

1783: Subject or Citizen?

International exhibition to mark the 225th anniversary of the Treaty of Paris

**Library and Archives Canada
National Archives and Records Administration**

Backgrounder

The Treaty of Paris, signed on September 3, 1783, formally ended the American Revolutionary War between Great Britain and the United States and left an enduring legacy on North America. The Treaty formalized the political aspirations of the Thirteen Colonies and paved the way for the creation of the American Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the crucial nation-building discussions of America's Confederation Period.

It also provided the foundation for what was to become the Canadian nation, addressing such issues as boundaries, fishing rights and financial compensation of Loyalists. As such it shaped the political development and social attitudes of the remaining British North American colonies. The Treaty led to the creation of new international relationships and reshaped the lives of North Americans.

The Treaty of Paris is considered by Americans as one of the most important of American founding documents, part of an elite group that also includes the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

An International Partnership:

1783: Subject or Citizen? brings together for the first time Library and Archives Canada (LAC) with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in a collaborative educational initiative to mark the 225th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

In 2006, Library and Archives Canada and the National Archives and Records Administration began discussing a project of mutual interest pertaining to the treaty and its impact on North America. Both institutions engaged professional curators, historians and designers to research and develop the project, which would feature rare and unique documents from both institutions.

What the Exhibition is About:

The exhibition tells a story of the lives of everyday North Americans, white, black, British, German, French and of First Nations origin who watched their world greatly affected by a civil war, known as the American Revolution. After the Treaty of Paris was signed, North Americans had to make life-altering choices with lasting consequences, either whether to remain subjects of the British Empire or become citizens of the new independent state. The anniversary of the signing of this Treaty affords us the opportunity to explore life in this tumultuous era.

The exhibition focuses mainly on the impact of the treaty on individuals as well as the national and the international community. The evolution of the relationships behind the treaty is organized generally in thematic periods featuring the voices, values and visions that are representative of each unique relationship:

New Identities:

Eighteenth-Century British American World
Revolution: First American Civil War

New Relationships:

Treaty Negotiations
The Treaty of Paris, 1783

Reshaping of North American lives:

Brave New World: What the Treaty meant for the people of North America, the African-Americans, the Loyalists, the Patriots and the issues of property and person.

First Nations in the wake of the Treaty of Paris
National impacts of the Treaty.

What is featured in the exhibition:

1783: Subject or Citizen incorporates many valuable archival treasures from the vaults of both institutions, including the actual Treaty of Paris which has never before been seen or exhibited in Canada and rarely displayed in Washington D.C.

In addition to these rarely seen documents are dozens of other historical documents, maps, plans, books, paintings, diaries, letters and publications from the collections of Library and Archives Canada and the National Archives and Records Administration. Some of the items include maps from 1755, stamps from 1765, a copy of the Loyalist Oath as well as the Quebec Herald from August 1790. These are records of everyday life and depict how certain groups and individuals coped in an unsure world.

Information is provided on how these groups were affected in the aftermath of the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

First Nations: The American Revolution created a civil war amongst the Iroquois Six nations breaking hundreds of years of peace within the Iroquois Confederacy. Iroquois nations aligned themselves with both the British and the Americans resulting in both loyalists and patriot First Nations peoples. Iroquois loyalists were granted lands in the remaining British colonies particularly in what is now Eastern and Central Ontario. The exhibition highlights many documents pertaining to not only the Iroquois but also other First Nations peoples as well.

African-Americans: Many free and enslaved African Americans fought with both loyalist and patriot forces in the American Revolution. For example, in 1783, thousands of Blacks from New York were transported to Nova Scotia and settled along the south shore of that province. The tragic example of the slave Mary Randon, featured in the exhibition, shows how black families could be torn apart.

French Canadians: The exhibition notes that French Canada was important to both British and American authorities. American forces actually occupied Montréal until 1776 and some French Canadians even joined American Regiments. Documents in the exhibition recount that Benjamin Franklin wanted Québec as part of the United States and tried unsuccessfully to negotiate the acquisition of Québec in the Treaty.

Loyalists: Loyalist refugees migrated and settled in many places throughout the British colonies. Some even returned to Britain or set up shop in the lucrative trade of the West Indies. The colonies of Québec (later Upper and lower Canada), Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick

offered grants of free land and equipment which made immigration attractive to poor and rich loyalists alike.

The exhibition will premier at Library and Archives Canada on May 6, 2008 and after a four-month run will travel to Washington D.C. to open in October.