

Chapter 11

Government Starts Under Constitution

GEORGE WASHINGTON BECOMES THE FIRST PRESIDENT

SINCE THE CONSTITUTION did not specify how the electors should be chosen, the procedure was left to the decision of the states. Should Presidential electors be selected by the state legislatures or by the direct vote of the people? Pennsylvania was the first state to enact an electoral law in September of 1788. The people were to vote for the men who were to choose a President and Vice President. Delaware and Maryland did likewise.

In Georgia, Connecticut, and South Carolina, state legislatures chose the electors. In New Jersey the governor and his council picked the men. Although New York had ratified the Constitution, the upper and lower houses of the legislature could not agree on the method of election. That state lost its votes for the first President. Members for both the Senate and House of Representatives had also to be elected before the electoral votes could be counted. In some states Congressmen and electors were voted upon at the same time and in others at separate elections. It was not easy to establish a new government and start it functioning.

On the first Wednesday of January in 1789, the first election took place under the new Constitution. On that day seventy-three electors were chosen to vote for the first President. However, when they met on February 4 in their respective states to cast their votes, four men were missing. One from Maryland was confined to his bed with gout. Another was prevented "from attending by the ice in the river and bay." Two from Virginia failed to appear at the electoral meeting. When, according to the Constitution, the ballots were opened at a session of Congress and counted, every one of the sixty-nine electors had voted for George Washington for President. John Adams had a bare majority for Vice President. Messengers were dispatched on horseback to Virginia and Massachusetts to notify Washington and Adams of their election.

Washington hesitated to accept the Presidency because he was fifty-seven years old. After almost a lifetime of public service, he really wanted to retire to private life and spend his days quietly on his own plantation near the Potomac River. On April 16, 1789 he wrote this entry in his diary:



The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, Mount Vernon, Virginia

MOUNT VERNON, VIRGINIA – HOME OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

Although Washington answered his country's call in both war and peace, he always expressed regret at leaving his home overlooking the Potomac River.

About ten o'clock, I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity; and, with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York, with the best disposition to render service to my country in obedience to its call, but with less hope of answering its expectations.

His journey to New York was one continuous ovation. When his carriage entered towns along the way, church bells clanged a welcome and cannon fired salutes. At the frontier of Pennsylvania, Washington was met by the governor of the state, Thomas Mifflin, who had been one of his officers during the war. At Chester, where he stopped for breakfast, troops of cavalry were waiting to escort the new President into Philadelphia. A beautiful white horse was led out for

Washington to ride, and the procession moved along the road with General St. Clair in front. About 20,000 people lined the streets and cheered, "Long live the father of his people!"

On a sunny afternoon Washington stood on the banks of the Delaware, a stream he had crossed twelve years before, through floating ice, when on his way to Trenton. His decision on that stormy Christmas night had turned the fortunes of war at a dark hour. At the bridge the women of Trenton gathered to honor the President. They had an arch built, entwined with laurel and evergreen, and inscribed: "The Defender of the Mothers Will Be the Protector of the Daughters." Young girls wearing white dresses and crowns of blossoms strewed flowers in his path over the bridge. They sang an ode composed

for the occasion by an officer who had served under Washington.

Early on the morning of April 23, Washington arrived at Elizabethport, New Jersey, to complete his journey by water. Here he boarded a barge manned by thirteen master pilots dressed in white uniforms. The troops of his overland escort remained behind and fired salutes from the Jersey shore. The bay was thronged with craft, large and small, and the air was filled with music from the bands on board. Every ship in the harbor was decorated for the event, except one, a

Spanish man-of-war. As Washington's barge passed by this vessel, the flags of every nation were suddenly displayed and the members of the crew manned the sails and stood at attention behind their guns. Cheers rose from the crowded boats.

Thousands of people lined the New York shore to greet the new President with loud huzzas and gun salutes. In the evening the sky was a blaze of fireworks. Throngs walked the streets shouting and singing.

