Congress Hall

Capitol of the United States, 1790-1800

Official National Park Handbook

Handbook 147

Congress Hall

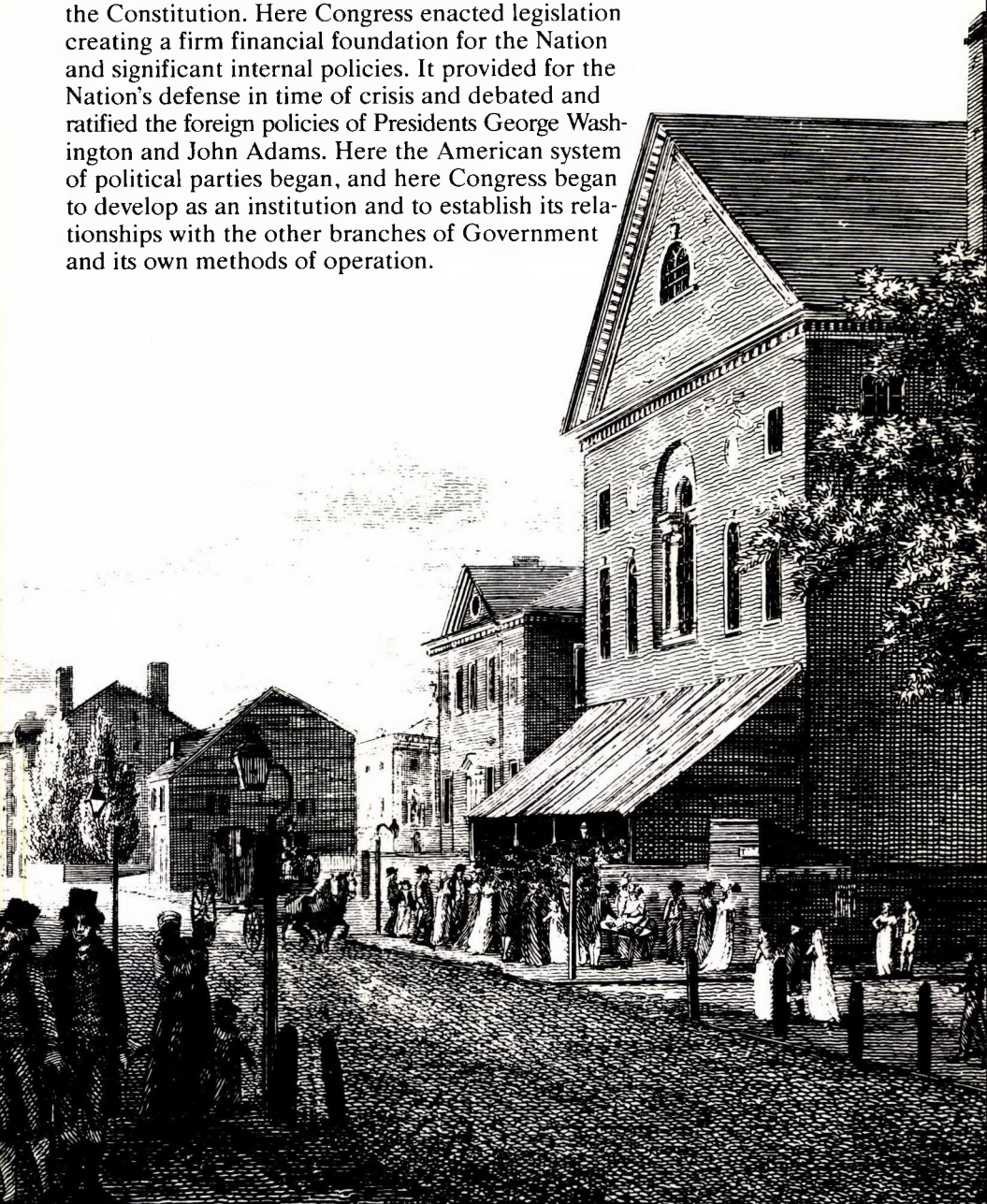
Capitol of the United States, 1790-1800

Independence National Historical Park
Pennsylvania

Produced by the
Division of Publications
National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 1990

Between 1790 and 1800, Philadelphia served as the capital of the United States and the U.S. Congress met in the Philadelphia County Court House, now called Congress Hall. During these formative years, the United States was faced with the challenge of establishing a viable government under the Constitution. Here Congress enacted legislation creating a firm financial foundation for the Nation and significant internal policies. It provided for the Nation's defense in time of crisis and debated and ratified the foreign policies of Presidents George Washington and John Adams. Here the American system of political parties began, and here Congress began to develop as an institution and to establish its relationships with the other branches of Government and its own methods of operation.



Congress Comes To Philadelphia

This eagle appears on the wall above the podium in the Senate Chamber of Congress Hall. Although painted sometime between 1800 and 1807, after Congress had moved from Philadelphia, it nevertheless has come to be viewed as one of the tangible reminders of the time when Congress Hall served as the Capitol of the United States.

Philadelphia in the last decade of the 18th century was a "large, elegant," and fast-growing city of more than 40,000 inhabitants. It was the capital of Pennsylvania and many regarded it as the "capital of the new World." Its commerce and shipping prospered. The city had distinguished public buildings, a few private mansions, and scores of neat and regular brick townhouses. Charitable institutions were numerous and on the rise. Educational and intellectual institutions flourished.

On its relatively clean, well-paved, well-lighted, and regularly laid-out streets mingled Quakers, adherents of the Episcopal Church, other Protestants, Catholics, and Jews; English, Germans, Irish, French, Negroes, and Indians—a legacy of William Penn's policy of religious toleration. To one Congressman, Philadelphians seemed "very plain and Simple in their manners, and affairs—[keeping] a stately distance in their intercourse with Strangers. In their Economy they are frugal, and in their business industrious. They believe themselves to be the first people in America as well in manners as in arts, and like englishmen they are at no pains to disguise this opinion."

It was to this city that the new Federal Government came late in 1790. For the first year and a half of its tenuous existence, the struggling government under President George Washington had met in New York City. When Philadelphia was selected to serve as the temporary Capital for 10 years while the permanent Capital was being built in the District of Columbia, the Philadelphia County Commissioners offered Congress the use of their recently completed courthouse.

As early as 1736, the Pennsylvania Assembly had envisioned the State House, now Independence Hall, forming part of a larger government complex to be developed within the next 20 years. Lots on either side of the State House were set aside for "two public buildings . . . of the like outward [form], Struc-

ture and Dimensions, the one for the Use of the County, and the other for the Use of the City. . . ." The construction of the County Courthouse at the corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets, however, did not begin until April 1787. (The other structure, City Hall, was not started until 1791.)

Built of brick and in the Georgian tradition, the County Courthouse complemented the State House in material and style. It was a two-story structure with a large bay in the rear. Inside was a single large courtroom on the first floor and a smaller courtroom and two other rooms on the second. Massachusetts Congressman Theodore Sedgwick thought the courthouse "neat, elegant & convenient, but partakes not of the splendid grandeur of federal stile in New York, yet I believe the citizens are determined to make efforts in the next season to outshine their rivals."

In preparation for the arrival of Congress, the county commissioners refitted and refurnished the building. The floors were carpeted wall-to-wall, venetian blinds were installed, and stoves were placed in the fireplaces. In the bay at the southern end of the large first-floor room, they set up a dais for the Speaker of the House of Representatives. At the north end "a very capacious gallery" accommodated 300 to 400 spectators. Frequently during intense debate the public filled it to capacity.

Thomas Affleck, a prominent Philadelphia cabinetmaker, was hired to make the furniture to be used by the Congress. To be sure that he gave the legislators the style and comfort to which they were accustomed, Affleck traveled to New York "to view the Federal Hall & take Drafts of all the Seats, Desks & other Furniture & Accommodations." For the House members, he made rows of "shining mahogany" writing desks and black leather armchairs. For the Senators, who met in the more elegantly furnished courtroom upstairs, he made individual desks and covered the armchairs with red leather. The vice president presided over the sessions from a seat beneath a canopy set up in the bay of the room. A splendid carpet in "rich bright colours," with an American eagle holding an olive branch, a bundle of 13 arrows, and a scroll inscribed "E Pluribus Unum," covered the floor. Two smaller rooms flanking the second floor hallway were fitted up as a committee room and an office for the Secretary of the Senate.

In 1793, with the reapportionment of the House of Representatives following the first Federal census in 1790, the House membership increased from 69 to 105. Therefore, during the recess between sessions, the county commissioners had the building enlarged by extending it 26 feet into the State House Yard, now Independence Square. They had the Speaker's dais moved to the west side of the House. A door opposite led to the portico, a new structure connecting the House Chamber with the House offices in the west wing of the State House. The members sat in no particular order in three semi-circular tiers of seats. To the area outside the semicircle, members brought visitors to hear the debates. In the bay area at the south end of the room was a refreshment table for the members, and doors leading out into the State House Yard. Thomas Affleck was hired once more to make the necessary furniture for the House and Senate, matching the earlier pieces.

In the slightly enlarged Senate Chamber the Senators sat at desks arranged in two semicircular rows. The addition provided enough space for the creation of two much-needed committee rooms. The Secretary of the Senate and his staff remained where they had been and the room opposite became a conference room, where committees of the House and Senate could meet and adjust their differences on legislation.

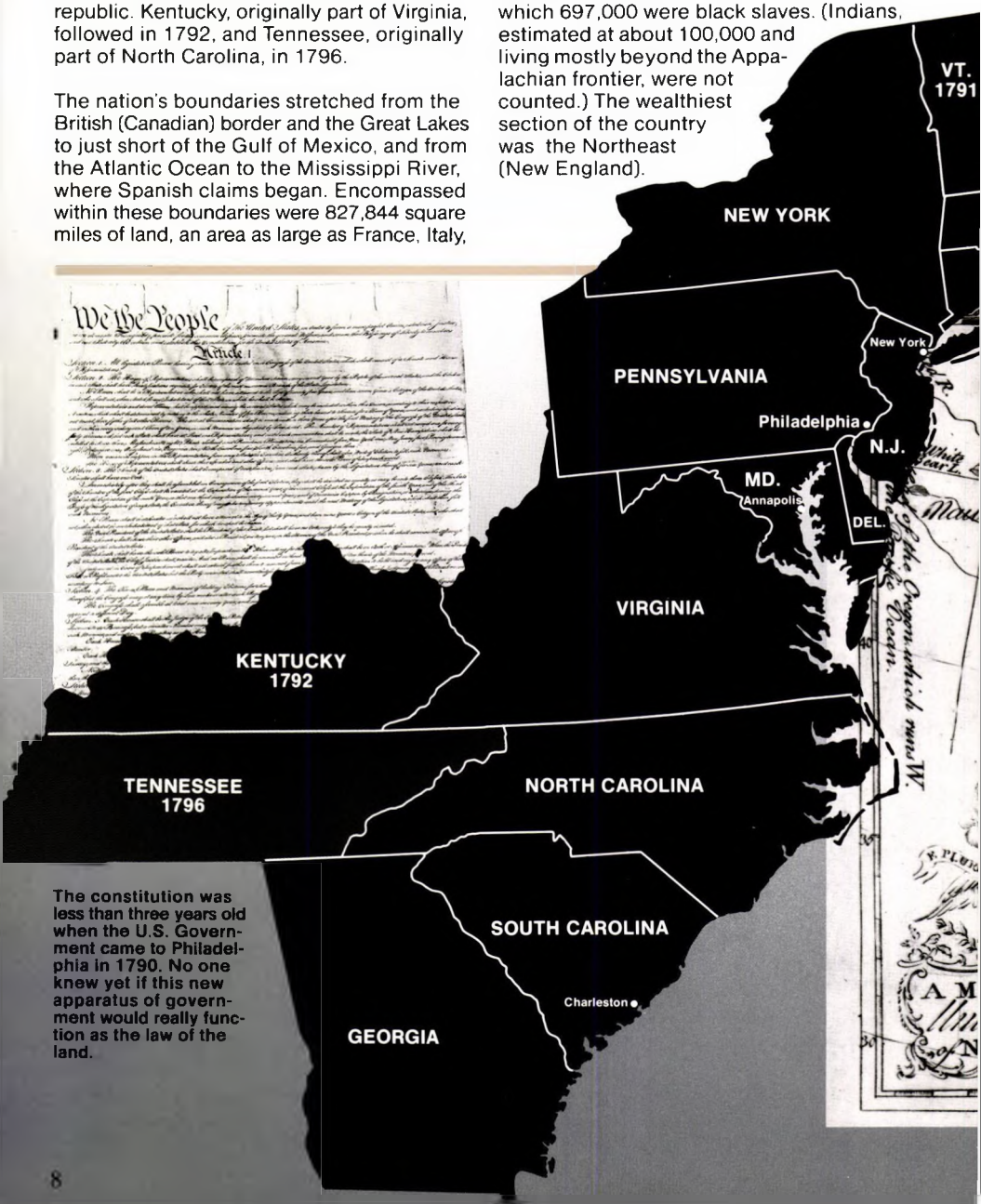
In 1795, the deliberations of the Senate were opened to the public, and a small, cramped gallery for about 50 spectators was erected in the chamber.

