

AMERICA'S REVOLUTIONARY TEMPEST

At the time of the American Revolution, Great Britain possessed 21 colonies and territories on the North American mainland and 30 throughout "British America." Of these, 13 chose to become independent. When they did, their population was considered to be among the most free and prosperous in the world. And despite their "no taxation without representation" mantra, none of them wished to be represented in the British Parliament. To understand why they wished to revolt, we shall begin the course by peeking into a meeting of their Continental Congress in June, 1775.

Before July, 1776 Congress had declared that the colonies were no longer bound by Parliament's laws, the King had declared the colonies to be in rebellion, fighting had been taking place for over a year, and 9 colonial assemblies, approximately 80 county and town meetings, and the Chief Justice of South Carolina all had declared independence from Britain. In such context we shall consider the meaning and effects of the Declaration of Independence.

Within the 13 colonies there was a great deal of diversity, and many people remained loyal to the Crown. Some historians consider the Revolution to be our nation's first civil war. To perceive our Revolution accurately, we must examine the Loyalist opposition. We also must examine Slavery and its indelible birthmark on our Revolutionary history.

As a percentage of our population, the rate of American casualties during the Revolutionary War exceeded the casualty rate of any war in our history other than the Civil War. The Revolution touched virtually everyone within the rebellious colonies. The War and the years of Confederation will be subjects for our consideration. So, too, will be the contentious 1787 "Federal Convention" at Philadelphia and the Constitution for the United States of America that the Convention proposed.

In one session we'll convene as delegates of the Evergreen State to consider whether to ratify the proposed Constitution. Patriots such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison supported it. Yet initially other Revolutionary luminaries, such as Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, George Mason and Patrick Henry, opposed it. We'll see what we think. Finally we shall examine the nation as it emerges from the travails of its birth--a nation that differs significantly from that which many Revolutionary leaders had envisioned.

The course will proceed through lecture and discussion. Each participant may choose the level of active and passive engagement with which he or she is comfortable. All students should read the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. In the first

meeting of the course a bibliography of recommended books will be available to support further study by any participant who has an interest in doing so.

Leader: Robert Nolan is an attorney and retired executive who has a history degree from the University of Scranton, where he is on the adjunct faculty, and a law degree from Harvard.

Thursdays: 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., 8 weeks: March 1 through April 19

Location: Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville