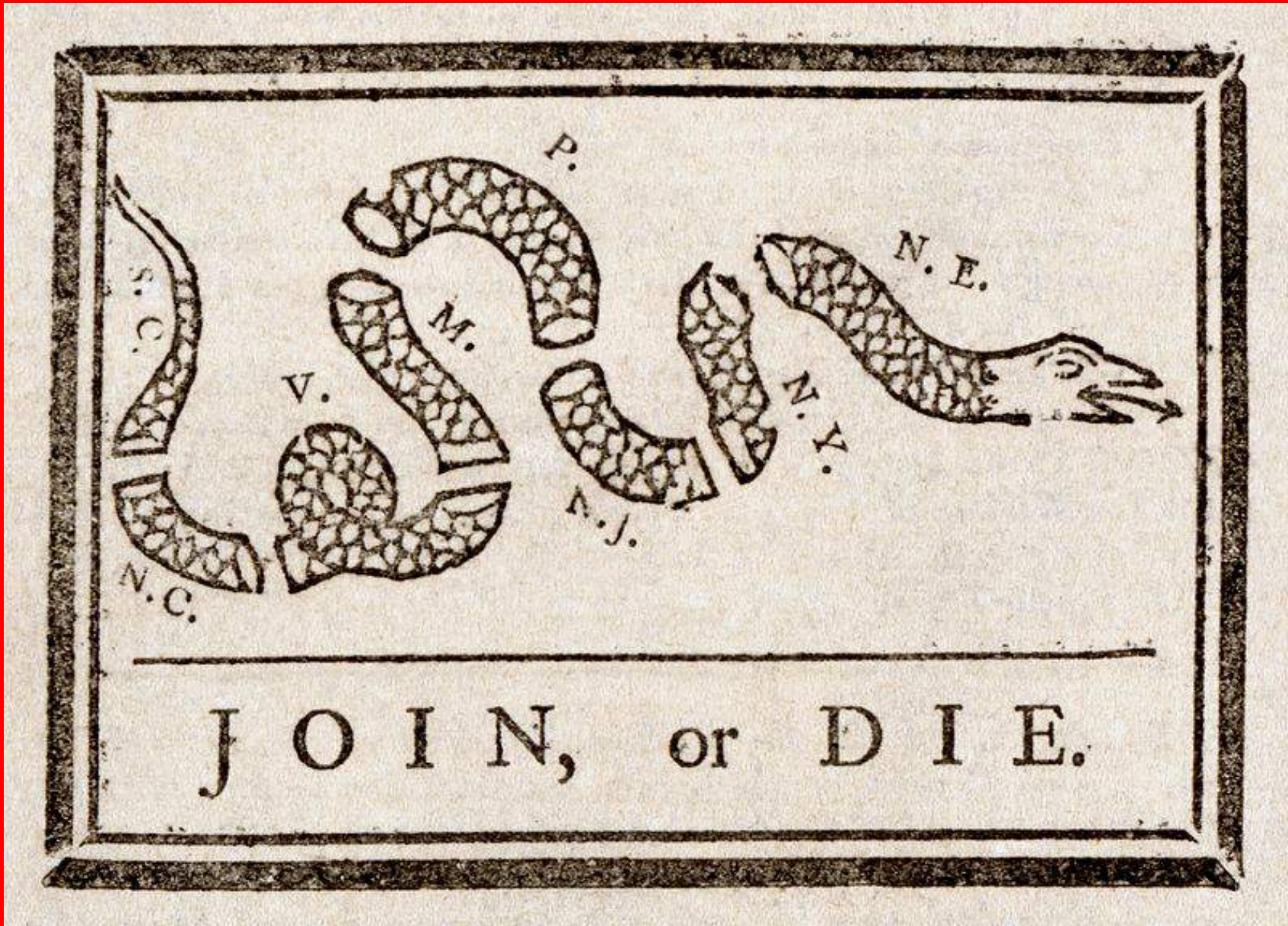
This image shows the Maryland State House or State Capitol as it appeared in Annapolis, Maryland. This image is courtesy of the Maryland State Archives.

The main author of the Articles, John Dickinson, called it a “firm league of friendship” among the states.



John Dickinson (1741-1827), was the fifth President of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania is named for him. This image was painted by Charles Wilson Peale (1741-1827) in 1780. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Articles of Confederation established a loose alliance of states rather than a strong central government.