The United States in the 1790s

When the decade began, the United States consisted of thirteen highly individual States, each jealous of its own rights and sovereignty, and two territories—one northwest and one southwest of the Ohio River. Vermont was admitted to the Union as the 14th State in 1791, ending fourteen years as a separate republic. Kentucky, originally part of Virginia, followed in 1792, and Tennessee, originally part of North Carolina, in 1796.

The nation's boundaries stretched from the British (Canadian) border and the Great Lakes to just short of the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River, where Spanish claims began. Encompassed within these boundaries were 827,844 square miles of land, an area as large as France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and the British Isles combined. Only 239,935 square miles (about 29%) were settled, however.

The 1790 national census, mandated by the new Constitution, put the collective population of the United States at 3,929,214, of which 697,000 were black slaves. (Indians, estimated at about 100,000 and living mostly beyond the Appalachian frontier, were not counted.) The wealthiest section of the country was the Northeast (New England).



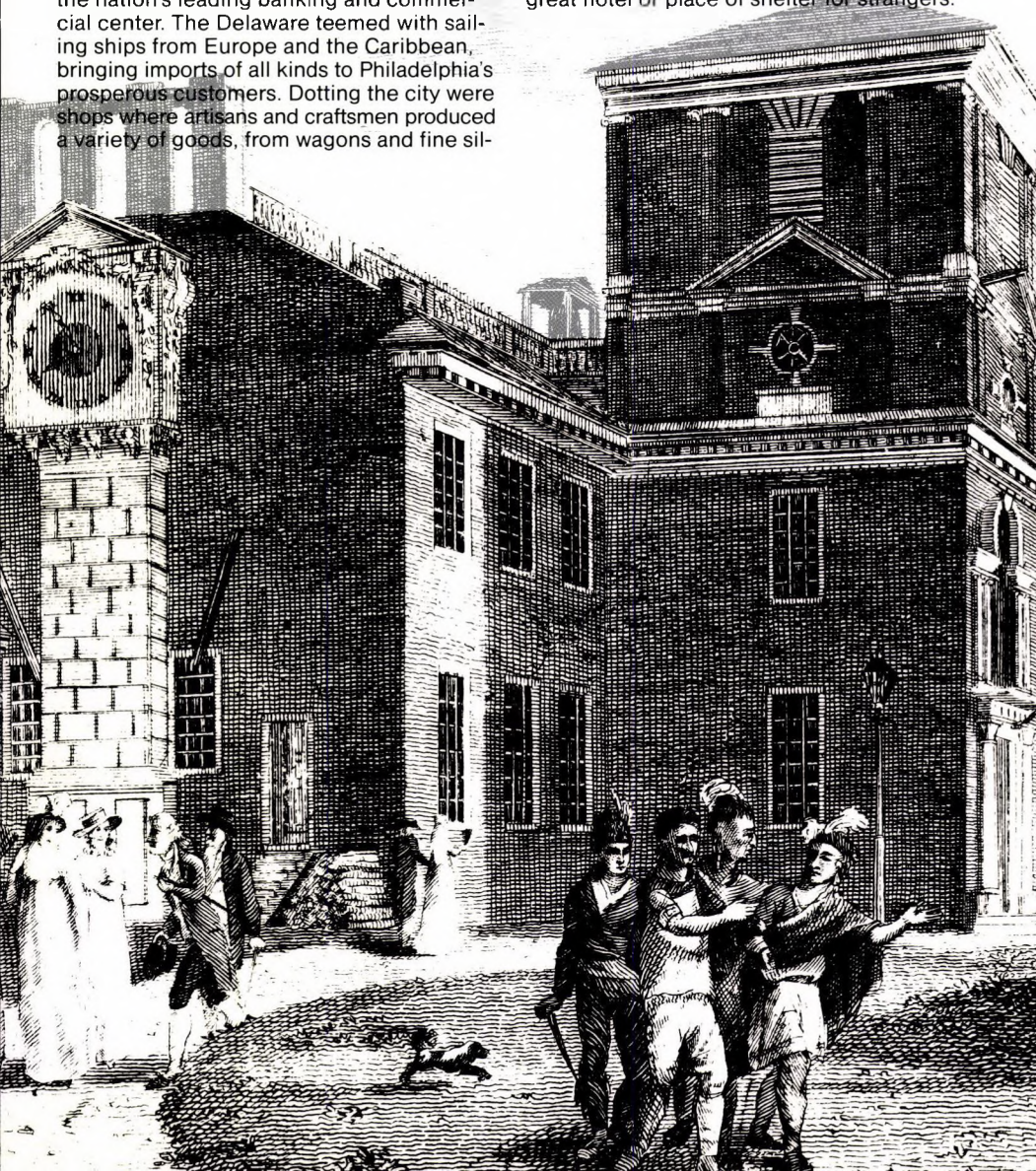
The constitution was less than three years old when the U.S. Government came to Philadelphia in 1790. No one knew yet if this new apparatus of government would really function as the law of the land.

The map below was printed in Philadelphia in 1786 and shows the United States the year before 55 delegates met in the Pennsylvania State House (now Independence Hall) to create a new constitutional basis for American government.

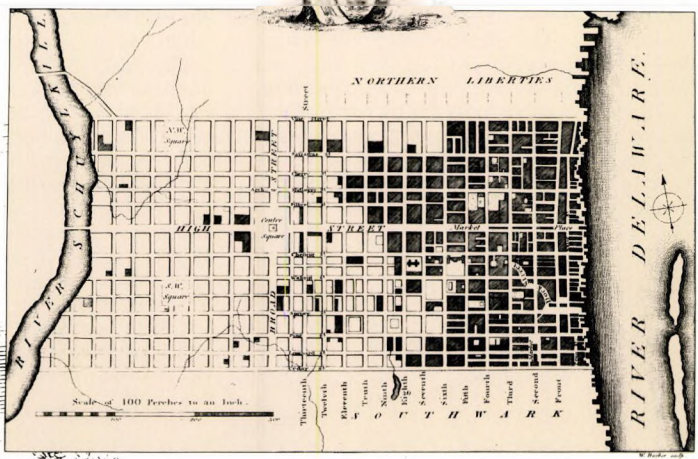
It specialized in commerce and fishing and its society was dominated by merchants, bankers, and shipowners. The Middle States (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) were an amalgam of commercial and agricultural interests. The South was basically agrarian and rural. Planters and farmers grew tobacco, rice, and (after 1800) cotton. Virginia was the most populous State. Philadelphia, with 42,520 people, was the largest city. New York, with 33,131 was the second largest. Most people, however, lived in small towns and settlements, and on isolated farmsteads.

Philadelphia in the 1790s

The city that William Penn founded on the banks of the Delaware River in 1681 was the metropolis of English America and the focal point of government during the Revolutionary War. It reached the peak of its influence, however, during the decade it served as the Federal capital. With a population larger than that of any other city in North America (42,520 in 1790 and 61,559 in 1800), Philadelphia easily surpassed its nearest rivals, New York and Boston. It also became the nation's leading banking and commercial center. The Delaware teemed with sailing ships from Europe and the Caribbean, bringing imports of all kinds to Philadelphia's prosperous customers. Dotting the city were shops where artisans and craftsmen produced a variety of goods, from wagons and fine silverware to tailored clothes reflecting the latest European fashions. Conestoga wagons lumbered through its streets all day long, mingling with coaches, chaises and drays. Philadelphians rejoiced at this activity, for it meant prosperity and comfortable lives. By the end of the century Philadelphia had attracted thousands of immigrants from many cultures, giving the city a distinctly cosmopolitan air. One observer remarked that Philadelphia in the 1790s had turned into "one great hotel or place of shelter for strangers."



Philadelphia proper stretched from the Delaware River on the east to the Schuylkill on the west and from Vine Street on the north to Cedar Street on the south. Most of the city's streets were paved, and edged with raised brick sidewalks. This map of Philadelphia in the late 1790s was made by William Birch and his son Thomas and depicts the city at the height of its importance. The Birch engraving below, showing the back of the State House, is one of 28 views they created to record the character of Philadelphia at the end of the 18th century.



