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## A New Nation

**Scott Stephenson:** In 1783, the American war was over. But as Philadelphian Benjamin Rush, who signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776, would later argue, this was far from being the case with the American Revolution. Now that independence had been achieved, Americans faced new challenges. Most revolutions in history had descended into chaos or dictatorship. Republics were fragile. What would happen this time? What kind of nation would the Revolution create?

In this Gallery, you can explore what happened to different kinds of people in the decades following the end of the Revolutionary War. That includes, in 1787, the meeting of representatives here in Philadelphia to draft a constitution for a new national government. Now, in the case in the center, you'll see objects of everyday life. I want you to think back to that very first Gallery that we went into, where we looked at objects bearing symbols of the British monarch. Here, you'll see many of the same kinds of things that have imagery of the symbols that represented the new American Republic and George Washington in place of King George. If you look up to the top of one side of that case, you'll see a tavern sign that, as you step back and forth, will transform from an image of King George to an image of General George Washington.

Americans in the 1790s had created a new national government, but pressing questions about the future of the American Revolution remained unanswered. What would the ultimate fate of enslaved people be in the American Republic? What role would women play? What was the future of the American Revolution? These are questions we explore in the small theater just ahead of you called *The Ongoing Revolution*. These are also questions the Revolutionaries themselves struggled to answer, and you can look in the eyes of some of the Revolutionary generation as you walk along this remarkable illuminated wall. These images are reproduced from actual photos of people alive during the Revolutionary War who lived into the age of photography.