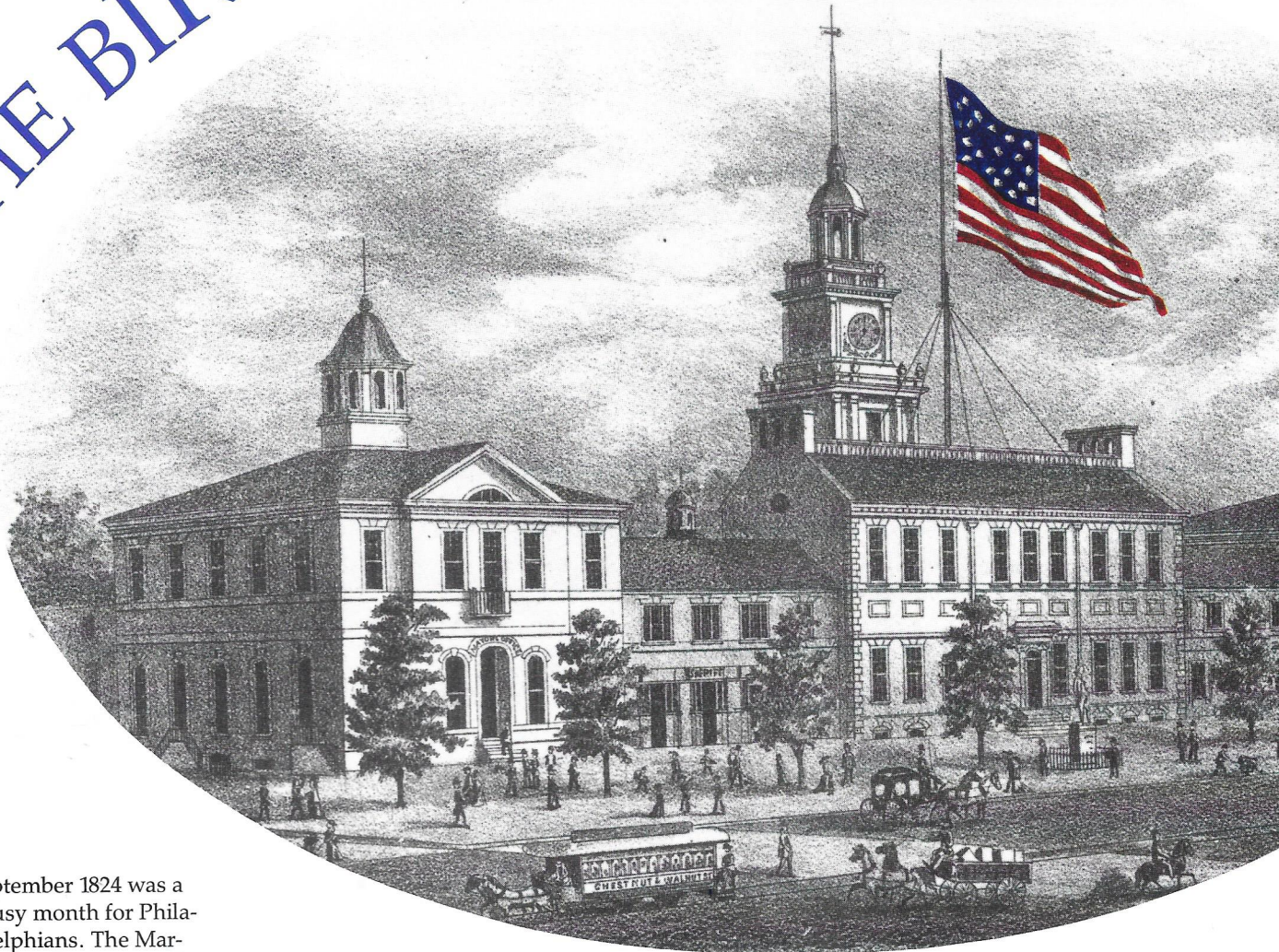


Independence Hall

THE BIRTHPLACE of a

by William C. Kashatus III



September 1824 was a busy month for Philadelphians. The Marquis de Lafayette returned to America for the first time since the Revolutionary War, and it was rumored that the high point of his travels would be a visit to Pennsylvania's venerable State House. Naturally, much of the preparation for his visit centered on the old red brick building where the events of the Revolution had begun.

To greet their esteemed visitor Philadelphians constructed a huge arch of frame work, covered it with canvas,

and painted it "in perfect imitation of stone." Designed by architect William Strickland, their creation resembled a Roman victory arch, suggesting the strength of the nation's republican form of government. Only the sight of the Georgian-style State House in the background could compare with its grandeur.