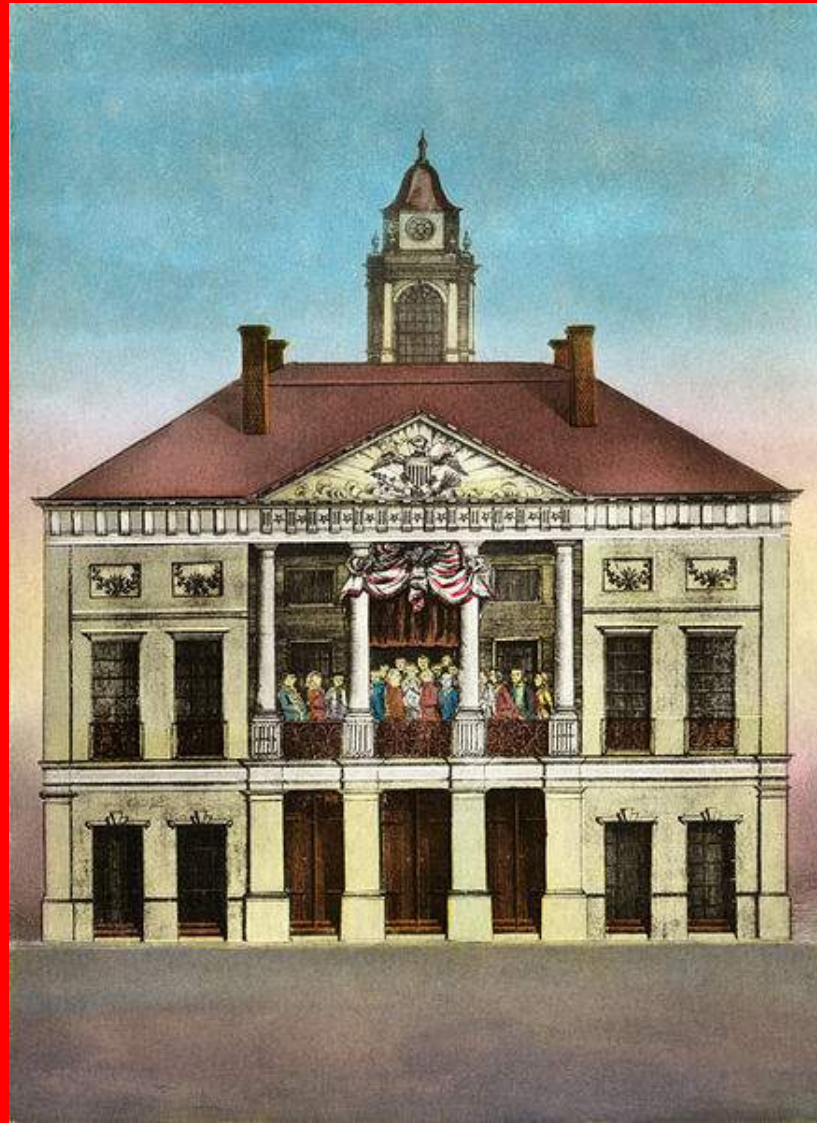
This image shows Benjamin Franklin's "Join or Die" cartoon. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The authors of the Articles of Confederation feared a strong central government because of their experience with the British monarchy and Parliament.



They thought the states could get along well with each other and be able to protect themselves if they were threatened. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Continental Congress purposely created a weak national government under the Articles of Confederation.



This is Federal Hall , known at the time of the Articles of Confederation as City Hall in New York City. The Confederation Congress met here from 1785-1788. This painting was created by Amos Doolittle (1754-1832) in 1789. This image is courtesy of the Library of Congress.

The Articles of Confederation made the Continental Congress the national lawmaking body in which each state had one vote.