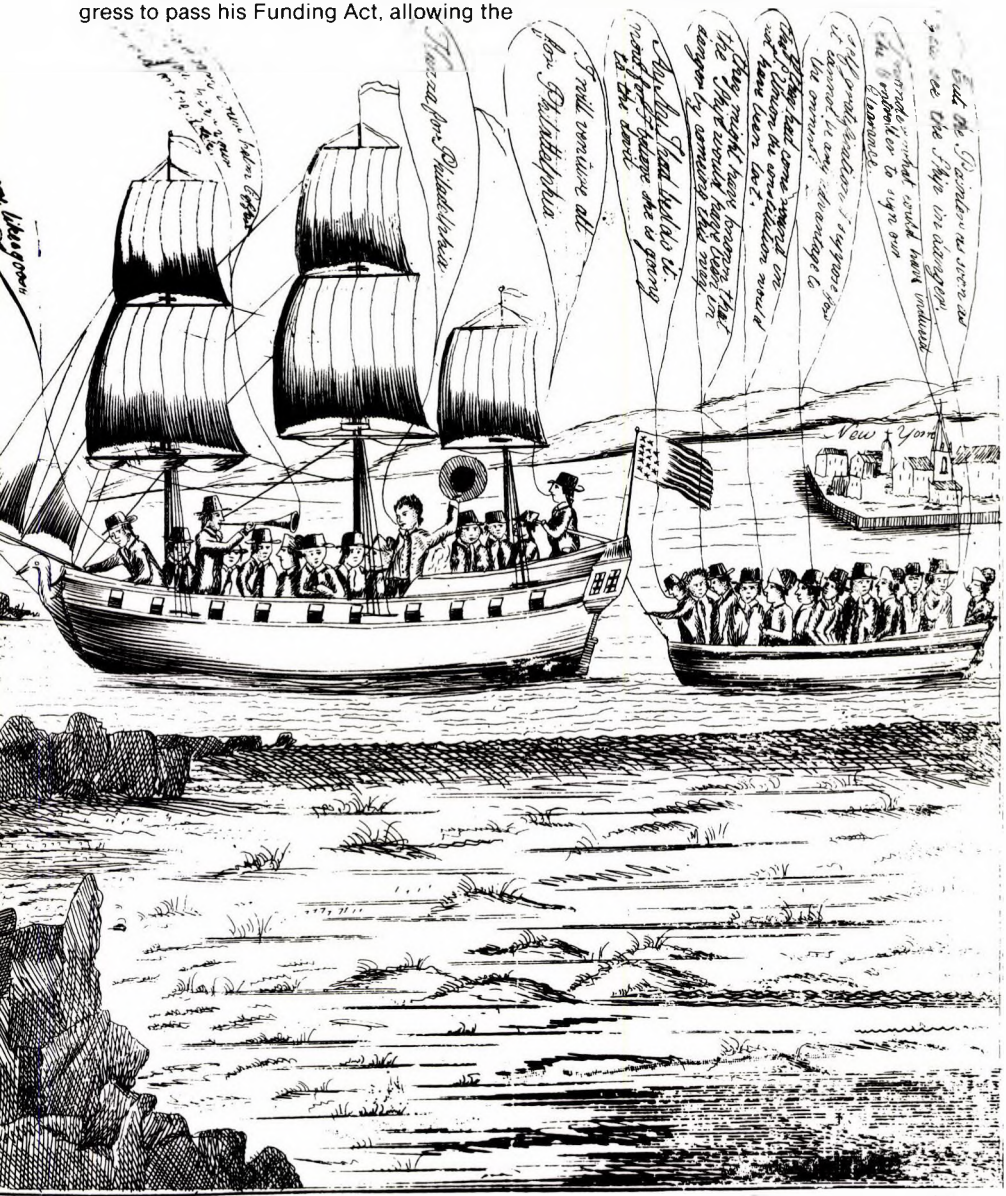
The Move to Philadelphia

For years after the Revolutionary war, the United States Government was migratory, meeting in Annapolis, Trenton, New York, and Philadelphia. Even so there were great pressures to establish a permanent home. The debate over a permanent location for the national government had been going on since the days of the Continental Congress and, for various reasons, was never resolved.

The new Federal Government under the Constitution began its work in 1789 in New York City. In its search for a new capital the Congress considered locations on the Delaware, the Susquehanna, and the Potomac. Southerners like Washington, Jefferson, and Madison favored a seat on the Potomac River; Northerners divided their preferences between New York and several southeastern Pennsylvania locations. The move to Philadelphia was the result of compromise legislation called the Residence Act, which Congress passed on July 16, 1790, authorizing President Washington and commissioners appointed by him to choose a site for the

permanent capital on the Potomac River. At the same time it stipulated that the temporary seat of government be located in Philadelphia for 10 years.

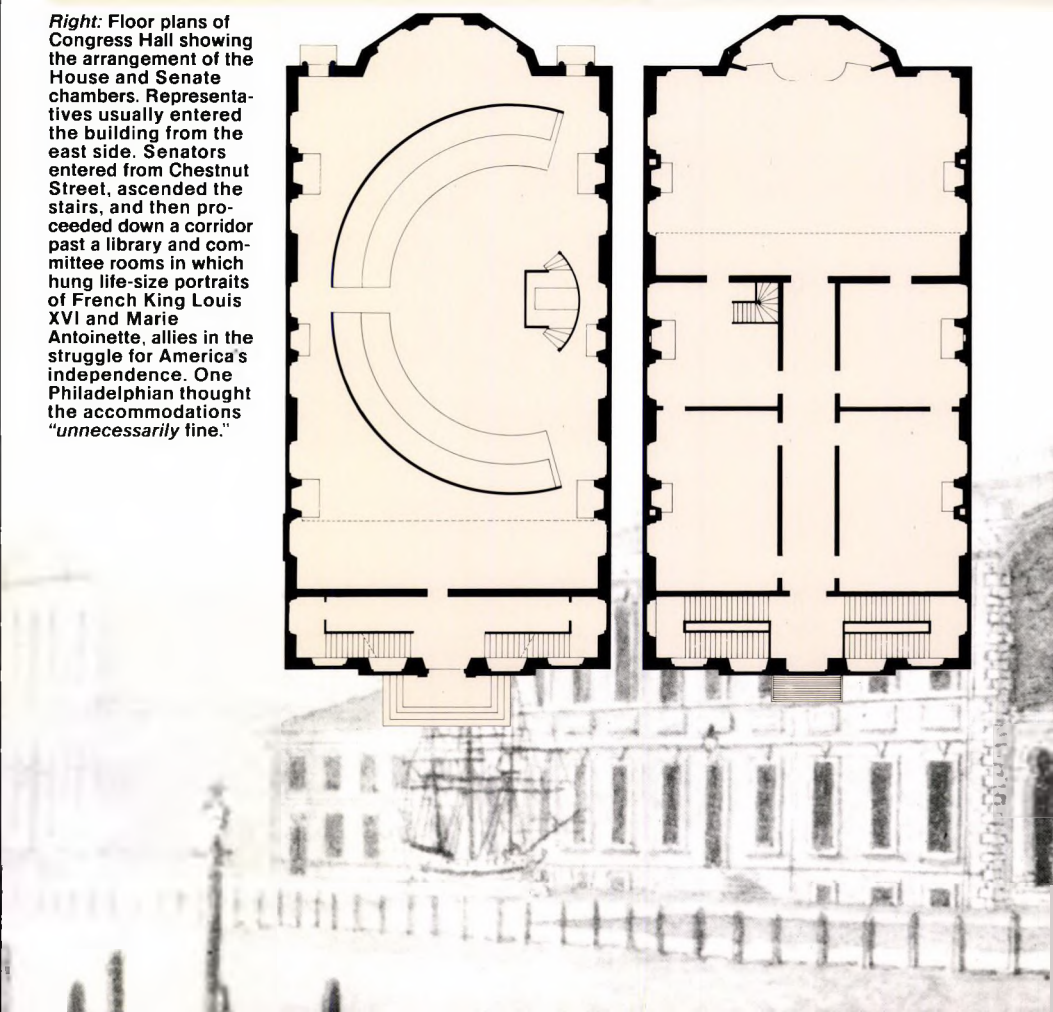
The backstage politicking necessary to arrive at this compromise was secretly engineered by Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton who needed Southern backing in Congress to pass his Funding Act, allowing the Federal Government to assume the States' war debts. Not everyone was pleased with the result, as the anti-Philadelphia cartoon on these pages suggests. Robert Morris, financier, entrepreneur, and senator from Pennsylvania, is generally credited with getting the capital moved to Philadelphia and was castigated by New Yorkers for his part in removing it from their city.



The Philadelphia County Courthouse (Congress Hall)

The Philadelphia county courthouse was brand new in 1789 when Congress began to debate the question of finding a more central location for the new Federal Government. In the hope of enticing the Government to settle in Philadelphia, the County Commissioners offered Congress the use of its new courthouse. New York City, however, where the old Confederation government had met since 1785 and where the new government was still meeting, countered by renovating Federal Hall, the Congress' present meeting place. To the disappointment of many Philadelphians, Congress decided to remain in New York.

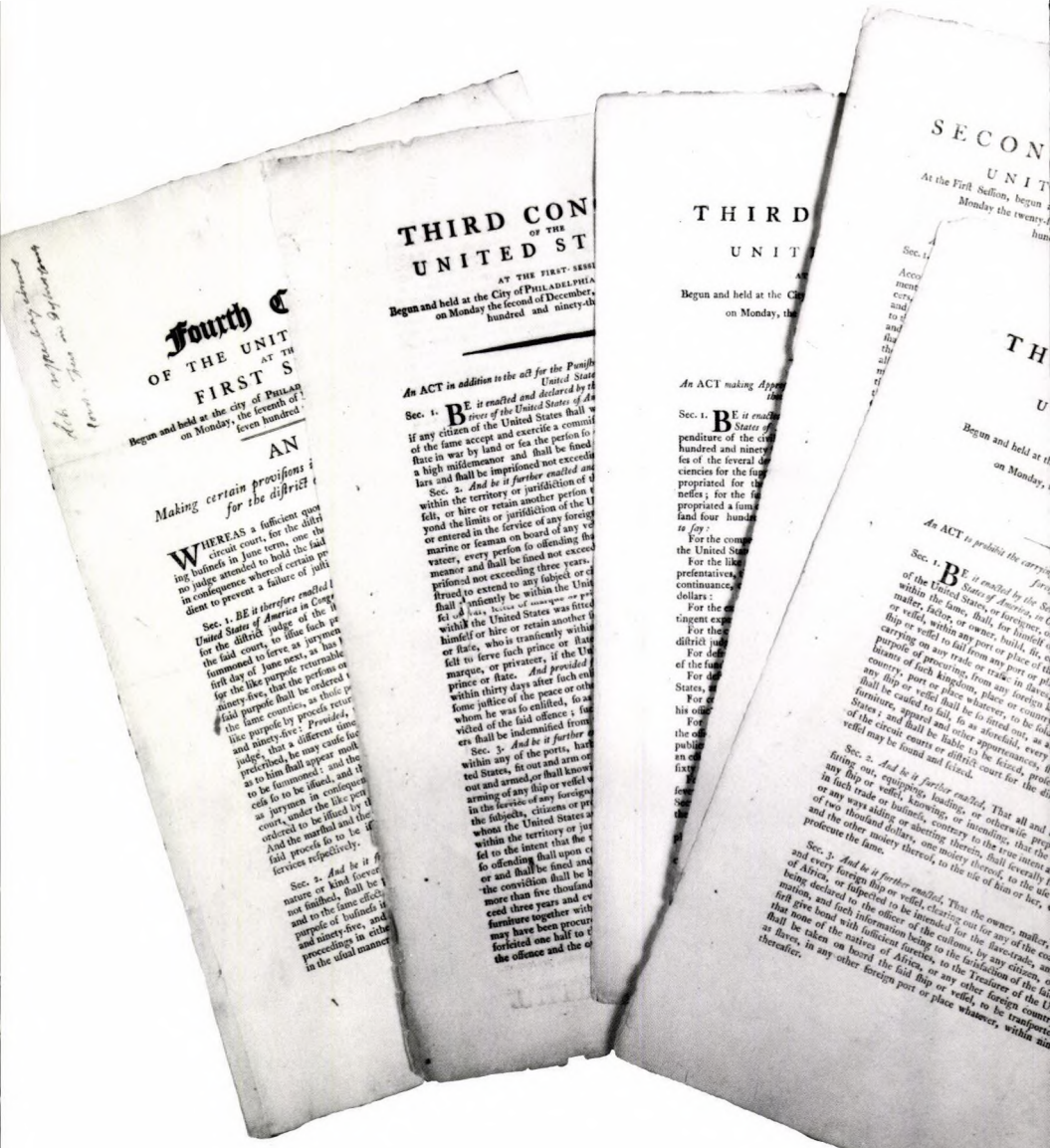
At this time, the county courthouse was the meeting place of the mayor and aldermen of the city, freeholders conventions to nominate candidates for local office, the county commissioners, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, the Mayor's Court, and the United States Court for the District of Pennsylvania. But in July 1790, when it was clear that Philadelphia would become the the temporary capital, the city and county commissioners assumed the task of furnishing the courthouse for use by Congress. The Congress brought with it from New York little more than its books, papers, and the mace which the House of Representatives had purchased in September of 1790. Almost all of the furniture used by the House and Senate was paid for by the city and county of Philadelphia, with funds provided by the State government.