Inside the State House, walls were "fit up...in the most splendid manner." The Assembly Room had recently been

"painted a stone color," and the windows were dressed with "scarlet and blue drapery studded with stars." At the east side of the room stood a wooden statue of Lafayette's friend and the first president of the United States, George Washington. Eventually, the statue would be centered in front of "azure star drapery, suspended from spears and wreathes," offering even the most impartial of observers an aesthetic symbolism for the

respect Americans felt for their greatest military hero. Portraits of founding fathers were hung on either side of the statue, and likenesses of Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, and Francis Hopkinson were prominently placed. Pennsylvania's revolutionaries played instrumental and influential roles in the events that led to American independence and, Philadelphians believed, deserved to be distinguished from other patriots whose portraits graced

INATION



to construct a new state capitol building at Harrisburg, where the Commonwealth had relocated its seat of government. However, the Marquis de Lafayette's visit inspired a patriotic interest in the building, and Philadelphia City Council began to take greater care in preserving it as a national shrine during the late 1820s. And for good reason too.

The United States of America was founded in the State House on July 2, 1776, the day the Second Continental Congress decided to separate from Great Britain. The resolution, formalized by the Declaration of Independence, was adopted two days later by the Congress. The theory of popular sovereignty or government by the consent of the people—the fundamental principle upon which the American Revolution rested—was guaranteed in that same building on September 1787, when another national convention adopted the federal Constitution. Had the movement for independence failed or had the Constitution never been ratified, the Pennsylvania State House might very well have been demolished. Instead, it has come to represent for generations of Americans the nation's most historic shrine, one that is honored wherever the natural rights of man and the principles of self-government are cherished. Today, Independence Hall continues to serve as a symbol that the government of the United States is

The centerpiece of the nation's 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia was Independence Hall, hailed as "the birthplace of liberty."

ultimately responsible to the common people.

The foundations for this great structure were laid by the grandchildren of Pennsylvania's Quaker settlers. For a half century after William Penn established his colony, Pennsylvania's government had no official building. The Provincial Council, Assembly, and Supreme Court of Pennsylvania met in private dwellings rented each year or, periodically, in City Hall at Second and High streets. However, by the 1720s assemblymen began to complain about the lack of a government building, as well as the "indecentcies" to which they had been exposed by "rude and disorderly persons" who accosted them on their travels to and from the city. Their grievances resulted in a resolution passed by the Assembly on October 16, 1728, to consider moving the capital to Chester. The proposed move startled the merchants of Philadelphia who, fearing the great loss of business they would suffer if the capital was relocated, petitioned the Assembly in February 1729 to provide a building for the use of the government. Later that year the Assembly appropriated funds for such a structure and appointed a building committee which included Andrew Hamilton, the first Speaker of the Assembly; John

Kearsley, an assemblyman; and Thomas Lawrence of the Provincial Council.

By the 1730s Andrew Hamilton had already gained notoriety for his defense of John Peter Zenger during his famous freedom of the press trial in New York. Hamilton's ability to persuade others also worked to his advantage as a novice architect. His plan for a state house—which he vowed would be "a credit to the whole province"—was accepted by the Assembly on August 14, 1732. The Assembly chose the south side of Chestnut Street between Fifth and Sixth streets to erect the State House. Ground was broken shortly after the adoption of the plan, and Hamilton was called to supervise the construction.

Inspired by Georgian-style architecture of the English courts, Hamilton designed a building that would be larger than any in the colonies at the time. He hired master carpenter Edmund Wooley to carry out his plan and by 1749 a rather impressive edifice had been constructed. The new State House stood two stories high and measured more than a hundred feet in length. Its gabled roof supported an ornate cupola. Brick arcades, measuring fifty feet in length, radiated from either side and were attached to wing build-

the walls of the State House.

The pomp and pageantry climaxed on Tuesday, September 28, with Lafayette's arrival. He first asked to be taken to the "Hall of Independence" where the new nation had been created by its idealistic and unrelenting visionaries. Unwittingly, Lafayette had renamed the Pennsylvania State House, which would be known from that day as "Independence Hall."

Prior to Lafayette's visit in 1824, little respect had been given to the Pennsylvania State House. There had even been talk of demolishing the building in the early nineteenth century to raise money

ings. These wing buildings would be occupied by various county and provincial officials and, occasionally, lodged the doorkeeper of the Assembly or an Indian delegation that traveled to Philadelphia to address the Provincial government. The State House itself was much more commodious and would be used for a variety of purposes.

