Chapter 8.4

The Constitutional Convention took place in Philadelphia on May 27 1787

George Washington was elected president of the Convention.

55 delegates from 12 states, all but Rhode Island who disagreed with the idea of a central government, met at the convention. The delegates representing the states were extremely knowledgeable of politics and brought extensive experience to the meeting.

James Madison’s contribution to the Convention was so great he would later be called the “father of the Constitution.”

The delegates agreed that the most important rule of the convention was that of secrecy. The delegates wanted to be able to speak their minds and discuss all ideas freely, without causing alarm to the general public. No one was to speak about what happened within the walls of the convention.

Another central acceptance was the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. Every delegate was committed to the idea that a government’s priority was to protect the people’s right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” They also agreed that the “just powers” of the governments came solely from the “consent of the governed”

The best way to protect the rights of the people, the delegates agreed, was through some kind of republic.

After the Revolution, all states had adopted their own constitutions. They all had their differences, but they all had their own form of representative government. These state constitutions helped to shape the delegates thinking.

The major questions that had to be answered during this convention were who would exactly have a say is a truly representative government? For almost every state only free white males could vote. Some states only allowed wealthier citizens to vote or hold office. Women could not vote in any state except New Jersey and they would eventually lose that right in 1807

**Republic:** A country governed by elected representatives.

**Enlightenment:** “The age of Reason” in the 17th and 18th century Europe. Enlightenment thinkers emphasized using rational thought to discover truths about nature and society.