The inauguration took place on April 30, 1789. At nine o'clock crowds gathered in churches throughout the city, asking divine

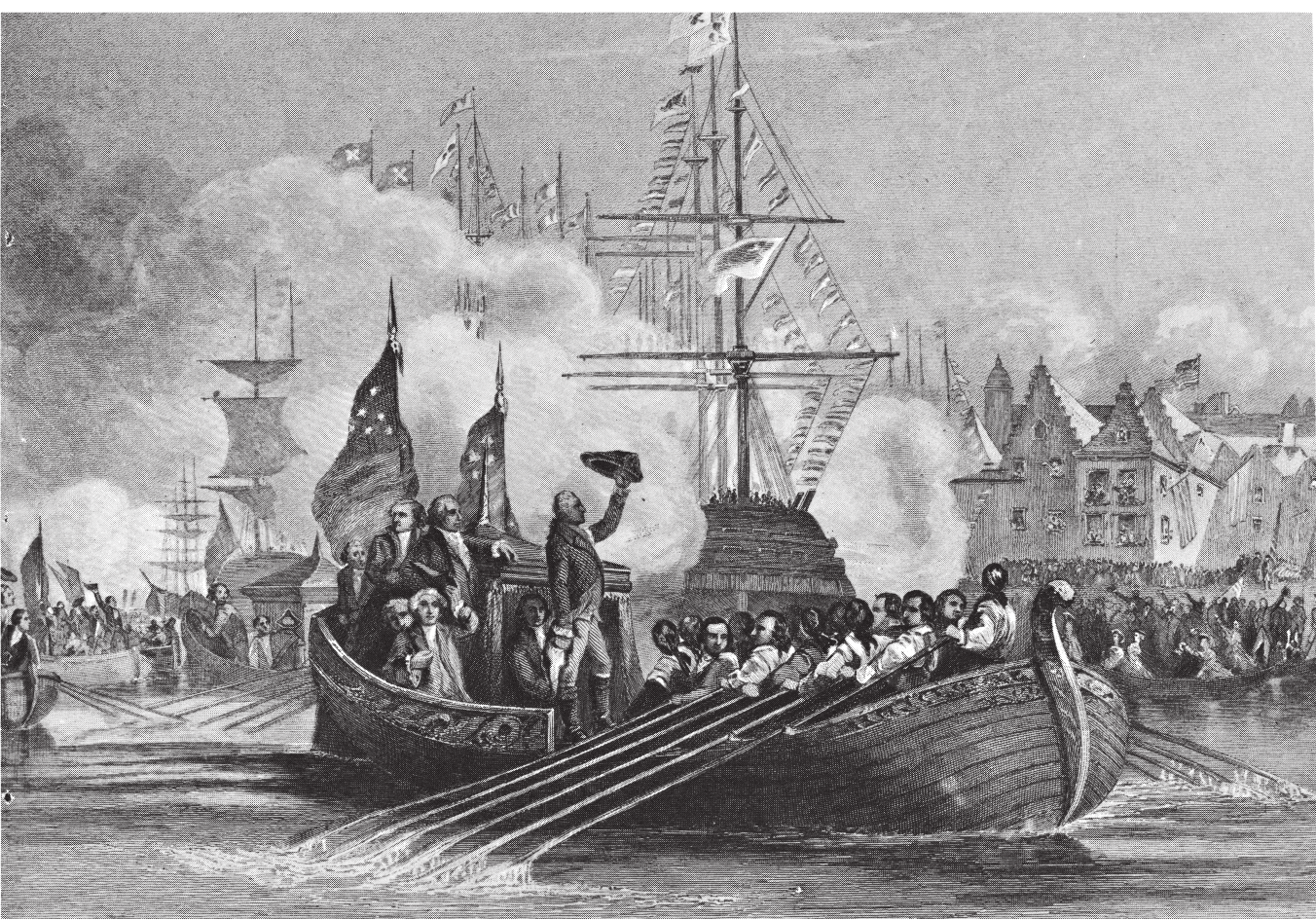
WASHINGTON'S RECEPTION ON THE BRIDGE AT TRENTON

On the bridge over a stream Washington's army had crossed on that snowy December 26, 1776, the newly elected President was greeted by mothers and daughters who strewed flowers in his path while singing an ode composed for the occasion:

Welcome, mighty chief, once more!
Welcome to this grateful shore!

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WASHINGTON ENROUTE TO HIS INAUGURATION

Decorated boats, large and small, joined Washington's triumphal crossing from New Jersey to New York for his inauguration. At a signal, a Spanish ship suddenly hoisted the flags of many nations in the rigging, the gunners fired salutes, and the sailors dressed in their best uniforms stood at attention as Washington's barge passed nearby. The waterfront was crowded with men, women and children shouting and waving their greetings to the new President.

guidance for the first President of the new nation. At noon the procession formed in front of Washington's house on Cherry Street. The parade was led by American soldiers in fancy dress uniforms. Scotch infantrymen in their plaid kilts marched to the lively tunes of their bagpipes. Opposite Federal Hall soldiers formed in two lines, between which Washington and his party were conducted into the

building. In the Senate chamber, John Adams, the Vice President, received them.