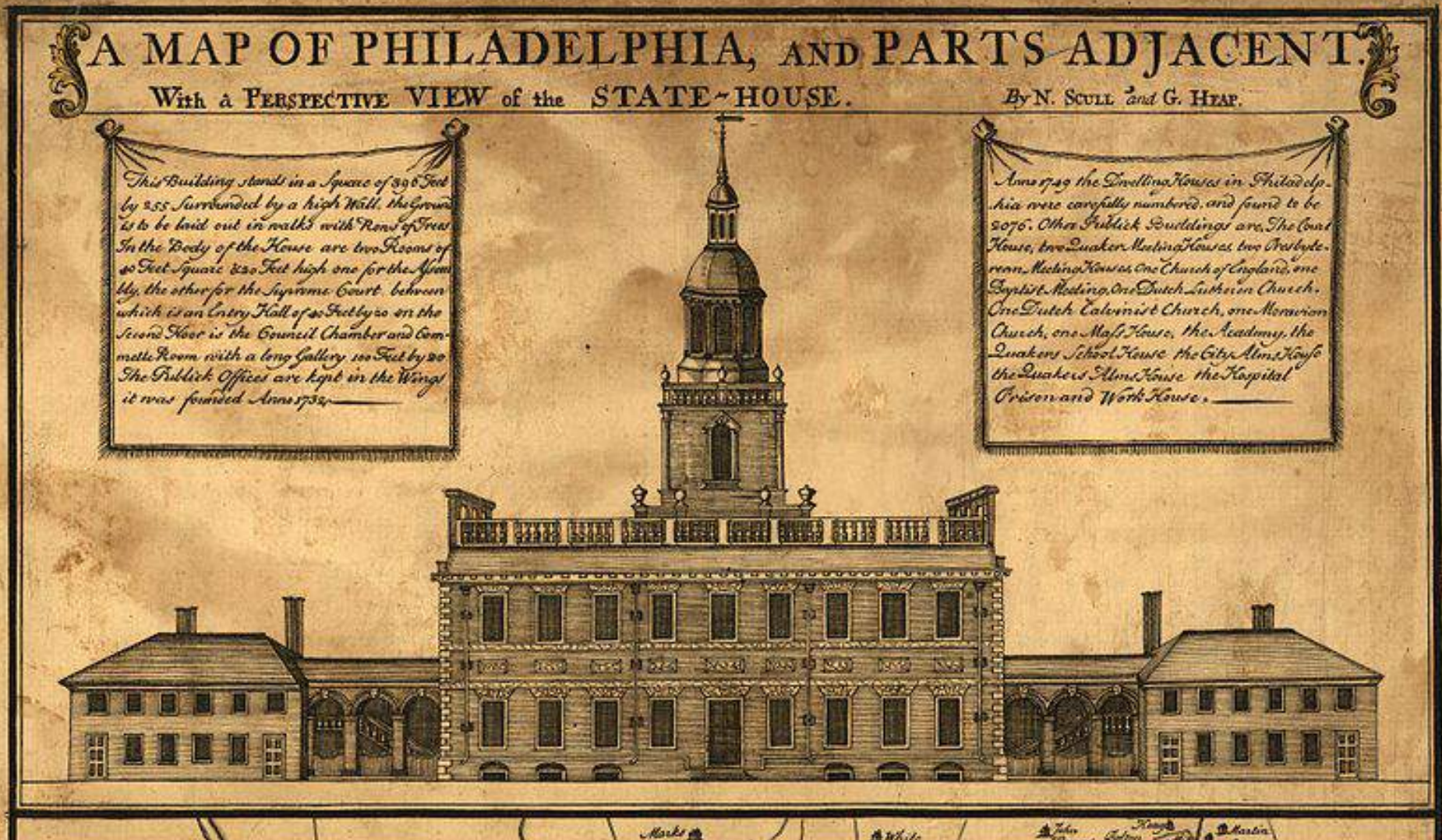
Nassau Hall, on the campus of Princeton University, served as the home for the Confederation Congress in 1783. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Congress' powers included declaring war, raising an army and navy, making treaties, borrowing money, establishing a postal system, and conducting business with other countries.



This is the Senate Chamber in the Maryland State Capital. The Maryland State Capital building housed the Confederation Congress from 1783-1784. This image is courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

The list of powers given to the national government by the Articles of Confederation seemed impressive.



The Confederation Congress met in Philadelphia's Independence Hall from 1781-1783. This image is courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Under the Articles of Confederation, however, the national government actually was much weaker than the state governments.



After the British Army forced the Continental Congress out of Philadelphia, the Congress moved to various locations, such as York, Pennsylvania. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The new National government had no authority over individual citizens and very little control over state governments.



Living History personnel at Colonial Williamsburg, in Virginia explain the process of wig making and the significance of wigs in Colonial life. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Continental Congress, now called the Confederation Congress, could make laws, but the writers provided no measures to carry out those laws.



The Articles left it to the states to enforce laws passed by Congress. The Confederation Congress met in Philadelphia's Independence Hall from 1781-1783. This image was taken by Robert Housch on July 30, 2009.

The Articles also made no provision for a national court system.



If the states disagreed with each other, or with the Confederation Congress, they had no place to resolve their differences. This is the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Room in Philadelphia's Independence Hall. This image is was taken by Robert Housch on July 30, 2009.

Every state could send delegates to Congress, but each state, whatever its size, had only one vote.



The larger states did not like the policy of each state having only one vote in Congress. The larger states viewed this as unfair to them. Why should Rhode Island have as much power in the Congress as New York and/or Pennsylvania? This is the Assembly Room in the Pennsylvania State House (Independence Hall) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This image was taken by Robert Housch on July 30, 2009.