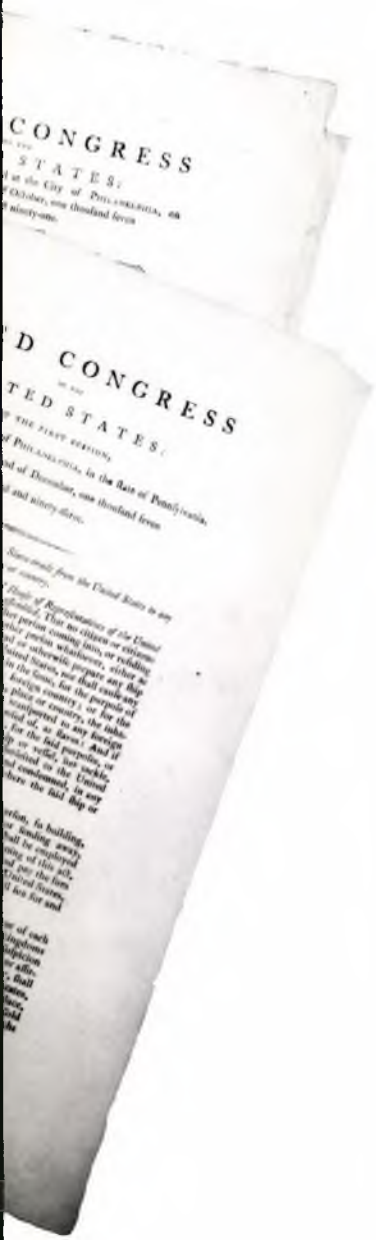
Right: **Floor plans of Congress Hall showing the arrangement of the House and Senate chambers. Representatives usually entered the building from the east side. Senators entered from Chestnut Street, ascended the stairs, and then proceeded down a corridor past a library and committee rooms in which hung life-size portraits of French King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, allies in the struggle for America's independence. One Philadelphian thought the accommodations "*unnecessarily* fine."**

Representative Frederick A. Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania served as Speaker of the House during the First and Third Congresses. He had earlier served as Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly and was the presiding officer at his State's convention to ratify the Constitution. He remained in Congress until 1796, when his deciding vote for implementing the Jay Treaty angered his constituents and ended his political career.

The watercolor painting of the Pennsylvania State House and its flanking buildings on these pages is one of the earliest to show the county courthouse after Philadelphia became the temporary capital. It is one of a series of nine watercolors made about 1792 by English artist James Peller Malcolm. The ship on the State House lawn is the 33-foot frigate *Union*, refurbished to serve as a float in the 1788 Fourth of July parade.


Fourth C
OF THE UNIT
AT TH
FIRST S
Begun and held at the city of PHILAD
on Monday, the seventh of
seven hundred
AN
Making certain provisions
for the district
WHEREAS a sufficient quo
circuit court, for the distri
ing business in June term, one
no judge attended to hold the said
in consequence whereof certain pr
dient to prevent a failure of justi
Sec. 1. BE it therefore enacted
United States of America in Congr
for the district judge of the
the said court, to issue such pr
summoned to serve as jurymen
first day of June next, as has
for the like purpose returnable
ninety five, that the person o
said purpose shall be ordered
the same counties, as those p
like purpose by process return
and ninety-five: Provided,
judge, that a different time
prescribed, he may cause suc
as to him shall appear most
to be summoned; and the
cess to be issued, and the
as jurymen in consequen
court, under the like pen
ordered to be issued by th
And the marshal and the
said process so to be i
services respectively.
Sec. 2. And be it f
nature or kind soever
not finished, shall be
and to the same effect
purpose of business
and ninety-five, and
proceedings in either
in the usual manner
THIRD CON
OF THE
UNITED ST
AT THE FIRST SESS
Begun and held at the City of PHILADELPHIA
on Monday the second of December,
hundred and ninety-th
An ACT in addition to the act for the Punish
United State
Sec. 1. BE it enacted and declared by th
tives of the United States of Am
if any citizen of the United States shall w
of the same accept and exercise a commis
state in war by land or sea the person so
a high misdemeanor and shall be fined
lars and shall be imprisoned not exceedi
Sec. 2. And be it further enacted and
within the territory or jurisdiction of t
sell, or hire or retain another person t
yond the limits or jurisdiction of the U
or entered in the service of any foreig
marine or seaman on board of any ve
vateer, every person so offending sha
meanor and shall be fined not exceed
prisoned not exceeding three years.
ffrued to extend to any subject or cit
shall indiscriminately be within the Unit
fel of the United States or persons
within the United States was fitted
himself or hire or retain another p
or state, who is transiently within
felt to serve such prince or state
marque, or privateer, if the Un
prince or state. And provided
within thirty days after such en
some justice of the peace or othe
whom he was so enlisted, to as
ers shall be indemnified from
Sec. 3. And be it further e
within any of the ports, hark
ted States, fit out and arm or
out and armed, or shall knowi
arming of any ship or vessel w
in the service of any foreign
the subjects, citizens or pr
whom the United States a
within the territory or jur
fel to the intent that the s
fo offending shall upon c
er and shall be fined and
the conviction shall be i
more than five thousand
ceed three years and ev
furniture together with
may have been procur
forfeited one half to t
the offence and the e
THIRD
UNIT
Begun and held at the Cit
on Monday, th
An ACT making Appro
tho
Sec. 1. BE it enacte
States of
penditure of the civ
hundred and ninety
fes of the several de
ciencies for the fur
propriated for th
nesses; for the fe
propriated a sum
fand four hundr
to say:
For the compe
the United Stat
For the like
prefentatives,
continuance,
dollars:
For the e
tingent expe
For the
district jud
For defr
of the fun
For de
States, a
For
his offic
For
the offi
public
an e
fixtu
fewe
Sta
tha
SECON
UNIT
At the First Seffion, begun
Monday the twenty-
hun
Sec. 1
Acco
ment
cies,
and
to
and
tha
all
n
t
TH
U
Begun and held at t
on Monday,
An ACT to prohibit the carryi
fore
Sec. 1. BE it enacted by the Se
of the United States of America, in
within the same, shall, for himself
master, factor, or owner, for himself
or veffel, within any port or place of th
ship or veffel to fail from any port or place
carrying on any trade or traffic in, or
purpose of procuring, from any the place
blaves of fuch kingdom, place or country
any fhip or veffel fhall be whatever, to be
country, port or place whatever, to be fold
fhall be caufed to fail, to as aforefaid, every
furniture, apparel and other appurtenances, fh
States; and fhall be liable to be ſeized, proſe
of the circuit courts or diſtrict court for the d
veffel may be found and ſeized.
Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That all and
fitting out, equipping, loading, or otherwiſe prep
any fhip or veffel, knowing, or intending, that
in fuch trade or traffic, contrary to the true intent
or any ways aiding or abetting the ſame, ſhall ſeverally
of two thouſand dollars, one moiety thereof, to the ufe
and the other moiety thereof, to the ufe of him or her,
Profecute the ſame.
Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, That the owner, maſter,
and every foreign fhip or veſſel, clearing out for any of the co
of Africa, or ſuſpected to be intended for the ſame, or for the
being, declared to be intended for the cuſtoms by any citizen
mation, and ſuch information being to the ſatisfaction of the
firſt give bond with ſufficient ſureties, to the Treaſurer of the U
that none of the natives of Africa, or any other foreign coun
ſhall be taken on board the ſaid fhip or veſſel, to be tranſporte
as ſlaves, in any other foreign port or place whatever, within ni
thereafter.

The Work of Congress



When the third session of the First Congress opened its proceedings in Congress Hall on December 6, 1790, the 65 representatives and 26 senators present faced a number of very formidable tasks: "to complete the System of Finance; and . . . give Stability and Efficacy to the Government and shape its future Progress and Operations."

The most pressing problem was legislating sound, workable financial measures. The task of formulating them fell to Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, who, although only 34 years old, possessed maturity of judgment, administrative ability, and an unrivaled understanding of finance and banking.

The first taxes had been raised before Congress arrived in Philadelphia. As the next step, Hamilton now submitted to Congress a plan to establish the Bank of the United States, privately capitalized but public in character. As depository for the Government's funds, collector of taxes, and issuer of bank notes, it offered a means to control the activities of State banks and give the Nation a stable currency and bank credit. Congress heatedly debated the chartering of the Bank, and deep divisions developed among the members. The opposition, coming largely from the Southern members and led by James Madison of Virginia, argued that there was no authorization, either expressed or implied, for it in the Constitution. Nevertheless, both houses of Congress passed the bill. President Washington hesitated to sign it but was finally persuaded to do so by Hamilton's argument for a broad interpretation of the Constitution. For the next 20 years, the Bank of the United States successfully provided the Nation with a medium of exchange and bank credit and gave the economy the regulator it needed.

The success of Hamilton's financial plans required the tapping of other sources of revenue. Rather than impose direct taxes, Hamilton favored the enactment of an excise tax on foreign and domestically manu-

factured liquor. Despite strong opposition, the bill passed the House. The Senate approved it only after Hamilton gathered his supporters around him and personally sat behind locked committee room doors with Robert Morris and the committee. The bill's unpopularity in grain-producing areas was clearly demonstrated in 1794, when the so-called "Whiskey Rebellion" erupted in western Pennsylvania and threatened to spread throughout the West. But the Federal Government quickly and easily put it down.

To further implement Hamilton's financial program, Congress adopted in April 1792 his recommendation for the establishment of a Federal Mint to provide the Nation with an adequate coinage.

By the end of 1792, in large part due to Hamilton's work, the problem of the debt had been settled, a revenue system set up, and the credit of the Federal Government established both at home and abroad. As Senator Rufus King reported: "Our commerce & navigation continue to increase . . . . the sound state of public credit and the Establishment of Banks have already given aids to commerce, and will soon afford assistance to manufacturing & agriculture. . . ."

While governmental systems were being tested and strengthened, Congress took the first step in enlarging the Federal Union. On February 18, 1791, Vermont was admitted "as a new and entire member of the United States of America," with complete equality in all things with the Thirteen Original States. In 1792, Kentucky, formerly part of the State of Virginia, was admitted as the 15th State; and in 1796, Tennessee became the 16th. Thus did Congress carry into effect the significant national policy set forth in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. While the issue of citizenship was under consideration, Congress received the welcome news that the first 10 amendments to the Constitution had been ratified by the States. These guaranteed to the people such fundamental rights as freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly. With this, the Bill of Rights, as these amendments were known, became an official part of the basic law of the Nation.

During the years in Philadelphia, Congress' particular role in governing the Nation—its powers, prerogatives, and procedures—became established. A struggle for power between the legislative and exec-

utive branches marked the period. Presidents Washington and Adams generally refrained from exerting direct influence upon legislative proceedings, and the relations of Chief Executive with the legislature mainly consisted of sending messages and complying with reasonable requests for help and information. Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton, however, did attempt to influence Congress when it considered fiscal and monetary matters; he even arranged committee memberships and personally attended committee meetings. For its part, Congress investigated the executive branch and its expenditure of funds and sought to share in the making of policy. It tested its possible role in the treaty-making process during the Jay Treaty debate.

The committee system developed quickly in Congress. In each house, committees were established to prepare and draft bills, and conference committees of members from both houses met to resolve differences. The first Congressional investigating committee was set up in 1792 to look into the disastrous defeat of Gen. Arthur St. Clair's army by Indians on the frontier.