The first floor of this new public building housed a pair of forty foot long chambers separated by a twenty-five foot wide central hall. The west chamber served as the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, where three to five judges, garbed in white wigs and scarlet robes, tried those accused of high crimes such as robbery, treason, and murder. This chamber was open to the public, and court room trials were a popular form of entertainment in the eighteenth century. Across the hall was the meeting place of the Pennsylvania Assembly, whose proceedings were not always open to the public. Accordingly, the room was fronted with double doors which could be opened or closed, depending upon the nature of the issue being debated. The second floor of the State House consisted of a long gallery which could be used for dancing or banqueting. At the eastern end of this gallery was a committee room for the use of the Assembly, and at the western end, the Governor's Council Chamber.

In 1753, a tower was erected on the roof of the structure to house a bell that had been ordered from London's White-chapel foundry. With the addition of the bell and its tower, construction on the Pennsylvania State House finally concluded. During the course of the eighteenth century this bell would witness a host of events leading to the birth of a new nation and would come to be venerated as a symbol of American freedom. Later known as the Liberty Bell, it remained in the State House tower until the 1830s, when an



irreparable crack would no longer allow it to function.

Beginning in 1753, the Pennsylvania State House became a forum for popular debate: citizens came to voice grievances or celebrate political victories. Not surprisingly, the events leading to the French and Indian War were hotly contested in the chambers of the State House. Continuing land settlement in the western part of the Commonwealth, territory once inhabited by the Delaware Indians, resulted in repeated petitions to the Assembly for protection by the Scotch-Irish and German settlers who pioneered the frontier. These petitions produced a serious conflict within the Assembly between the pacifist Quakers and their anti-Indian opponents from the West. The latter group would often attack Isaac Norris, the Quaker Speaker of the Assembly, for the improvements he made to the State House, linking those expenditures to the Quaker hesitancy to raise money for a militia. The erection of the steeple, the purchase of a new bell, and the mounting of two clocks on the east and west gables of the State House were alleged to be a "Quaker device" to "avoid using the government's money

Two landmark events in the history of Independence Hall: the signing of the Constitution (above) and Lafayette's visit (facing page).

against the French and Indians threatening Pennsylvania's frontier." By 1757, these criticisms prompted the rise of an anti-Quaker faction in the Assembly that actively worked to remove the Friends from positions of political influence. In December of that year, opposition to the Quakers grew so intense that a group of Scotch-Irish and German frontiersmen placed the mutilated bodies of a family that had been killed and scalped by the Indians in a wagon, hauled the corpses to the State House, and deposited them at the front door. Days later four hundred German settlers stormed the Assembly's room and demanded action. Believing they could no longer remain true to their pacifist convictions and fulfill their responsibilities as public officials, many Quakers resigned from the legislature. Their departure marked a significant—and irreversible—stage in the gradual decline of Quaker political influence in the Commonwealth.

With the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, the Pennsylvania State House

witnessed a period of peace and prosperity. However, during the American Revolution the building—located in a city that was considered to be the metropolis of English America—became the focal point of the colonies' struggle for independence. By the mid-1770s, Americans from New Hampshire to Georgia debated the fundamental principles of government. As Englishmen they initially believed the king and the Parliament to be the protectors of their constitutional rights, but within a decade, they discovered the folly of their mistaken beliefs.

