

**Era 3: Despair and Repair: *Economic Loss, Revolution, and New Beginnings, 1740s-1783***

<i>Higher Education</i>	A new group of Harvard educated individuals that used their training to advance society both outside of and through religion.	<p><i>The coming of the American Revolution brought economic and social turmoil to Boston and all of British North America. The Revolutionary Era forged a new persona: the American. These Founders laid the groundwork for a budding nation and pushed forward Boston's innovative economy and society.</i></p> <p><i>... Stagnation ... Revolution! ... Siege, Occupation, and Evacuation ... Mass exodus out of Boston ... Collapse of West Indies Trade ... Spread of Enlightenment thinking ... The Rebirth- a new elite comes to town ...</i></p> <p><i>Repopulation, reorientation, and renewal...</i></p>
<i>Social and Scientific Interplay</i>	The ideas of the Enlightenment intertwined to create a new role for the sciences' in society.	
<i>Local Government: Law and Policy Making</i>	The drafting of the Massachusetts State Constitution and the formation of laws in the Commonwealth set the tone for the next three centuries.	
<i>Local Government: Leadership</i>	Certain politicians worked towards developing a newly independent Commonwealth.	
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	The entrepreneurial leadership of many individuals before, through, and after the revolution was critical in Boston's economic repair and ascension.	

### ***The American Revolution and Boston***

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Boston was the largest port town in British North America. Here one could find a thriving coastal trade, burgeoning participation in the triangular trade fed by the cod and rum industries, Long Wharf reached out to greet larger ships and encourage Boston's connection between sea and land.

In 1743 Boston led all other the colonial towns in shipbuilding, finished goods, meatpacking, and a series of other trades as well as shipping. Over the years of this era, the town lost its economic stranglehold on these industries due to war, high taxes, out-migration, pauperism, and the compounding of all these problems. Boston was a center of inter-colonial and trans-Atlantic trade in 1730, but as New York, Philadelphia and a host of other towns grew, Boston lost its colonial hegemony. The eve of the revolution found Boston in a declining position, struggling economically as it thrived as the beating heart of the revolution.

While the American Revolution began in Boston, with the stirring ideas of John and Sam Adams and the actions of the Sons of Liberty, Boston was struggling by 1774. The Boston Port Act, part of the Intolerable Acts, closed the harbor in 1774. These troubles compounded, leading to the first battles of the American Revolution in 1775. The Battle of Concord & Lexington in April of that year followed by the Battle of Bunker Hill in June demonstrated the resolve and determination of colonists to attain their freedoms. As the British held Boston, the newly formed Continental Army besieged the town. A once thriving major seaport had been crippled and closed, smallpox scourged the population, and massive outflows of people escaped the tightening grip of the British Royal Army. Under the leadership of George Washington, the Continental Army found success in expelling the British from the town, sending the British army, and many Loyalists away. Boston, after liberation, was a shambles, and 80%, or more, of its population had left or died. Slowly, new and returning citizens came to the town, though the town didn't return to its pre-war population until nearly 1790. The war dragged on for 8 years. A new revolutionary elite from outside the town, like John Lowell of Newburyport, moved to the town and took lead positions. Boston leaders helped to initiate a number of new practices and new institutions for the new nation.

### **Era 3 Cocktail**

Bringing together great individuals such as Paul Revere, Dr. Joseph Warren, John Adams, and John Hancock, the importance of *Entrepreneurial* leadership in Boston was vital in the prevalent revolutionary spirit, the eventual economic revitalization, and willingness to venture great risks in exchange for uncertain rewards. Many of the leaders were *educated at Harvard College*, where they were exposed to more than the religious teachings of the previous era, but new thoughts garnered through Enlightenment thought of humanity. This Enlightenment thought pushed forward the importance of a *social and scientific interplay*, the influences of Locke, Newton, Kant, and Montesquieu all weighed on decisions ranging from Harvard Medical School to thoughts on government found in the Massachusetts State Constitution. The Enlightenment also gave the anti-slavery

cause a push; Phillis Wheatley, a Black Boston slave was first given voice in an important struggle in 1773; and under the new 1780 state Constitution the judiciary ended slavery (the first of the 13 states to do this). In addition to the state constitution, the establishment of the new nation meant that *local government* was not only important; it was also modified and tested in a new form in this era.

Boston provided some of the greatest minds of the revolutionary period, a group of individuals that provided much of the framework and basis of the country that was to be. Education, politics, and new visions of commerce were the driving forces of Boston's repopulation and rise back to a town of economic import and power. Though much of the era found Boston diminished and lacking in the economic vitality that it had in Eras One and Two, the social capital gained during the era combined with the leadership of the revolutionaries, the desire to administrate innovatively, and the need to push forward into a new era. What drove these innovations across the spectrum were revamped and new drivers through education, industry, and government.

## **Driving Towards a New Nation**

### ***Local Leadership/ Entrepreneurial***

Names like Paul Revere, John Adams, John Hancock, and other 'founders' hailed and led from Boston. This leadership allowed for Boston's return to economic prominence in later eras through the charting of new courses of trade and novel financial institutions. In the formative process of creating a new federal government the influences of such men as John Adams can be seen in the very form that the fledgling young nation's constitution took. Collaborating across the young nation, these leaders worked with other regional leaders to establish new alliances, modes of thought, and structures of government. The leadership at home helped to reestablish an economy to draw newcomers to the evacuated town- rebuilding and growing into the new Federal era.

### ***Higher Education***

For the new republic to be successful the populace had to be educated. Though the Puritan ethos restricted the expansion of Harvard by slowing the opening of the **Harvard Medical School** the role of higher education played an important role in influencing decisions of Bostonians. This influence can be seen in the opening of **Academy of Arts and Science** in 1780. From a very early period higher education interplayed with social developments in the town, producing a unique flavor of government and society influenced by educational progress.