The work of committees was essential to the efficient operation of the legislative process. Thus the two Senate committee rooms and the conference room on the second floor of Congress Hall were the scenes of important legislative deliberations that proved vital in the molding of the new Nation. Committee work consumed much of the Congressmen's time and energy, with meetings being held in the mornings before the regular sessions, again in the evenings, and on Saturdays.

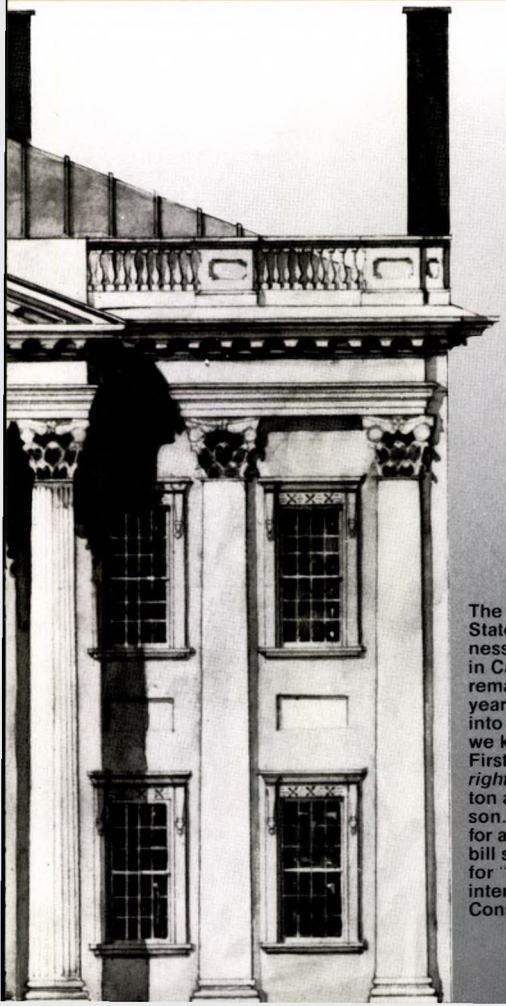
First Bank of the United States

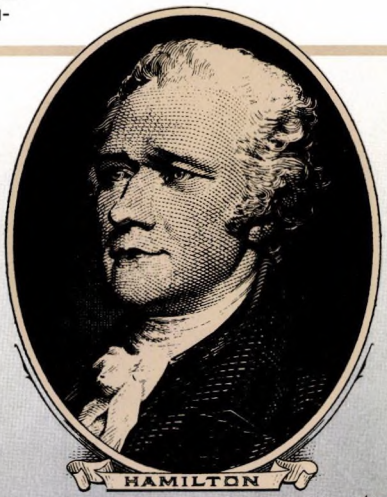
Two of the major tasks confronting Congress as it began its deliberations in Philadelphia's County Courthouse were the creation of an adequate currency and a national bank. On December 14, 1790, in a report to Congress, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton proposed to remedy both by creating the Bank of the United States. Modeled after the Bank of England, it would be part private and part public and serve as the main repository of Federal funds and an agency for collecting and spending tax revenues. It would, he said, work with the Treasury Department as "an indispensable engine in the administration of finances" and serve as the "mainspring and regulator of the whole American business world." The bank's most important function would be to issue bank notes, payable upon demand in gold and silver and designed to be the principal circulating medium of the Republic.

Hamilton's proposal did not go unchallenged, especially in the House of Representatives where James Madison and an agrarian element looked upon an alliance between Government and banking with great mistrust, questioning its constitutionality and believing that it would only benefit Northern commercial groups and the wealthy. But both the House and Senate passed the bill incorporating the Bank of the United States with very little debate. President Washington, however, hesitated to sign it and sought opinions from Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Attorney General Edmund

Randolph. Like Madison, both Jefferson and Randolph opposed the bill on constitutional grounds, Jefferson arguing that since the Constitution did not specifically provide for a national bank the Federal Government had no right to take action in that direction. "To take a single step beyond the boundaries . . . specially drawn around the powers of Congress," he said, "is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of any definition." Hamilton countered by asserting that where the Constitution failed to set specific limits the Government had authority to act, so long as the means employed were "necessary and proper."

Washington did not wholly agree with either argument, but he signed the bill on February 25, 1791. During its 20-year life, as Madison and others feared, the Bank of the United States helped to make the Government more centralized, linked more to Northern businessmen than Southern farmers. But it also gave the United States a sound financial system and more prosperous economy than many had imagined possible.





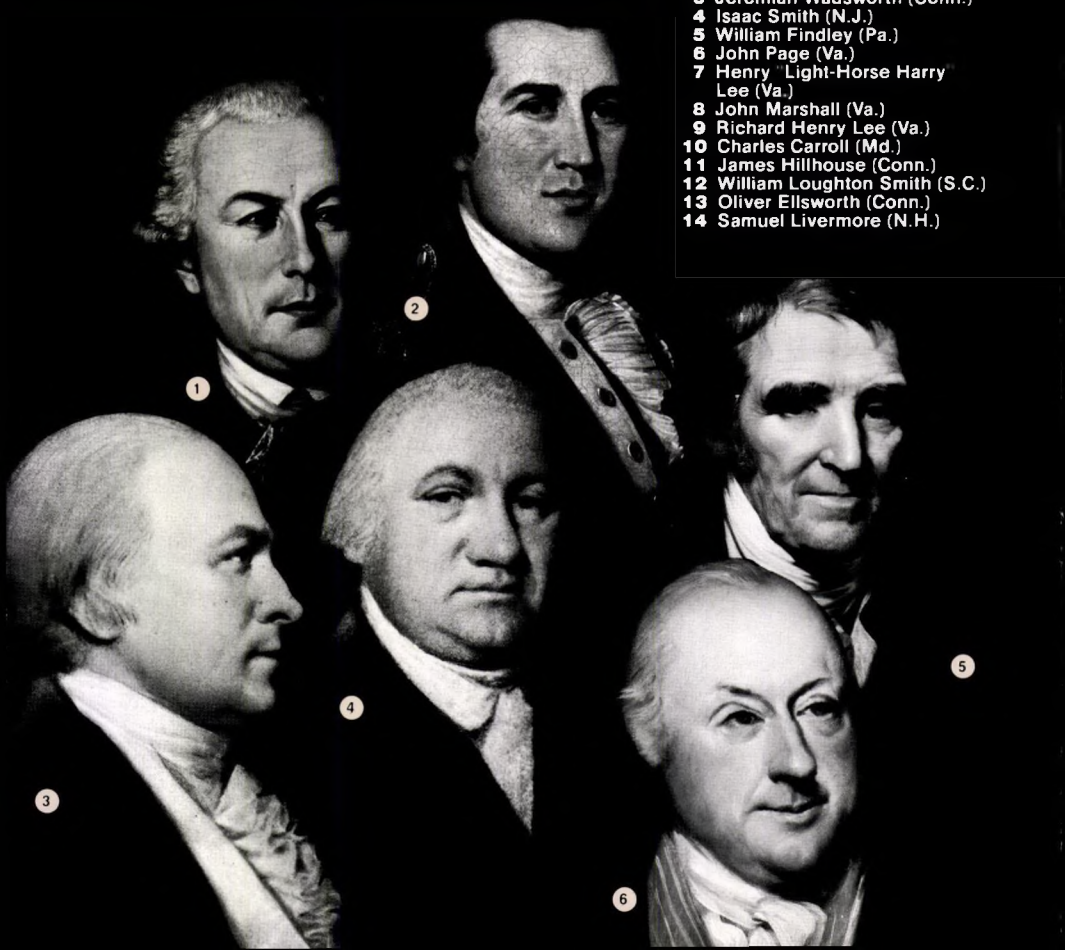
The Bank of the United States opened for business in February 1791 in Carpenters' Hall. It remained there for six years before moving into the building (*left*) we know today as the First Bank. *Above and right:* Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. Their arguments for and against the bank bill set the precedent for "loose" vs. "strict" interpretation of the Constitution.

The Men of Congress

The 367 men who served in Congress during the Philadelphia years were among the most distinguished in Congressional history. Over half had seen active military service during the War for Independence and the critical years that followed. Ten had signed the Declaration of Independence, among them Richard Henry Lee, who had introduced the June 7, 1776, resolution for independence into the Second Continental Congress. Roger Sherman, a member of the committee appointed to draft the Declaration of Independence, and Robert Morris, the financier of the Revolution. Many brought with them valuable experience gained in the Continental Congresses and State governments. Twenty-nine were framers and 19 were signers of the Constitution.

For some, greater fame lay in the future. James Madison of Virginia entered the House of Representatives with an already distinguished record of leadership in the framing and ratification of the Constitution. He had been the dominating spirit of the Convention. In Congress he assumed leadership of the Jeffersonian Republican forces in their opposition to the financial and foreign policies of Washington's predominantly Federalist administration. His four terms in the House of Representatives were a prelude to his later service as Jefferson's Secretary of State and his own two terms as President from 1809 to 1817.

Three other future Presidents served here: James Monroe of Virginia, the hard bitten



1 Elias Boudinot (N.J.)
2 Samuel Smith (Md.)
3 Jeremiah Wadsworth (Conn.)
4 Isaac Smith (N.J.)
5 William Findley (Pa.)
6 John Page (Va.)
7 Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee (Va.)
8 John Marshall (Va.)
9 Richard Henry Lee (Va.)
10 Charles Carroll (Md.)
11 James Hillhouse (Conn.)
12 William Loughton Smith (S.C.)
13 Oliver Ellsworth (Conn.)
14 Samuel Livermore (N.H.)

Tennessean Andrew Jackson, and William Henry Harrison from the Northwest Territory

Swiss-born Albert Gallatin, representing frontier Pennsylvania, brought into Congress a knowledge of finance matching that of Hamilton himself. Although voted out of the Senate after only three months' service because of his failure to meet the residence requirements, Gallatin returned and served three terms in the House of Representatives and was the leading spokesman of the Jeffersonians in financial matters. After Madison's retirement, Gallatin became the recognized leader of the Republican minority in the House. He went on to serve, capably and faithfully, for 14 years as Secretary of the Treasury under both Jefferson and Madison

John Marshall, the later great Chief Justice, served briefly with distinction. He became a champion of the Federalist administration. His powerful, clear and logical defense of President Adams' handling of the Jonathan Robbins case, involving the extradition of a British sailor, is a masterpiece of American oratory; it was also one of the few times a speech in Congress has changed votes

The rolls of Congress also contained the names of Aaron Burr of New York, later Vice President of the United States and the man who killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel; Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, Vice President under Madison, and many others of lesser fame long forgotten

The Rise of Political Parties

The clash of political philosophies and economic interests, as represented by Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, led to the development of the first American political parties. The Constitution had made no provision for parties or party structures. Indeed, the framers of the Constitution had hoped that interest in the national welfare would transcend local and party spirit. But by 1792, recognizable political groupings, with definite leadership and philosophies, could be identified in Congress.

The mercantile-shipping-financial interests rallied behind Hamilton; these were the Federalists. Their leaders were men of wealth and high social position. The party drew its strength from Northern merchants and successful Southern planters, from the well-to-do artisans, lawyers, and businessmen of the cities, and from an occasional farmer. Class-conscious, they favored a strong central government, distrusted the masses, and championed property rights.

The Republicans, led by Jefferson and his fellow-Virginian James Madison, represented the agricultural interests. They reflected the prevailing attitudes of the majority of Americans who distrusted a large central government and feared the bankers, the monied interests, and the burden of a large national debt. They defended local and State's rights, believed in simple, frugal government, and viewed the farmer as the American ideal.