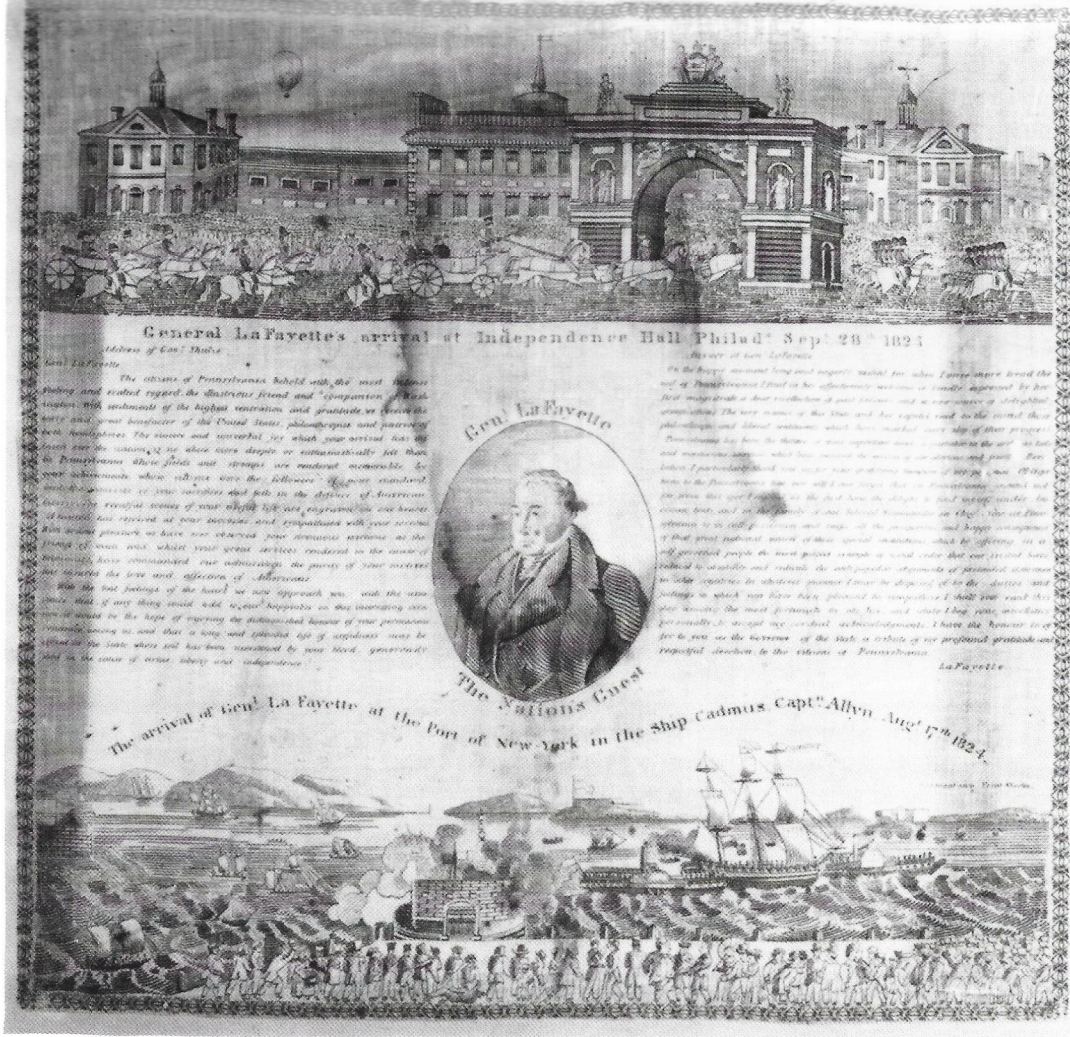
In an attempt to consolidate political and economic control over the North American colonists, King George III and the British Parliament curtailed their rights and privileges, including their rights in political assemblies, in conducting free trade, and in carrying out legal duties in a fair and just fashion. This was a breach of the colonists' rights under the English constitution. A first Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia's Carpenters Hall in 1774, attempted to reconcile the breach between

lated the course of debate and triumphed on June 7, 1776, when Richard Henry Lee of Virginia resolved, "That these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states. That all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved." Four days later a committee of five members was appointed by John Hancock, president of the Second Continental Congress, to draft the Declaration of Independence. Although the committee consisted of some of the best minds in the colonies, including Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert Livingston of New York, the task of writing the document fell to a thirty-three year old Virginian, Thomas Jefferson. It took him only seventeen days to write one of the most brilliant political documents in the history of the world.

When Congress reconvened in the Pennsylvania State House on July 2, it unanimously adopted Lee's resolution on independence. It was a day that John Adams believed would be "the most memorable in American history, celebrated by succeeding generations from one end of the continent to the other from this time forward forevermore." Adams had miscalculated by two days, since Americans celebrate Independence Day on July 4, the day that the Congress formally adopted Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence lifted the American struggle for freedom from a self-interested argument over economics to a conflict for fundamental human rights. Jefferson's revolutionary statement that common people possessed a right to control their political destiny was immortalized by the words well known by all today.

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by



the Crown and the colonies, but these efforts were rejected by the British government, which subsequently provoked the first battles of a war in the New England villages of Lexington and Concord. Inevitably, the acrimonious discussions about the constitutionality of governments and the rights of Englishmen seemed so insignificant when compared to one important fact: Americans were at war with the finest fighting force in the world.

In May 1775, representatives from the thirteen original colonies convened at the Pennsylvania State House to hold a second Continental Congress. The delegates' first order of business was to appoint a commander for the Continental forces. A Virginia member of the Congress who aspired to such a post less than subtly suggested his nomination by

dressing in the uniform of a lieutenant colonel of his state militia. "George Washington sat but three chairs off from the door of the library attached to the Assembly room," wrote John Adams of Massachusetts. Adams nominated Washington, and the Virginian "darted into the library like a streak of lightning and was seen no more during the deliberations." Indeed, George Washington was appointed commanding officer of the Continental Army and left Philadelphia to assume his new post in the New England theater of war.