"Sir," said Adams, "the Senate and the House of Representatives are ready to attend you to take the oath required by the Constitution which will be administered by the Chancellor of the State of New York."

Washington replied, "I am ready to proceed."

He was then conducted to a balcony

overlooking the crowd waiting outside. Washington stood in the center of the balcony between two pillars. Government officials and a few old friends found places to stand in the gallery. Not far from Washington stood Baron Friedrich von Steuben who had drilled the General's ragged continentals at Valley Forge during one of the darkest periods of the war. With his hand on the Bible, Washington spoke his oath of office slowly and distinctly for all to hear. The crowd listened in tense silence:

I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Then the Chancellor turned to the crowd and exclaimed, "Long live George Washington, President of the United States!"

Resounding cheers filled the air. The President bowed repeatedly until he was led away to the Senate Chamber to give his inaugural address. His speech was rather brief. In it he expressed the wish "that the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality, and the preeminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens and command the respect of the world."

Washington asked again the same favor that he had requested when he took command of the American armies during the War for Independence. He asked to serve his country without pay. He would accept only the money needed for "such actual expenditures as the public good may be thought to require."

DESCRIPTION OF WASHINGTON'S INAUGURATION IN THE "GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES," May 2, 1789

On Thursday last, agreeable to the resolution of both houses of Congress, the inauguration of THE PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES was solemnized.

At nine o'clock, A.M. the people assembled in the several churches, with the Clergy of their respective denominations, to implore the blessing of Heaven upon the new government, its favor and protection to the PRESIDENT, and success and acceptance to his administration.

About twelve o'clock the procession moved from the house of the President in Cherry Street – through Queen, Great Dock and Broad Streets, to the Federal State House . . . When within a proper distance of the State House, the troops formed a line on both sides of the way. The PRESIDENT, passing through, was conducted into the Gallery adjoining the Senate Chamber, and fronting Broad-Street, where, in the presence of an immense concourse of citizens, the Oath, prescribed by the Constitution, was administered to him by the Hon. R.R. LIVINGSTON, Esq. Chancellor of the State of New York.

The Chancellor then proclaimed him THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, which was followed by the instant discharge of 13 cannon, and loud repeated shouts. THE PRESIDENT bowing to the people, the air again rang with their acclamations. He then retired with the two Houses to the Senate Chamber, where he made his inaugural address.

THE PRESIDENT, accompanied by His Excellency the Vice-President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and both Houses of Congress, then went to St. Paul's Chapel, where divine service was performed, by the Right Rev. DR. PROVOST, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in this State, and Chaplain to the Senate.

The religious solemnity being ended, the President was escorted to his residence.

The people celebrated far into the night with fireworks, laughter, and song. The ship of state was launched under an

untried system of government. Would the sailing be rough or smooth? The world waited to see.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT BEGINS TO FUNCTION

TWO DAYS AFTER Washington was inaugurated, a leading newspaper editor wrote that “to strengthen and complete the union of the states, to extend and protect their commerce, to explore and arrange the national funds, to restore and establish public credit, . . . will require the energies of the patriots and sages of our country.”

For advisors in the executive department, Washington chose four “patriots and sages” who had served their country well. The first Secretary of State was Thomas Jefferson who had begun his public career in the House of Burgesses in Virginia. He was a member of the Continental Congress when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. During the last two years of the war he had been the governor of Virginia. After the treaty of peace was signed with Great Britain, he spent five years in France as the first ambassador from the United States to that nation. He was well versed in both domestic and foreign affairs.

For Secretary of War, Washington chose Henry Knox, an artillery officer who had fought for independence from the Battle of Bunker Hill to the siege of Yorktown. The first Attorney General of Virginia, Edmund Randolph, became the first Attorney General of the United States. He, too, had been governor of Virginia and was a delegate from that state to the Constitutional Convention.

With nearly everyone in debt to someone else, and few able to pay, the most

difficult job was that of Secretary of the Treasury. This post fell to Alexander Hamilton, thirty-two years old and the youngest man in the Cabinet. When Hamilton served as Washington’s aide-de-camp during the war, the General had discovered his talents for organization and finance. Hamilton was the only delegate from New York who had signed the Constitution.