Federalists
1 Rufus King
2 Timothy Pickering
3 John Adams
4 Fisher Ames
5 Robert Morris
6 Henry Knox
7 Alexander Hamilton

The Federalists controlled the executive branch during the administrations of Washington and Adams, but in the legislative branch their control was not as complete. The House of Representatives was rather evenly divided between the two parties—at different times each having a slight majority.

Political animosities between Republicans and Federalists accounted for many of the Congress' internal problems. This contemporary cartoon pokes fun at one such incident, between Republican Congressman Matthew Lyon of Vermont and Federalist Congressman Roger Griswold of Connecticut, who settled their differences with cane and tongs on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Some members of Congress could not be easily classified, their votes being determined not by party designation or by State or region, but by strong personal convictions. Some of the more prominent Federalists and their Jeffersonian Republican opponents are shown on these pages.

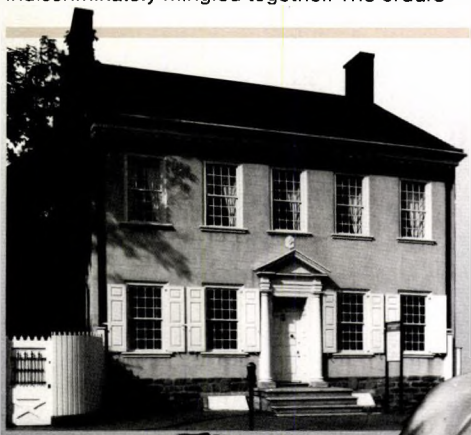
Jeffersonian Republicans
1 Thomas Sumter
2 James Madison
3 James Monroe
4 Thomas Jefferson
5 John Langdon
6 Albert Gallatin

The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793

Smallpox and malaria were regular visitors to Philadelphia, but yellow fever had appeared only sporadically until the late summer of 1793, when it struck with devastating results. More than 2,000 died. Those who could fled the city, including President Washington and most other government officials. Those who remained behind confronted a terror and demoralization the likes of which few had previously known.

Bush Hill, the estate where Vice President Adams lived for two years after the government moved to Philadelphia, was used as a hospital and, said one witness, "exhibited as wretched a picture of human misery as ever existed. . . . The dying and the dead were indiscriminately mingled together. The ordure and other evacuation of the sick were allowed to remain in the most offensive state imaginable. . . . No wonder, then, that a general dread of the place prevailed . . . and that a removal to it was considered as the seal of death."

Dr. Benjamin Rush, considered the most eminent American physician of his day, fought the disease with bleeding and purgatives, accepted treatments for almost everything; other doctors prescribed milder remedies. Alexander Hamilton was felled by the fever but was "saved by Doctor [Edward] Stevens's cold bath, and bark," said Congressman Fisher Ames of Massachusetts. The fever abated with the arrival of colder weather and spared the city for the next three years.



During the epidemic, President Washington stayed at the Deshler-Morris house (*left*) in Germantown. The Rev. Richard Allen (*below, left*), one of the founders of Philadelphia's African Methodist Church, and the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Rush (*below, center*) helped care for and comfort the sick. The severity of the disease is clearly underscored by the Bill of Mortality (*opposite*) published near the end of 1793. Dolley Payne Todd (*below*), whose husband died of the disease, subsequently married Congressman James Madison, destined to become the fourth President of the United States.

MORTALITY.

—EACH MOMENT has its fickle, emulous
Of TIME's enormous fcythe, whofe ample fweep,
Strikes empires from the root; each MOMENT plays
His little weapon in the narrower fphere
Of fweet DOMESTIC comfort, and cuts down
The faireft blooms of fublunary blifs.

An Account of the BAPTISMS AND BURIALS in the United Churches of Chrift Church and St. Peter's, by Matthew Whitehead and John Ormrod, Clerks; and Joſeph Dolby, Sexton.

Alſo---An abſtract of the Baptiſms and Burials of the various Congregations of the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia. From December 25, 1792, to December 25, 1793.

BAPTISMS,	Males,	74	BURIALS,	Males,	228
	Females,	65		Females,	170
		139			398

Difference of Baptiſms and Burials in Chriſt Church and St. Peter's between this year and laſt,

Baptiſms decreaſed	41	Burials increaſed,	373

Buried under one year,	23	From forty to fifty	37
From one to three	31	to ſixty	31
to five	19	to ſeventy	19
to ten	26	to eighty	18
to twenty	42	to ninety	7
to thirty	81	to a hundred	1
to forty	63	to a hundred and five	1

The Diſeaſes and Caſualties in Chriſt Church and St. Peter's, this year.

Apoplexy,	1	Gravel	2
Aſthma,	1	Hooping Cough	5
Bilious Fever	3	Hives	5
Cholic	1	Mortification	3
Cancer,	2	Nervous Fever	5
Child-bed,	3	Old Age	3
Conſumption	12	Purging and Vomiting	9
Dry Gripes	1	Palſey	7
Dropſy	9	Small-pox	16
Decay	44	Suddenly	4
Fits	17	Teeth and Worms	10
Fever	7	Worms	6
Flux	6	Yellow Fever	214
Gout	2		

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH.

Baptiſms	143	Decreaſed	2	Burials	94	Increaſed	54

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

ST. MARY'S	Baptiſms	335	Decreaſed		13
	Burials	370	Increaſed		228
HOLY TRINITY,	Baptiſms	53	Increaſed		6
	Burials	53	Increaſed		40

BAPTISMS INCREASED or DECREASED.

Swedes	42		Decreaſed		10
German Lutherans	506		Increaſed		66
Ditto Reformed	200		Decreaſed		1
Firſt Preſbyterians	45		Ditto		9
Second Do.	50		Ditto		26
Third Do.	60		Ditto		5
Scotch Do.					
The Aſſociate Church	6		Decreaſed		2
Moravians	1		Ditto		6
Methodiſts	50		Ditto		30
Jews, or Hebrew Church	4				

BURIALS INCREASED or DECREASED.

Swedes	96	Increaſed	6
German Lutherans	802	Ditto	617
Ditto Reformed	224	Ditto	157
The Friends	482	Ditto	324
Firſt Preſbyterians	95	Ditto	58
Second Do.	147	Ditto	86
Third Do.	152	Ditto	103
Scotch Do.	31	Ditto	2
The Aſſociate Church	15	Ditto	9
Moravians	18	Ditto	16
Society of Free Quakers	43	Ditto	28
Methodiſts	50	Ditto	20
Baptiſts	87	Ditto	55
Jews, or Hebrew Church	4	Ditto	2

BURIALS in the STRANGER's GROUND.

Whites	1639	Increaſed	504
Blacks	305	Ditto	238

BAPTISMS this Year,	1634	Decreaſed	137
BURIALS Ditto,	5304	Increaſed	3959

BURIALS in the GRAVE-YARDS, ſince the FIRST of AUGUST.

Chriſt Church and St. Peter's	229	Roman Catholics—St. Mary's	218
St. Paul's	77	Ditto Holy Trinity	50
Swedes	79	The Aſſociate Church	18
German Lutherans	658	Moravians	10
Ditto Reformed	265	Society of Free Quakers	52
The Friends	385	Methodiſts	35
Firſt Preſbyterians	76	Baptiſts	72
Second Do.	129	Kenſington,	178
Third Do.	112	Jews or Hebrew Church	4
Scotch Do.	18	Stranger's Ground	1426
	TOTAL ſince Auguſt		5019

HOW many precious ſouls are fled
To the vaſt regions of the dead!
Since to this day the changing ſun
Through his laſt yearly period run.

Who yet ſurvive, but who can ſay?
That through this year, or month, or day,
"I ſhall retain this vital breath,
"Thus far, at leaſt, in league with death."

That breath is thine, eternal God;
'Tis thine to fix my ſoul's abode;
It holds its life from thee alone
On earth, or in the world unknown.

To thee our ſpirits we reſign,
Make them and own them ſtill as thine;
So ſhall they live ſecure from fear,
Though death ſhould blaſt the riſing year.

Thy children, panting to be gone,
May bid the tide of time roll on,
To land them on that happy ſhore,
Where years and death are known no more.

No more fatigue, no more diſtreſs,
Nor ſin, nor hell ſhall reach that place;
No groans to mingle with the ſongs,
Refounding from immortal tongues:

No more alarms from ghaſtly foes;
No cares to break the long repoſe;
Nomidnight ſhade, no clouded ſun,
But ſacred high eternal noon.

O, long expected year! begin;
Dawn on this world of woe and ſin;
Fain would we leave this weary road,
To ſleep in death, and reſt with God.

Foreign Affairs in the Forefront

George Washington, pastel by James Sharples, Sr., or Ellen Sharples, about 1796. Washington's last year as president. It was also the year of his famous Farewell Address warning against establishing permanent foreign alliances that could draw the United States into European conflicts.

On March 4, 1793, a great crowd—officers of the Government, members of Congress, foreign ministers, and a number of private citizens—gathered in the Senate Chamber and along the second-floor hallway to see George Washington sworn in for his second term as President. Amid a solemn hush, Washington entered the room, and delivered an inaugural address, the brevity of which set a standard not always followed by his successors:

"Fellow Citizens: I am again called upon by the voice of my country to execute the functions of its chief magistrate. When the occasion proper for it shall arrive, I shall endeavor to express the high sense I entertain of this distinguished honor, and of the confidence which has been reposed in me by the people of the United States.

"Previous to the execution of any official act of the President, the Constitution requires an oath of office. This oath I am now about to take and in your presence, that if it shall be found during my administration of the government I have in any instance violated willingly or knowingly the injunction thereof, I may (besides incurring Constitutional punishment) be subject to the upbraidings of all who are now witnesses of the present solemn ceremony."

Washington then took the oath of office and returned to his residence. As he left the Senate Chamber, the people could no longer remain silent and spontaneously saluted him with three rousing cheers.

During the Congressional recess that followed Washington's inauguration, foreign affairs took on great importance. The French Revolution had reached its violent climax, watched with mixed feelings by the American public. War had broken out between France and Great Britain, and the United States found itself in a delicate position vis-a-vis the contending parties: one a close and valuable ally in the fight for independence, the other a nation whose powerful navy controlled the high seas and with whom America

had a flourishing trade. In the spring of 1793 Washington issued a proclamation of neutrality declaring the United States "friendly and impartial toward the belligerent Powers" and prohibiting American citizens from "aiding or abetting hostilities."

By the time Congress reconvened on December 3, 1793, to hear Washington's fifth annual address to the joint houses, events threatened to drag the United States into the European conflict. This was due primarily to the activities of "Citizen" Edmond Charles Genêt, Revolutionary France's Minister to the United States. Genêt regarded Washington's neutrality proclamation as, in the words of one historian, "a harmless little pleasantry designed to throw dust in the eyes of the British." He boldly tried to involve the United States "in war abroad, and discord and anarchy at home" by blatantly fitting out privateers in American ports to raid British commerce. He even threatened to appeal to the people for support against Washington. Such was the climate of discontent that John Adams would later remember "the terrorism excited by Genêt in 1793, when ten thousand people in the streets of Philadelphia day after day threatened to drag Washington out of his house, and effect a revolution in the Government, or compel it to declare war in favor of the French revolution. . . ."

Washington devoted most of his fifth annual address to foreign affairs and to explaining the Neutrality Proclamation, which he had issued without Congressional support or debate. Two days later he submitted to Congress the correspondence and official documents relating to Genêt's indiscretions and demanded the minister's recall. By now, however, the government of France was in the hands of the radical Jacobins. Genêt, fearful for his life should he return home, asked for and received asylum in the United States. He subsequently became an American citizen and married the daughter of Governor George Clinton of New York.