Throughout the year representatives fiercely debated the question of colonial independence at the State House. As the spring of 1776 approached, John Adams grew increasingly adamant, urging fellow delegates to make the commitment for separation. He asserted

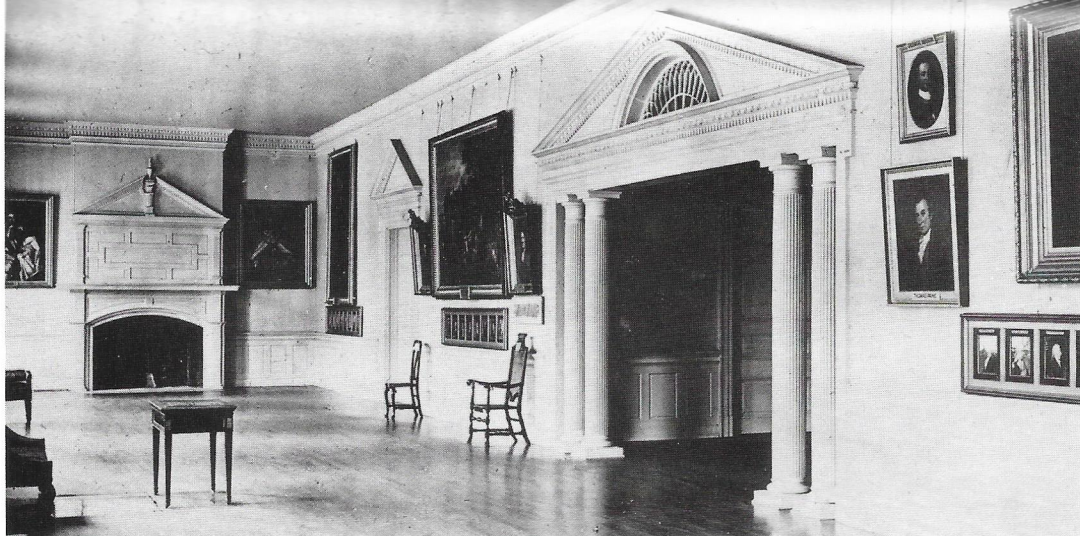
that "There are only two creatures of value on the face of this earth; those with the commitment and those who require the commitment of others," but his pleas appeared to fall on deaf ears. Pennsylvania delegate Robert Morris and other conservatives claimed that the colonies were not prepared militarily or financially for independence, let alone for war. Their colleague John Dickinson was just as insistent on mending the breach with the mother country. After championing efforts at offering reconciliation—the Olive Branch Petition—to King George, Dickinson castigated Adams for his "treasonable designs" and threatened to "break off from him and New England if Adams didn't concur in our pacific system." Nevertheless John Adams persisted. With the help of radical delegates he manipu-

able rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments have been instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it.

Read publicly for the first time by Col. John Nixon on July 8, 1776, in the State House yard, the Declaration of Independence had a tremendous impact on those who gathered to listen. Not long after the reading, a group of militiamen calling themselves the "Associators" stormed into the State House court room and tore down the King's coat of arms which hung above the judges' bench. They dragged it off to the commons where they set it on fire. By their response alone the colonists had committed the grievous act of treason. They were revolting against a universally accepted form of government and one that had rested on the assumption that the King was inspired by no less an authority than God. If their movement for independence failed they would pay for their actions with their lives. Their death warrant would be the same document they heralded as their Declaration of Independence.

Benjamin Franklin, the oldest of the revolutionaries, was quite aware of the possible consequences of his actions. On August 2, as he and fellow rebels reunited in the State House's Assembly Room to sign the Declaration of Independence, he sternly reminded them of the importance of their conviction. "We must all hang together on this matter of independence, or we will most assuredly hang separately!"

For nine months, beginning in mid-September 1777, the British occupied Philadelphia and used the State House to quarter troops. Congress, which had held its proceed-



Notables who met in Independence Hall (above) – then called the State House – included (from top to bottom) George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. The gardens in 1800 (facing page).

ings in the building until that time, was forced to retreat to the city of Lancaster. When members returned in June 1778, New Hampshire delegate Josiah Bartlett reported that the State House was in "a most filthy and sordid situation" with "the inside torn much to pieces." Despite the damage to the capitol building, the return of Congress to Philadelphia marked a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

Through Franklin's diplomatic efforts an alliance was formed between the United State and France. It was confirmed on August 6, 1778, when Conrad Alexandre Gerard, the first French Minister to the fledgling nation, formally presented his credentials to the Congress in the Assembly Room. France's military and financial aid gave new strength to the patriots' cause, and within three years the fighting came to an end. Congress learned of the American victory at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 24, 1781, when Washington's dispatches were received at the State House. The following week Congress was presented with twenty-four stands of British colors captured during the battle.

