

# The Birth of a New Nation (1783–1800)

Chapter **1**

## The Articles of Confederation

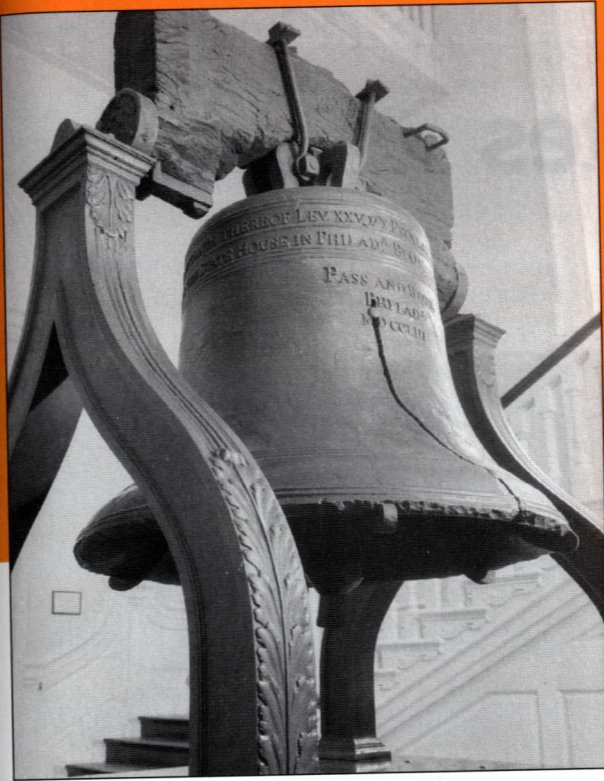
The first American government was called a **confederation**. It consisted of all thirteen states. The Continental Congress (see p. 22) sent delegates to the government, and each state had one vote. For major laws to be passed, nine of the thirteen states had to agree. There was no king or president. The confederation lasted for eight years, from 1781 to 1789. It was an unusual government for its time because it had a written constitution and no monarch. The constitution of the confederation was called the **Articles of Confederation**. It provided for a central government that was weaker than the state governments.

### POWERS OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT UNDER THE CONFEDERATION

- 1 To declare war and make peace
- 2 To coin and borrow money
- 3 To deal with foreign countries and sign treaties
- 4 To operate post offices

### WEAKNESSES OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

- 1 The national government could not force the states to obey its laws.
- 2 It did not have the power to tax.
- 3 It did not have the power to enforce the laws.
- 4 Congress lacked strong and steady leadership.
- 5 There was no national army or navy.
- 6 There was no national system of courts.
- 7 Each state could issue its own paper money.
- 8 Each state could put tariffs on trade between states. (A tariff is a tax on goods coming in from another state or country.)



There have been two Liberty Bells. The first one was made in London and arrived in Philadelphia in 1752. The bell cracked when it was tested. The second bell was made in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It cracked sometime between 1817 and 1846. Bolts were inserted in an effort to keep the bell from cracking further.

The Liberty Bell, which hangs in Liberty Bell Center near Independence Hall in Philadelphia bears an inscription from Leviticus XXV,10: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

## Shays's Rebellion

In 1786, the American economy was in trouble. Many people could not pay their debts. Some lost their property. Some went to jail as debtors. The price farmers could get for their crops dropped.

Farmers in Massachusetts started an armed rebellion against the state. Their leader was **Daniel Shays**, a Revolutionary War captain. He asked the Massachusetts government to ease up on debtors. When it did not, his troops conducted raids all over the state. Since there was no national army, the Massachusetts state government had to put down the rebellion alone. Shays's Rebellion showed the leaders of the new states that they needed a stronger national government than was provided for by the Articles of Confederation.