The first branch of the new Government to go into operation was the legislative department. The first Congress elected under the Constitution met in the new Federal Hall in New York City on the first Wednesday in March of 1789. The ringing of bells and the roaring of cannon at sunrise, at noon, and at sunset celebrated this historic event. Immediately, the members began with the most pressing need of the new Government — money. Faced with the necessity of providing revenue to support the Government, Congressmen turned to taxes on goods imported to the United States. Not only would duties bring in funds to pay the expenses of operating the Government, but such imposts would encourage manufacturers to go into business and produce articles needed by the people. The import tax would have to be high enough to make the imported goods more expensive than those produced in this country.

The happenings in Congress were reported in the papers of the day and were read with much interest by the people.

The revenue bill was still being debated in Congress when Washington was inaugurated and for weeks after he became President.

The House agreed to reduce the duty on molasses from 5 to 2½ cents per gallon; to tax cotton 3 cents per pound; and to add playing cards to the list at a duty of 10 cents a pack.

Although the executive branch was started when the first President took office, Congress was busy setting up various departments. The passage of the Judiciary Bill established a Supreme Court at the seat of the National Government and branches in districts of the states. These courts could be reached easily by the people living in the districts. John Jay, a lawyer who helped to negotiate the peace treaty with Great Britain, became the first Chief Justice of the United States. All of this business was attended to during the first session of Congress.

The site for a national capital caused much debate in Congress. The southerners objected to New York City because it was so far away from their homes. They wanted a more central location. Offers of free land from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia poured into Congress.

The editor of a Maryland newspaper printed this comment on February 4, 1791:

Where will Congress find a resting place? They have led a vagrant life ever since 1774, when they first met to oppose Great Britain. Every place they have taken to reside in has been made too hot to hold them. Either the enemy would not let them stay, or the people made a clamor because they were too far north or too far south and obliged them to remove. If three removes are as bad as one fire, then Congress may be said to have been burnt out several times.

After two years of bickering, Washington announced in a speech that a district ten miles square had been selected on the Potomac River to become the permanent seat of the Government. The city had been laid out "agreeable to a plan which will be placed before Congress." Early in 1791, the Government moved to Philadelphia, nearer the site of the new capital. The new capital was

named Washington in honor of the first President.

As the three departments of Government began to function successfully, the people gained more confidence in the Constitution and in themselves. With renewed courage, they tackled the problems of providing employment, restoring commerce, and paying their bills.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE COOPERATE TO REGAIN PROSPERITY

A WAVE OF PATRIOTISM swept over the country when the Constitution was ratified. Signs of better times brought hope to the people. The manufacturers, beginning in a small way, were much encouraged when both Washington and Adams wore suits of cloth woven in the United States at their inauguration. Mrs. Washington wore with pride, before leaving Mount Vernon, a dress made of calico woven and printed in New England.

Five and a half months after his inauguration, Washington left New York City for Boston on a tour of the New England states. His eye witness accounts of mills visited, as written in his daily journal, presented a picture of early manufacturing in that section of the country:

Tuesday, October 20, Hartford, Connecticut

After breakfast, accompanied by Colonel Wadsworth, Mr. Ellsworth, and Colonel Jesse Root, I viewed the Woollen Manufactory at this place, which seems to be going on with spirit. Their Broadcloths are not of the first quality, as yet, but they are good; as are their Coatings, Cassimeres, Serges and Everlastings; of the first, that is, broadcloth, I ordered a suit to be sent to me at New York — and of the latter a whole piece, to make breeches for my servants. All the parts of this business are performed at the Manufactory except

the spinning — this is done by the Country people who are paid by the cut.

Wednesday, October 28, Boston, Massachusetts

Went, after an early breakfast, to visit the duck manufacture, which appeared to be carrying on with spirit, and in a prosperous way (Duck is cloth like light-weight canvas.) They have manufactured 32 pieces of Duck of 30 or 40 yards each in a week . . . They have 28 looms at work, and 14 Girls spinning with Both hands (the flax being fastened to their waist). Children (girls) turn the wheels for them, and with this assistance, each spinner can turn out 14lbs. of Thread per day when they stick to it, but as they are paid by the piece, or work they do, there is no other restraint upon them but to come at 8 o'clock in the morning, and return at 6 in the evening.

Friday, October 30, Lynn to Ipswich

After passing Beverly, 2 miles, we come to the Cotton Manufactory, . . . In this Manufactory they have the new Invented Carding and Spinning Machines . . . one of which spins 84 threads at a time by one person. The Cotton is prepared for these Machines by being first (lightly) drawn to a thread on the common wheel; there is also another machine for doubling and twisting the threads for particular cloths; this also does many at a time. For winding the Cotton from the Spindles, and preparing it for the warp, there is a Reel which expedites the work greatly. A number of Looms (15 or 16) were at work with spring shuttles, which do more than double work. In Short, the whole seemed perfect, and the Cotton stuffs which they turn out, excellent of their kind; warp and filling both are of Cotton.