Peacetime did not bring the prosperity for which Americans yearned. The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, the new nation's first constitution, and a document that had been signed in the Pennsylvania State House in 1778, did not propose the formation of a powerful national government. Under the Articles of Confederation the states retained the nature of sovereign nations, cautiously reserving their powers, and the national government was unable to levy taxes, regulate trade, or conduct foreign policy. Not surprisingly, Congress found itself forty-two million dollars in debt after the war, and its most pressing need was to compensate the soldiers who valiantly fought for American independence. Many of the veterans, destitute and desperate, began by 1783 to voice their resentment toward the Confederation government. On June 21 three hundred new recruits of the Continental Army marched to the Pennsylvania State House with fixed bayonets to demand their pay. "...Furnished with spirits by the rabble," they "uttered offensive words" and "pointed their muskets to the windows of Congress" throughout the afternoon.



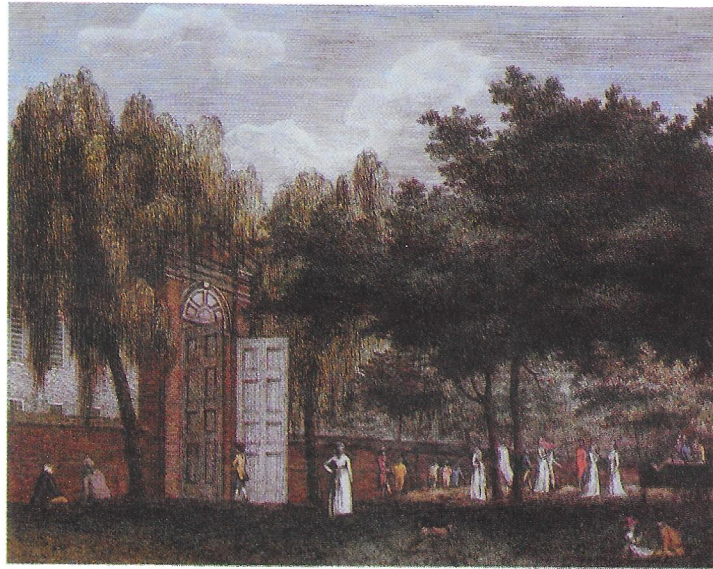
Although the members of Congress were not harmed, the incident convinced them that New Jersey would be a safer location to conduct the business of national government. The Confederation Congress moved to Princeton five days later.

Unfortunately for Congress, the relocation of the capital did not solve the problems of the Confederation government. The failure of an Annapolis Convention to establish a lasting commercial agreement among the states, along with Shays' Rebellion, a protest of Massachusetts farmers against the refusal of their legislature to issue paper money, brought matters to a crisis. These events set the stage for another national convention. Conducted at the Pennsylvania State House, this meeting first attempted to revise the Articles of Confederation.

In May 1787, delegations of twelve states— with Rhode Island the exception—gathered in the Assembly Room for the purpose of “forming a more perfect union.” On the first day of the proceedings Gov. Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, as a member from the host state, proposed that George Washington be made president of the convention. After the motion had been seconded and unanimously adopted, Washington, “in a very emphatic manner, thanked [the delegates] for the honor they had conferred on him” and modestly “lamented his want of qualifications” for such a post. Nevertheless, he took the president's chair at the east end of the room, where merely his presence would give legitimacy to the proceedings. Little did he or his fellow delegates realize that they would give birth to a new federal constitution that would last for more than two hundred years. What transpired at that State House gathering has been called the “miracle at Philadelphia.”

During the following four months the debate would center on two issues: states'

states believed themselves to be independent political bodies that simply belonged to a loose national confederation. Under these circumstances the larger states, such as Virginia and Massachusetts, which sought to wield control in a national government, proposed that representation in a national legislature be based on the number of free people in each state, thus giving the larger states greater representation. Their sentiments provided the foundations of the Virginia Plan. However, the smaller, less populated states



were threatened by this proposal. The delegations representing Maryland and Delaware realized that if they were to hold any influence in a national government, representation in the national legislature must be equal for each state. They advanced their perspective in a New Jersey Plan.

