

A Note Making Peace on a Global Scale

The "Preliminaries of Peace" ending the American War of Independence were signed in Paris on 30 November 1782, dispatched to Philadelphia and ratified by the Third Confederation Congress on 15 April 1783. On 11 April already Congress had issued a proclamation announcing the cessation of hostilities between the US and Great Britain on the territory of the United States. This news in hand, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and John Jay met privately with David Hartley, the official British Peace Commissioner in his rooms at the Hotel de York in Paris, now 53, rue Jacob, on 3 September 1783, and signed a treaty entitled "The Definitive Treaty of Peace between his Britannic Majesty and the United States of America." The treaty, which declared the US "to be free Sovereign and independent States", was at once dispatched to the United States, since Article 10 required ratification and exchange of the ratified copies within six months.

Congress was scheduled to convene at the Maryland State House in Annapolis on 26 November 1783, and the treaty was duly laid before it on 13 December 1783. By 12 January 1784, however, delegates from only seven of the 13 states had arrived. Under the 1781 Articles of Confederation, a quorum required the presence of delegates from at least nine of the 13 states. On 13 January, the delegates from Connecticut arrived, but Congress was still one delegate short of a quorum. Only the arrival of Richard Beresford, a delegate from South Carolina who had been sick in Philadelphia, the next day, allowed Congress to declare on 14 January 1784 that "having seen and considered the definitive articles aforesaid have approved, ratified and confirmed and by these presents do approve, ratify and confirm the said articles and every part and clause thereof." Once it was signed by Thomas Mifflin, *President of the United States in Congress Assembled*, Congress "Resolved, That the said ratification be transmitted with all possible despatch, under the care of a faithful person, to our ministers in France ... to be exchanged." Once news of the ratification of the treaty by Congress had arrived in London, the House of Commons ratified the treaty on 9 April 1784 as well. The exchange of the ratified treaties took place on 12 May 1784, and the process of making peace was completed with the deposition of the treaties in the diplomatic archives of the warring parties shortly thereafter.

A "Declaration Signed in Paris by the American Commissioners" delivered to Benjamin Franklin and John Adams at the office of *comte de Vergennes* at Versailles in the morning of 20 January 1783, which also covered France, Spain, and the Netherlands, stipulated that "That such Vessells and Effects, as should be taken, in the Channell and in the North Seas, after the Space of twelve Days, to be computed from the Ratification of the said Preliminary Articles should be restored on all Sides; that the Term should be one Month from the Channell and North Seas, as far as the Canary Islands inclusively, whether in the Ocean or the Mediterranean; two Months from the said Canary Islands, as far as the Equinoctial Line,

or Equator, and lastly five Months in all other Parts of the World, without any Exception or any other more particular Description of Time or Place.”

The declaration was postdated to 3 February 1783, which meant that all combat activity on the territory of the United States ended *de jure* at midnight of 4/5 April 1783, two months or 60 days after 3 February 1783. The pre-dating to 3 February was not accidental: the “phasing in” of the cessation of hostilities gave the warring parties not only until midnight 3/4 July 1783, to inform their forces word-wide of the armistice, but it also meant that on 4 July, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, arms would rest everywhere.