### ***Social Science Interplay***

The reasoned thought of the Enlightenment brought a new way of looking at matters in society. The influences of Locke, Newton, Kant, and Montesquieu all weighed on the decisions from the foundations of the **Harvard Medical School** to the thoughts and beliefs passed into law through the **Massachusetts State Constitution**. This moved social consciousnesses further away from the strict tenants of the faith and allowed a new cultural dialogue and course to be set.

### ***External Force: Caused This to Happen in Boston***

The forces of war, disease, and out migration all influenced the direction and path of Boston leading into and out of the American Revolution. The war shifted power relations throughout the Atlantic world, forcing the colonists to find new trade routes, means of governance, and alliances- all of these factors drove new innovations in civic life, education, and identity. Enlightenment thought can be seen as an influential component upon this mental reorientation- changing the form of education, science, religious life, and politics. The **trial of Phillis Wheatley**'s intellect was based on scientific reason rather than racial preconceptions; this mode of thought was promoted and developed through throughout the Enlightenment era.

### ***Local Government: Law/Policy***

Much of the foundations of American government arose from the Constitutional work that John Adams undertook in drafting the **Massachusetts State Constitution** in 1780. Rejecting Pennsylvania's and other states' unicameral constitutional arrangements, Adams envision a three-branched, bi-cameral system based on the notion of checks and balances and republican democracy. Comprised of a two-house upper and lower legislature, a judicial branch, and an executive branch, in the Massachusetts State Constitution a new form and role for government was conceptualized and framed. This became a model for other states constitutions and ultimately the Constitution of the United States.

### **Paths to War; Roads Leading Away From Boston**

During and after the revolution, Boston dealt with a new group of leaders, a new sense of freedom, and the realities of a crippled economy, destitute infrastructure, and a war-worn populace. Innovation followed Revolution in education, government, and the sciences, leading the way towards a newly revitalized Boston economy. Bostonians once again mastered the seas and the ports of the world began to see the new flag of the United States of America sailing in on Boston-based vessels.

#### **The Trial of Phillis Wheatley 1773**

Phillis Wheatley was brought to Boston at the age of eight as a slave from West Africa. As a young girl, Phillis quickly learned the English language and displayed a remarkable intelligence. After reading Milton and Pope, Wheatley started composing her own poetry while still in her early teens. Phillis' owner, Susannah Wheatley sought to publish a volume of Phillis' works. But no publisher would take the risk of printing a slave's poems. Many doubted whether Africans were capable of things like artistry. Mrs. Wheatley assembled 18 of Boston's most preeminent leaders to examine Phillis' intelligence and skills.

Susannah Wheatley was highly influential in Phillis' literary career and provided *local funding*. She had faith in Phillis' literary talents and pushed to have Phillis' poetry published in local newspapers. Ultimately Susanna would use her connections to assemble a diverse group of Boston's leaders to verify Phillis' work.

Phillis Wheatley's inquisitors were well educated men influenced by *external factors*, namely the Enlightenment. Philosophers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century often reasoned that Africans were less intelligent and less artistic than Europeans. Enlightenment thinkers relied on logic and observation, and they saw no evidence of African accomplishments. Phillis Wheatley acted as a *local leader* for Africans; during her questioning,

she demonstrated Africans could be intelligent and artistic. The 18 leaders unanimously verified that Phillis Wheatley was the true author of her poems. Her volume *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* was published the following year in London. Phillis Wheatley was freed in 1774.

### **Harvard Medical School: Established 1782**

*The third medical school in the U.S. -- a surprisingly slow start for an otherwise innovative city.*

Harvard was the nation's first college, but not its first medical school. The College of Philadelphia claimed that honor when it began offering medical education 1765, followed shortly thereafter by King's College in New York. Despite Bostonians' demonstrated interest in medicine and an awareness of their neighbors to the South, it was another 17 years before Harvard created its medical department.

Bostonians had long been interested in medicine and disease. Cotton Mather and the black slave Onesimus experimented with a small pox vaccine in 1721, and in 1735 the city's first medical society was formed. A wealthy doctor bequeathed funds to Harvard College to establish a chair in anatomy and surgery in 1770, though they were insufficient for the task and no chair was established. It was also around this time that Harvard's Anatomical Club was founded. Yet still, there was no place in Boston for interested students to study medicine.

In 1780 John Warren, a graduate of the College and an influential surgeon of the Revolutionary War (brother of martyred hero Gen. Joseph Warren), began giving public anatomy lectures attended by the President of Harvard College and members of its senior class. These lectures were "an innovation of more than ordinary significance." (Norwood, p. 170). Within a year Warren's detailed proposal to establish a medical professorship had been accepted by Harvard College and Warren himself was appointed its first professor of anatomy and surgery. But even after its founding in 1782, Harvard continued to lag behind other medical schools in funding and outfitting its institution.

Why did Boston make such slow progress in establishing and supporting a medical school? One scholar suggests that a prejudice against the dissection of human bodies, a necessary component of medical education, may be responsible. It is also possible that a feud between two of Harvard's first three medical professors, John Warren and Benjamin Waterhouse, may have consumed the energy and attention of these potential innovators.

In founding their medical school, Bostonians followed the example of their predecessors in Philadelphia and New York. A few entrepreneurs, including John Warren, initiated medical education. *Inter-regional collaboration* was critical. Warren wrote to Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia asking about their medical faculty and used Rush's answers to help draft his winning proposal. With reports of the happenings at other medical schools appearing in local newspapers, Bostonians were no doubt aware of their laggard status making *inter-regional competition* a factor. And like its predecessors, Boston's first medical school was established in conjunction with an existing institute of *higher education*.

ERA THREE

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