The issue of democracy presented an even greater dilemma. Should the common people be allowed to elect their representatives? Could the people be trusted with self-government? Was it not best to permit only the wealthiest and best educated to govern? Elbridge Gerry, the wealthy delegate from Massachusetts, had an answer to these troublesome questions: “Democracy is imprudent, the present

difficulties we experience flow from an excess of democracy!” Pennsylvania delegate Gouverneur Morris went even further. “The people never exercise wisdom in their political judgements. They're simply the dupes of those with greater knowledge!” Indeed, the common people had few champions at the Constitutional Convention, but those allies spoke persuasively on their behalf. Perhaps the greatest single insight offered on the floor of the Convention came from James Wilson, a native of Scotland, a lawyer, and a member of the Pennsyl-

vania delegation. Wilson reminded his fellow delegates that “supreme power does not rest with the states, nor does it rest with the elite of a national legislature. No, supreme power resides in the people as the fountain of government. They have not parted with that power; they have only dispensed such portions of power as were conceived necessary for the public welfare. No government can long subsist without the confidence of the people.”

After weeks of debate the Connecticut delegation proposed the Great Compromise. Adopted with the federal Constitution on September 17, 1787, it provided for a bicameral national legislature, to consist of a Senate, in which representation would be equal,

in which the representation would be allotted according to the total of the free population and three-fifths of the slaves of each state. Members of the House of Representatives would be elected directly by the common people; senators would be appointed by state legislatures. Combined with the Convention's act of submitting the final draft of this Constitution to the states for their approval, this national legislature underscored popular sovereignty in the United States' political process.

In the closing moments of the federal Convention, Benjamin Franklin, who had been staring at a carving of a sun on the wooden back of the president's chair, offered a prophetic comment. “I have often in the course of the session looked at that behind the President and wondered whether it was rising or setting,” he said. “Now, at length, I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun.” The elder statesman was, indeed, correct. A new day had dawned for the American people. The adoption of the federal Constitution marked the start of the country as a republic.

Although the Convention adopted the new Constitution, the crucial decision of ratification was left to the states. Special elections were held in thirteen states to determine whether or not the proposed constitution would be implemented. Pennsylvania's State Convention ratified the document on December 18, 1787, in the very same Assembly Room where the Constitution had been forged. Delaware's convention unanimously ratified the Constitution eleven days earlier, and was the first state to do so. While several of the smaller states followed their example during the following year, some of the larger states, including Massachusetts, Virginia, and New York, did not ratify until a series of ten amendments designed to

power of centralized government was drafted. This Bill of Rights would be adopted by Congress in 1791 and appended to the federal Constitution.

Following the Constitution's ratification by a majority of the states, the country's first national election was held and the new government swung into operation on March 4, 1789 in New York City. The capital would be relocated in Philadelphia a year later, the result of a compromise known as the Residence Act. According to this act, the permanent capital was to be established on the Potomac River, but a temporary seat of government would be headquartered in Philadelphia for ten years, allowing sufficient time to erect buildings and structures needed for the new government in what would later be known to the world as Washington, D.C., "the nation's capital."

During Philadelphia's tenure as the nation's capital the State House square became the focal point of the new government. The City and County of Philadelphia offered the federal government use of City Hall on the east side of the State House and the County Courthouse on the west end. The former would house the nation's Supreme Court and the latter building, the national Congress. Although the 1790s was a formative period for the new government, the State House was overshadowed by these two buildings. While Pennsylvania's legislature continued to use the building for its proceedings, few of the events connected with federal government actually took place in its chambers. When the state government moved to Lancaster in 1799, followed by the federal government's relocation in Washington in 1800, the days of the Pennsylvania State House appeared to be numbered. In 1815 Gov. Simon Snyder withdrew the Commonwealth's responsibility for

maintaining it. The following year the legislature provided for the sale of the square and its buildings in order to raise money for the new capital at Harrisburg. On March 23, 1818, the City of Philadelphia purchased the building from the Commonwealth for seventy thousand dollars and, in so doing, saved the elegant edifice from possible demolition. If nothing else, the city's acquisition of the building was a relief for Charles Willson Peale. One of Philadelphia's most noted portrait artists, Peale, as early as 1802, had converted portions of the State House into a museum of natural history and portrait gallery. The city's purchase guaranteed that Peale could continue to display his "painting, mummified animals and other scientific curiosities" to the public. But the Pennsylvania State House did not command the attention or respect it deserved until Lafayette's visit awakened a patriotic interest in the newly-christened "Independence Hall."