Congress did hold all the powers connected to war and peace. These powers, however, actually meant very little.



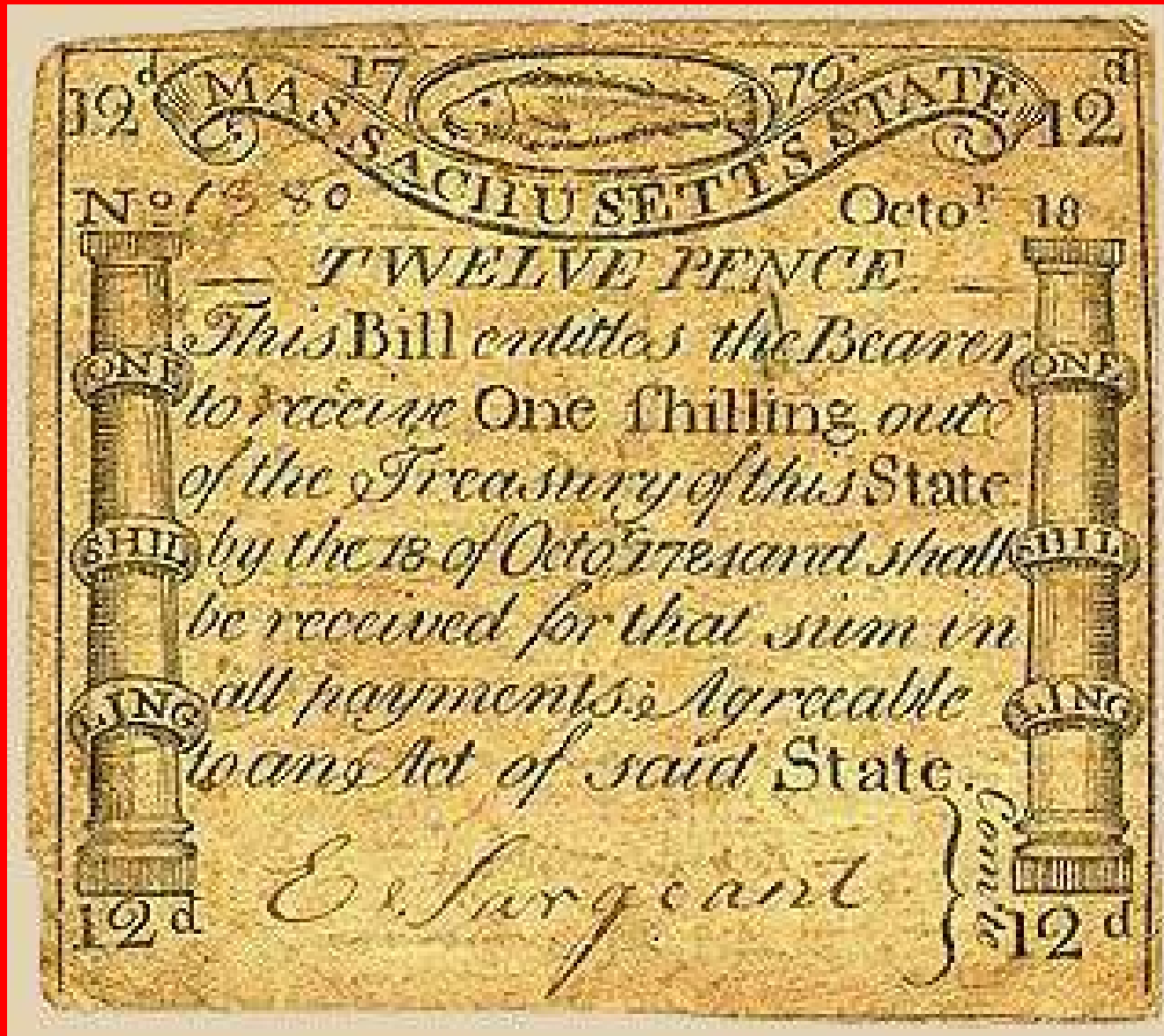
This image shows American soldiers in 1781, the year that the Articles of Confederation were finally approved by all of the states. This image is courtesy of the United States Army Center of Military History.

Without the money to finance a war or the ability to collect taxes to raise the money, these war powers proved useless.