Washington's description of these three mills traced three steps in the growth of manufacturing during his term of office. In Hartford spinning was still done in homes of farmers and weaving was done in the factory. In Boston spinning was done in a mill. In the factory near Beverly carding, spinning, and weaving were completed by machinery in one place. The President was impressed with all of the new machinery

and its possibilities in developing manufacturing in this country. He favored a duty on foreign goods to protect the infant manufacturers. The tax would be high enough to raise the price of the imported article above the price of the article produced at home.

The members of the German Society of New York agreed to appear on every New Year's Day. They would dress entirely in garments manufactured in the United States. They would buy American-made products instead of imported articles whenever possible. Each member agreed to pay an extra fee to provide a fund for prizes to encourage manufacturing in the nation.

Other societies helped to increase the products made in the United States. The Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures and Useful Arts was organized in this way in 1787:

For the better employment of the industrious poor, and in order to render the society as useful as possible, a subscription, for sums not less than ten pounds from any one person or company, shall be immediately opened to all persons whatever, for the purpose of establishing factories in such places as shall be thought suitable. These subscribers shall be entitled to all the profits attending the business and shall be the sole owners of all the lots of ground, buildings, implements, raw materials, and other things, purchased or paid for out of their subscriptions which shall be called the manufacturing fund.

The Pennsylvania Society offered twenty dollars in cash or a gold plate worth that much with an appropriate inscription to:

such person as shall exhibit on or before the thirty-first day of December, 1788, a model of a most useful engine or machine to be moved by water, fire or otherwise, to save the labor of hands in manufacturing cotton, wool, flax or hemp more than any engine or machine now used in the State of Pennsylvania.

Premiums of thirty dollars in cash or gold plate with inscription were offered to the farmer who raised the most hemp, the most flax, and sheared not less than 200 pounds of wool from his own sheep. Prizes were awarded for the best dishes, the finest glassware, and the most beautiful book printed in Pennsylvania.

Our present day corporations are the outgrowth of these manufacturing societies and are modeled after them. Today, in a number of corporations, it is the custom to give a bonus to each employee who makes or sells more products than the average. This idea was also adopted from the old manufacturing societies of early days.

Manufacturing was encouraged by Alexander Hamilton, the brilliant young Secretary of the Treasury in Washington's Cabinet, and was aided by his program. Hamilton took over the finances of a nation that had little or no credit at home or abroad and a debt of more than \$50,000,000. That was a large sum of money in those days. Hamilton insisted this debt must be paid for the United States to regain credit and respect, both at home and across the seas. Both individuals and nations that fail to pay their bills find it difficult to borrow money. He declared that it was the obligation of the National Government to pay back the money that the states had borrowed to support the armies of the Revolutionary War. If men who lent this money were repaid, they would have something to invest in manufacturing that would employ workmen and aid prosperity.

Hamilton submitted plans to Congress for taxation to raise the funds to pay these debts, and for a Bank of the United States. He met with considerable opposition. Although the bill which established the Bank was passed, public opinion remained

divided on the issue. Some men favored the Bank because it gathered money belonging to many persons. This provided capital for loans to the Government and to individuals; kept precious gold and silver in vaults instead of being worn out in circulation, and paper money took its place; speeded up payments in business because bank notes were easy to transmit from place to place; aided collection of taxes; and prevented persons from charging exorbitant rates of interest to borrowers. Others objected to the Bank on the grounds that a federal bank would interfere with a state bank; that states had the right to prohibit as well as to permit banks; and that the Constitution did not give the Federal Government the right to enter the banking business in competition with banks owned by citizens.

The argument that the Bank of the United States was unconstitutional divided people. It helped to lay the foundation of the two party system in this country. However, investors were waiting in line before the door opened to buy stock in the Bank of the United States. All the shares were sold on the first day. This sale proved that the public had confidence in Hamilton's measures to straighten out the tangled finances of the budding nation.

HAMILTON REPORTS TO CONGRESS

IN JANUARY OF 1790, the House of Representatives had ordered the Secretary of the Treasury to prepare and report to the House "a proper plan or plans . . . for the encouragement and promotion of such manufactures as will tend to render the United States independent of other nations for essentials, especially for military supplies."