During the 1830s Philadelphia City Council employed architect John Haviland to restore the Assembly Room "to its ancient form," considered the first "restoration" of Independence Hall. Haviland's work involved replacing the panelling that had allegedly been removed and stored in the attic of the building. Not long afterwards the chamber was used as a levee room for distinguished visitors, including Sen. Henry Clay of Kentucky and Hungarian nationalist Louis Kossuth. Independence Hall attracted even greater national attention in the 1850s when City Council resolved to celebrate the "4th of July annually in the said State House, known as Independence Hall." The mayor officially opened the building to the general public in 1855, later inspiring the famous orator Edward Everett, who on July 4, 1858, eloquently declared, "Let the rain of heaven distill gently on the roof of this great Hall, the storms of win-

A northwest perspective of the State House made about 1780.



ter beat softly on its door. As each successive generation of those who have benefitted by the great Declaration made within it shall make their pilgrimage to that shrine. May they not think it unseemly to call its walls 'salvation' and its gates 'praise.'" While Everett's sentiments certainly appealed to the common people, it was still the uncommon visitor who tended to attract interest in the old State House.

Among the United States presidents to pay homage to Independence Hall there was none greater than Abraham Lincoln. The building held a special significance for the president because he intensely admired the founding fathers and staunchly safeguarded the commitment to preserve the union he had inherited. When he raised the United States flag above Independence Hall on February 22, 1861, the recently-elected president said he was "filled with deep emotion" and awed by the "place where the founding fathers collected together the wisdom, the

patriotism, and the devotion to principle from which sprang the institutions of our nation." Lincoln concluded his remarks by stating, "I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence, a document given to the world from this great hall." Lincoln would never again return to the site that so inspired him. Instead, thousands of Pennsylvanians would pay tribute to him four years later in the very room in which the Declaration of Independence had been signed; on April 22, 1865, the body of the assassinated Abraham Lincoln lay in state in the Assembly Room. About eighty-five thousand mourners filed grimly through the chamber to view the body during the eighteen hours Independence Hall remained open to the public.

On a much happier note, preparations for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, celebrating



the one hundredth anniversary of the nation's independence, prompted a number of improvements to the structure and the area immediately surrounding it. In 1869, a statue of George Washington was unveiled directly in front of the Chestnut Street entrance. More significant was the committee established by the mayor in 1872 for the purpose of restoring Independence Hall. The committee retrieved furniture believed to have been in the Assembly Room in 1776 from the State Capitol at Harrisburg and from private sources. These furnishings were displayed near the president's dais that had been rebuilt at the east end of the room. Portraits of the founding fathers lined the walls, and pillars—believed to have supported the ceiling in the eighteenth century—were erected. Layers of paint which had accumulated on the walls of the first floor were removed to

reveal the original wood carving gracing the hallway and the adjoining chambers. In addition, a thirteen thousand pound bell—one thousand pounds for each of the original thirteen states—and a new clock were placed in the steeple.

These improvements triggered a new wave of enthusiasm for restoration of Independence Hall and selected buildings on the square. Several attempts were made in the 1890s to restore the area to the appearance it had had during the American Revolution. However, the greatest restoration efforts began in the 1940s when individuals representing more than fifty civic and patriotic groups organized the "Independence Hall Association." Their campaign to establish a national historical park gained momentum in 1945, when the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania authorized the expenditure of funds to purchase three city blocks for the creation of Independence Mall. This area was

Department of the Interior by Congress in 1948. Three years later, on January 1, 1951, the City of Philadelphia transferred the custody and operations of Independence Hall and several buildings lining the square to the National Park Service. Although the city legally retains the title and property of Independence Hall, the responsibility for protecting and preserving the historical integrity, as well as the interpretation of history, remains with the National Park Service.

Today, Independence Hall continues to serve the American people. Each year thousands of visitors from across the nation and from around the world pass through its doors to see, firsthand, the site where the principles of self-government were forged. Sometimes in their effort to deify the founding fathers these visitors lose sight of the fact that the common people also helped to shape the events that occurred in Independence Hall. Certainly, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and their contemporaries considerably influenced public opinion and political circumstance, but the forces that shaped their destinies, as well as the events that transpired in the Pennsylvania State House, were set in motion by the needs of the Scotch-Irish immigrants who sought to protect their families from the French and Indian invaders...by the colonial merchants who opposed British taxation...and by the Revolutionary War soldiers who fought to secure American independence. These common people were every bit as instrumental as the founding fathers in affecting the events that led to the birth of our nation.

It is only fitting that Americans, particularly Pennsylvanians, celebrate Independence Hall as the birthplace of a legacy bequeathed by common forefathers, a living constitu-

adapt to the changing circumstances of time and still meet the needs of all people. Perhaps all Americans can take pride in the ever-present authority that still wanders through Independence Hall and throughout the nation: *We the People of the United States.* ❖

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