Late in 1793, as he prepared to resign as Secretary of State, Jefferson submitted to Congress a "Report on the Privileges and Restrictions on the Commerce of the United States in Foreign Countries," seeking to tie American trade and foreign policy to France. In support of this, Madison introduced into Congress in January 1794 a series of "Commer-

cial Propositions" aimed directly at attacking England where she was most vulnerable, "in her Commerce & Manufactures," so that she would treat the United States with "justice" and "proper respect." The floor of Congress now became the battleground of the two opposing factions: the Republicans, who were pro-French, and the Federalists, pro- English.

Despite Washington's Neutrality Proclamation, the British government treated the United States almost as though she were a belligerent power. The British Navy seized hundreds of American vessels trading in the French West Indies and English emissaries aroused the Barbary pirates to attack American shipping in the Mediterranean. Moreover, despite the terms of the 1783 treaty that ended the Revolutionary War, British troops continued to occupy forts in the Old Northwest, thus controlling the lucrative western fur trade and preventing settlement in the Ohio Valley. Anti-British feelings in Congress and the country at large were intense. War seemed almost inevitable, but, as one Congressman put it, the Nation would "not go to war lest they are driven to it by the most pressing necessity."

To prevent war, Washington in the spring of 1794 sent Chief Justice John Jay to England as minister plenipotentiary to secure, among other things, the cession of the British forts on the American frontier, reparation for losses sustained by the seizure of American ships, and a commercial treaty with Great Britain. Jay was surprised to find the British very cordial and eager to settle the dispute, but only if His Majesty's government believed the United States was and intended to remain truly neutral in the war with France.

For months Congress and the Nation anxiously awaited news of Jay's mission and the text of the treaty. When the treaty arrived, Washington called the Senate into special session to ratify it. The Senate was divided sharply in its debate over the treaty's provisions. Jay had gotten the British to agree to a commercial treaty giving the United States a most-favored nation status, to evacuate the Northwest forts by 1796, and to allow joint commissions to settle questions of reparations and other disputes. What Jay had failed to get, however, was Britain's agreement to uphold America's neutral rights under international law—an omission that angered Republicans

and which would later lead to a serious crisis with France.

On June 24, 1795, with Vice President Adams presiding, the Federalist-dominated Senate passed the treaty by a vote of 20 to 10—exactly the two-thirds majority required by the Constitution. Publication of the text of the treaty aroused throughout the Nation a cry, described by the President, "like that against a mad dog." At first Washington was uncertain whether to approve the treaty, but fearing a growing French influence in the Nation and feeling that accord with England rather than war was in the best interests of the people, he signed it.

The prospects for peace were brighter as President Washington addressed the Fourth Congress when it convened in December 1795. Thomas Pinckney had negotiated a treaty with Spain which the Senate quickly and unanimously approved. Unlike the Jay Treaty, the Pinckney Treaty was highly favorable to the United States, granting American citizens the long-sought right of unrestricted use of the Mississippi River. When the United States agreed to pay a yearly tribute to the Dey of Algiers, peace with the Barbary pirates was achieved. Gen. Anthony Wayne paved the way for peace on the frontier by signing a treaty with the Indians of the Northwest Territory clearing the Government title to additional Western territories acquired by the 1783 treaty with England. This led Congress to enact the significant Land Act of 1796, which encouraged settlement and aided the rapid expansion of the West.

The Jay Treaty, however, continued to divide Congress and the Nation. Washington officially promulgated the treaty on February 29, 1796, and the Republicans in the House of Representatives immediately launched their final campaign against it. The House passed a resolution asking Washington to submit to them all of the papers relating to the treaty. He refused, arguing that the Constitution had not included the House in the treaty-making procedure. For the next two months the House debated an appropriation bill upon which the execution of the treaty depended.

The debate involved not only the treaty itself, but the question of the constitutional relationship of the Legislature with the Chief Executive. The rights of the House were asserted in resolutions written by

Madison and introduced by North Carolina Representative Thomas Blount and which passed the house by a sizable majority vote. As Congressional debate continued, public sentiment changed dramatically in favor of the treaty, and petitions urging passage of the bill implementing it flooded Congress.

On April 28, when partisan feelings were at their strongest, Federalist Fisher Ames of Massachusetts took the floor. Frail and sickly, Ames spoke so faintly that he could barely be heard. Yet he delivered one of the most moving speeches ever heard in the House of Representatives to an audience that included members of the Senate, Justices of the Supreme Court, and even Vice President John Adams. Ames spoke for more than an hour, pointing out the benefits the United States would gain from the treaty and predicting dire consequences should the House reject it. There is some question whether Ames' speech changed any votes, but when he had finished, noted John Adams, there was hardly a dry eye in the chamber, "except some of the jackasses who had occasioned the necessity of the oratory."

The next day the bill was voted upon in the Committee of the Whole. The result was a tie, 49 to 49. The chairman, House Speaker and Republican Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, cast the deciding vote—with the Federalists for the bill. The treaty was safe, and "Peace & tranquility" now succeeded the months of "noisy Debate" in the halls of Congress.

While the "Spirit of Faction" subsided, Republicans continued to condemn Jay's Treaty as a sacrifice of American rights and honor. The partisan division in Congress was soon deepened by a worsening of Franco-American relations, brought about when France, angered not only by the ratification of Jay's Treaty but by the election that same year of John Adams to the Presidency, embarked upon a policy of seizing American shipping. President Adams sent Elbridge Gerry, John Marshall, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to France to smooth matters.

The envoys' dispatches recording in detail their experiences with the French Directory, including blatant attempts to extort large sums of money from the United States as the basis for any negotiations, reached America in the spring of 1798 and were sent to Congress by the President. (This came to be known as the XYZ Affair because those letters were substi-

tuted for the names of the Frenchmen who dealt with the American commissioners.) The American public was outraged: "Millions for defence, but not one cent for tribute" became the rallying cry of the day. Expecting the French to declare war, President Adams advocated a policy of armed neutrality. Congress responded by creating the Navy Department as a new executive department with full Cabinet status. The Senate confirmed President Adams' nomination of Benjamin Stoddert as the first Secretary of the Navy. Three new and powerful frigates were added to the American navy and the Marine Corps was revived. Money for arms and harbor fortifications was appropriated, and the army was enlarged.

A state of quasi-war existed between the United States and France for more than two years. In March 1799, believing that the French were now ready to negotiate a settlement of their differences, President Adams nominated William Vans Murray as Minister Plenipotentiary to France. The Senate expanded Murray's mission into a three-man team, which was finally able to negotiate an end to the quasi-war.

Domestically, the threat of war with France caused the Federalists in Congress, now holding a strong majority, to pass the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. Ostensibly these measures were aimed at newly arrived political refugees and immigrants. They were really designed to keep Jeffersonian Republicans in line. The laws increased the residency requirements for citizenship, gave the President the power to expel foreigners, and imposed limitations on freedom of speech and press, with fines and imprisonment the penalties for writing, publishing, or speaking anything of a "false, scandalous and malicious" nature against the Government or any of its officers.

Two States, Virginia and Kentucky, passed resolves (secretly written by Madison and Jefferson, respectively) questioning the constitutionality of what many were denouncing as "the most diabolical laws that were ever attempted to be imposed on a free and enlightened people." The controversy over the Alien and Sedition Acts undermined the Federalists' hold on the government, led to the election of Jefferson to the presidency in 1800, and brought about Republican control of Congress.

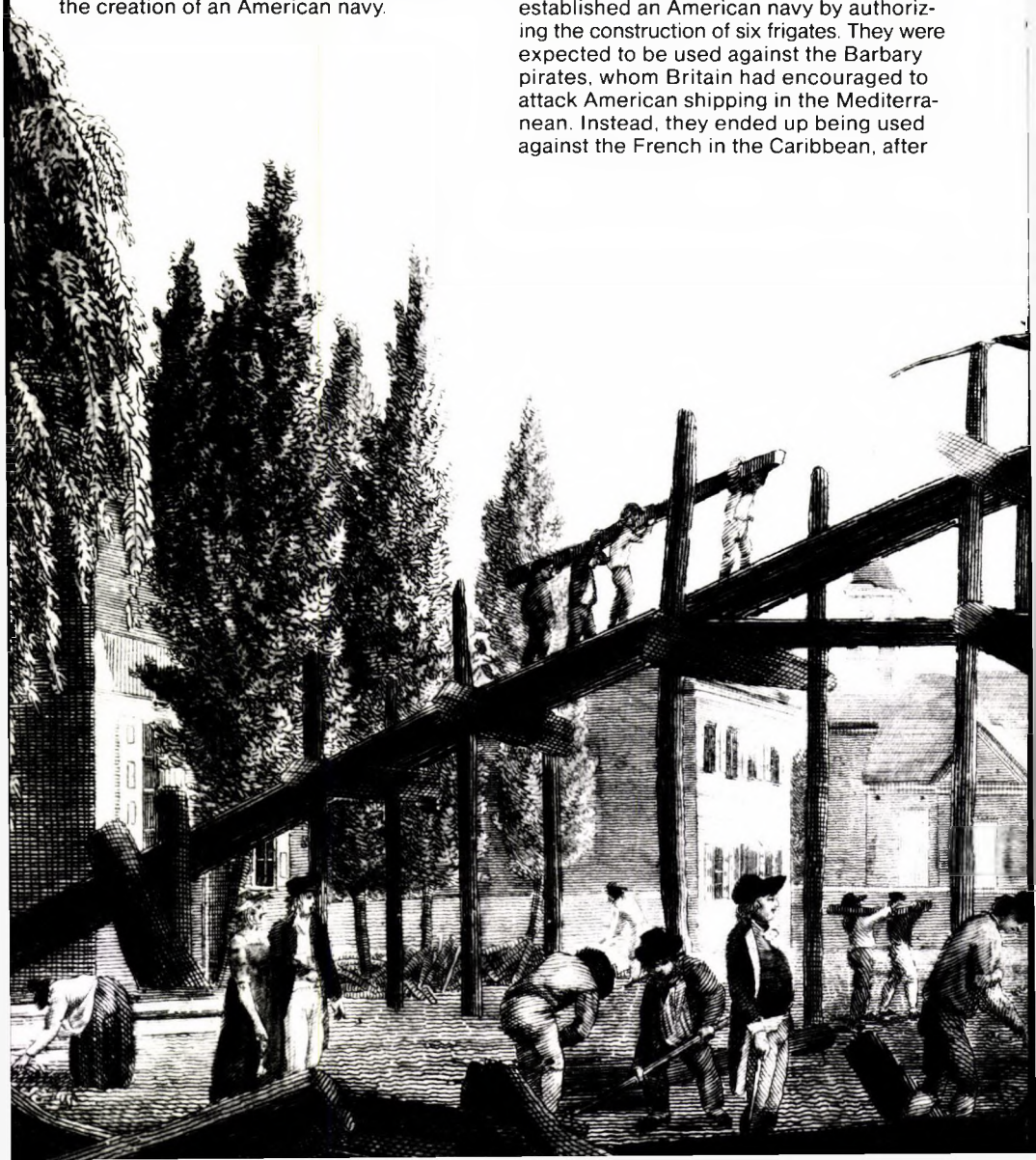
When Chief Justice John Jay (*above*) returned from England with the treaty he negotiated with Great Britain, he was not welcomed like a man who had helped prevent a war. Instead he found himself the center of a political firestorm. Federalist Senators in Congress generally approved the treaty's provisions and garnered more than enough votes to ratify it quickly. Republican Senators, however, called Jay a "lickspittle" and the treaty a sellout of U.S. rights. When Jay resigned as Chief Justice to become governor of New York in 1795, he was probably the most unpopular man in the nation and the object of such vilification that he wryly remarked to a friend that he could find his way across the country by the light of his own burning effigies (*right*).