This request was put in almost the exact words President Washington had used in a speech he had made in Congress a few days before. When Washington made his tour of the country, visiting many factories, he gathered information which aided Hamilton in writing his report. This personal interest of the President encouraged an increase in manufacturing both in homes and mills.

For nearly two years the Secretary of the Treasury gathered information in his thorough, methodical manner before he was ready to report to Congress on the subject of manufacturing. In his survey, Hamilton discovered that about three-fourths of the clothing worn by the people was made entirely at home. Nearly all families in Connecticut carried on some kind of manufacturing in their own homes to supply their own needs, and to provide goods for sale. In the homes of the 4562 inhabitants of Ipswich, Massachusetts, 41,978 yards of lace were woven in the year that Washington became the first President. In the following year, in the neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island, 3,000,000 nails were hammered with the aid of tiny forges nestling in roomy corners of kitchen chimneys. In a county of Virginia, a record was kept of the household manufactures of twenty families, some rich and some poor. In the year 1790 they turned out 1085 yards of linen, 344 yards of woolen, 1681 yards of cotton, 174 pairs of stockings, and 237 pairs of shoes. In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the largest inland town, one-third of the families were manufacturers. There were 14 hatters, 36 shoemakers, 25 tailors, 25 weavers of woolens, linens, and cottons, 3 stocking weavers, and 4 dyers.

Hamilton told Congress that "the

objections to the pursuit of manufactures in the United States are scarcity of hands, dearness of labor, and want of capital." He suggested immigration as a remedy. Now was the time to encourage immigration when the nations of Europe were threatened with civil and foreign wars. Workmen would gladly come if they knew they could find employment. Rich foreigners would invest money in mills.

Hamilton's plans to promote manufactures included duties on foreign articles that might be produced in this country; no duty on materials needed from abroad for manufacturing; encouragement of new inventions and the use of machinery; a general circulation of money from the Bank of the United States to make payments easier; the building of roads and canals to transport goods; and bounties, premiums, and prizes. He declared that agriculture would be advanced by manufacturing because the farmer could give all of his time to producing food for the artisan while he made the articles the farmer needed. To assure the people that his plan for prosperity did not interfere with their liberty to go into business and to buy and sell when and where they pleased, Hamilton made this statement in his report:

Indeed, it can hardly ever be wise in a government to attempt to give a direction to the industry of its citizens. This, under the quick-sighted guidance of private interest, will, if left to itself, find its own way to the most profitable employment; and it is by such employment that the public prosperity will be most effectually promoted.

This system of competitive enterprise had grown up in colonial times. It meant that every man was free to establish a

little business of his own. The people wished to go on doing business in this way. Hamilton's program laid the foundation of our economic system and led the nation back to prosperity. When the nation began to pay its debts, public credit was restored. The Government was able to borrow money again. The British complained that the thrifty Dutch were selling out in Great Britain and investing their money in the United States.

A mint was established in Philadelphia and banks increased in number throughout the country. When New York City had three banks, the event inspired a poem that appeared in a magazine:

The trade and business of the nation,
Exceeds all human computations;
One bank no longer can suffice,
And see in clusters how they rise!

Hamilton's plea for more manufacturing encouraged the building of factories. Although the British kept their new inventions a secret as long as they could, the machinery for making cloth found a way to the United States. Samuel Slater, from memory, built a number of Arkwright machines at Pawtucket, Rhode Island and started the first successful water-spinning mill in the United States. As more and more labor-saving machinery was invented, less and less manufacturing was done at home. Since women and children had worked at home making goods to sell, they went into factories to continue their

employment. Instead of selling their own products, they worked for wages.

The immigrants that Hamilton wanted came by the thousands. A letter from Amsterdam in 1791, the same year in which Hamilton made his report to Congress, stated that Germans were arriving there in divisions of three and four hundred "to take shipping for the land of liberty and peace."

When seventy families from Switzerland arrived at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, an American newspaper editor welcomed them in his newspaper:

They come from an industrious, frugal, and moral country, enjoying a republican form of government. This colony will be highly acceptable.

A London editor wrote in his paper:

The preparations over all the north of Ireland for emigrating to America are truly alarming. Not less than 880 passengers have engaged to sail on one vessel, now lying at Londonderry.

Sometimes, whole parishes migrated from Ireland and came with enough money to pay their passage and travel to settlements inland. Others arrived as indentured servants and worked their way, serving a term of months or years for their master who had paid for their passage over the ocean. However, immigrants who accepted the invitation to the United States soon learned that the disorders of the continent that they had left behind affected their lives in the New World.