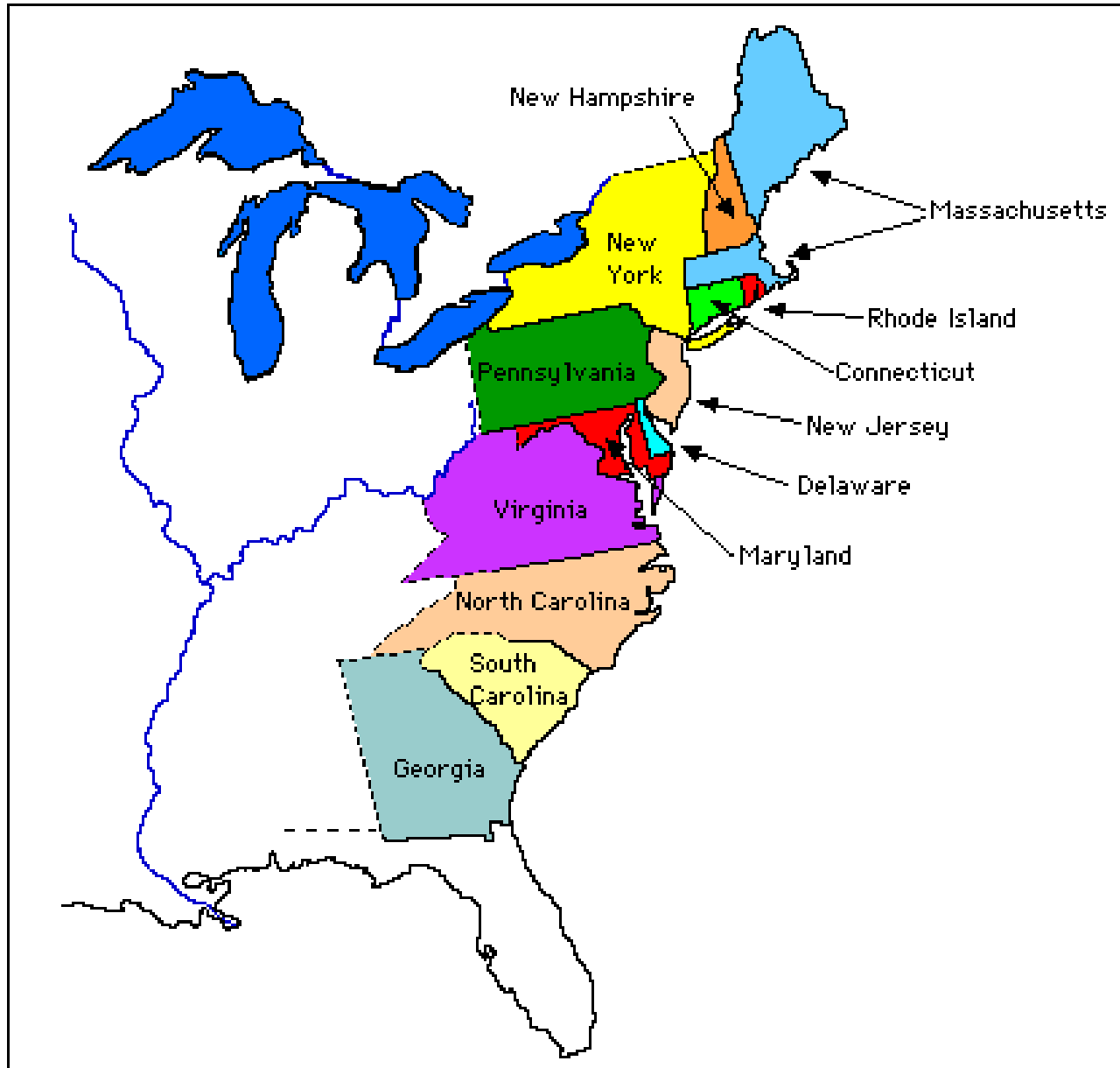
This image shows Four Dollars in Continental currency in 1776. This note was issued from Philadelphia. It entitles the bearer to receive four Spanish dollars, or the equivalent value in gold or silver. This image is courtesy of jeanlannes.com.

The Articles did not require the states to send money to Congress.



Congress could not collect money to pay for the activities of the national government. The states sent very little money, and Congress could not force them to send more. This image shows 12 pence in Massachusetts State currency in 1776. This note was engraved by Paul Revere. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The “United States” was acting like thirteen independent countries.



To the average citizen, this arrangement was working well. To those trying to run the country, this was not a workable situation. This image is courtesy of philadelphiarecollections.com.

George Washington called the Confederation Congress “a shadow without substance.”



It became clear that the Continental Congress could do little in the interests of the states. Congress kept talking about a national authority that did not really exist. This image of *George Washington, Lafayette and Tilghman at Yorktown* hangs in the Senate Chamber of the Maryland State House. This image is courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

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