JAY

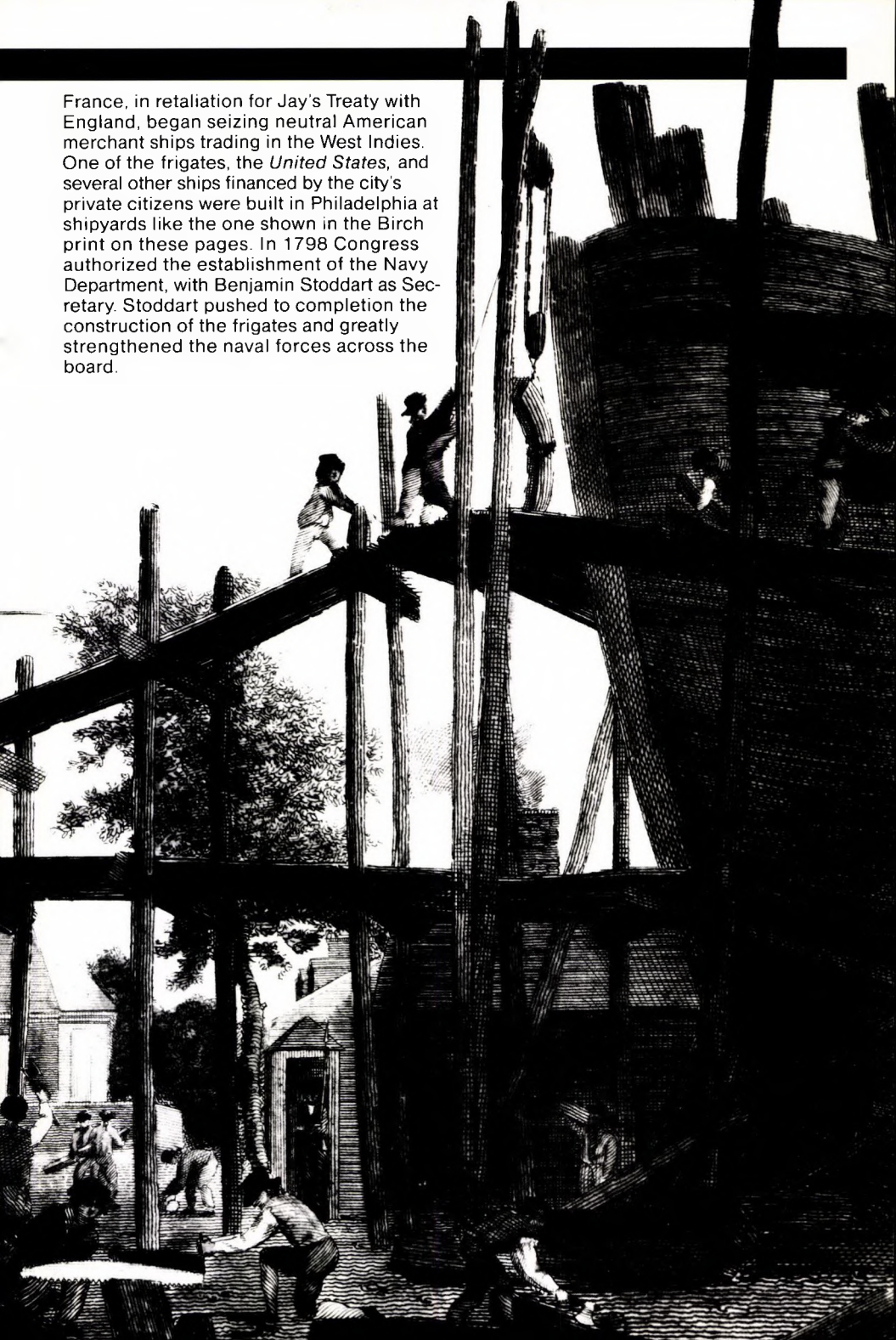
The Quasi-War and the Rebirth of the U.S. Navy

In 1794, when the crisis over Britain's seizure of American ships on the high seas and her encouragement of Indian depredations on the frontier was coming to a head, the United States Congress took steps to strengthen the country's defensive posture. While Federalist leaders had no desire for a war with Great Britain, they realized that it might just come to that and that the country had better be prepared. One of the proposals the Congress was asked to consider was the creation of an American navy.

The United States had not had a navy since at least 1784, when the last ship of the old Continental Navy was sold, and some Congressmen thought that it ought to stay that way. Representative William B. Giles of Virginia considered navies "very foolish things" and opposed building an American fleet. His colleague and fellow Virginian, James Madison, proposed that the United States hire the Portuguese Navy rather than construct one of its own. In February 1794, Congress established an American navy by authorizing the construction of six frigates. They were expected to be used against the Barbary pirates, whom Britain had encouraged to attack American shipping in the Mediterranean. Instead, they ended up being used against the French in the Caribbean, after



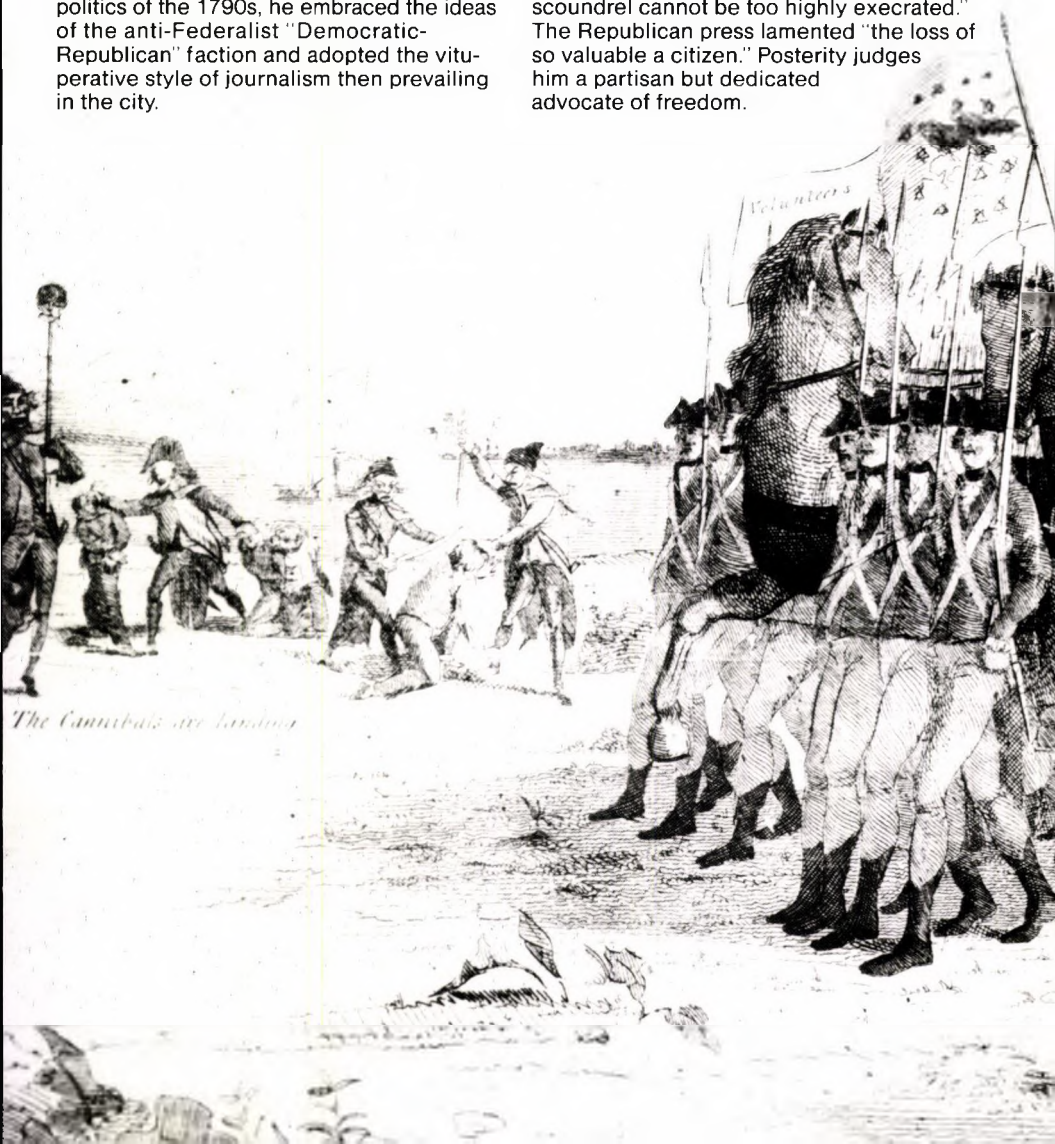
France, in retaliation for Jay's Treaty with England, began seizing neutral American merchant ships trading in the West Indies. One of the frigates, the *United States*, and several other ships financed by the city's private citizens were built in Philadelphia at shipyards like the one shown in the Birch print on these pages. In 1798 Congress authorized the establishment of the Navy Department, with Benjamin Stoddart as Secretary. Stoddart pushed to completion the construction of the frigates and greatly strengthened the naval forces across the board.



Benjamin Franklin Bache and a Free Press

On October 1, 1790, Benjamin Franklin Bache launched a newspaper—the *General Advertiser,* and *Political, Commercial, Agricultural,* and *Literary Journal,* later renamed the *Aurora*. Like his grandfather and namesake, Bache considered a free press "the Bulwark of Liberty" and the primary means of keeping the people enlightened. At first, he adhered closely to the motto on his paper's masthead—"Truth, Decency, Utility"—reporting both national events and Congressional debates with fairness and accuracy. But then, caught up in the partisan politics of the 1790s, he embraced the ideas of the anti-Federalist "Democratic-Republican" faction and adopted the vituperative style of journalism then prevailing in the city.

Bache blamed Washington for "all the misfortunes of our Country" and applauded his decision to retire from the Presidency. "If ever there was a period for rejoicing," he wrote, "this is the moment." By the summer of 1798 Bache was the object of much hostility, as the Federalist cartoon on these pages suggests. (Bache is shown being trampled by militiamen while Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin try to keep Washington from advancing to meet the French threat.) When Bache died from yellow fever in September, the Federalist press gloated: "The memory of this scoundrel cannot be too highly execrated." The Republican press lamented "the loss of so valuable a citizen." Posterity judges him a partisan but dedicated advocate of freedom.



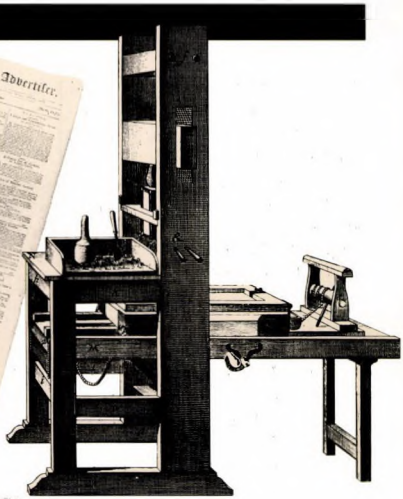
The first issue of Bache's paper (*right*) gave no indication that by 1797 it would have a daily circulation of 1,700 copies and be the most widely read newspaper in the country. In some ways, especially the editorial forum it offered to Philadelphians, it was a forerunner of modern journalism. *Far right:* An engraving showing the kind of printing press used to produce newspapers in the 18th century.

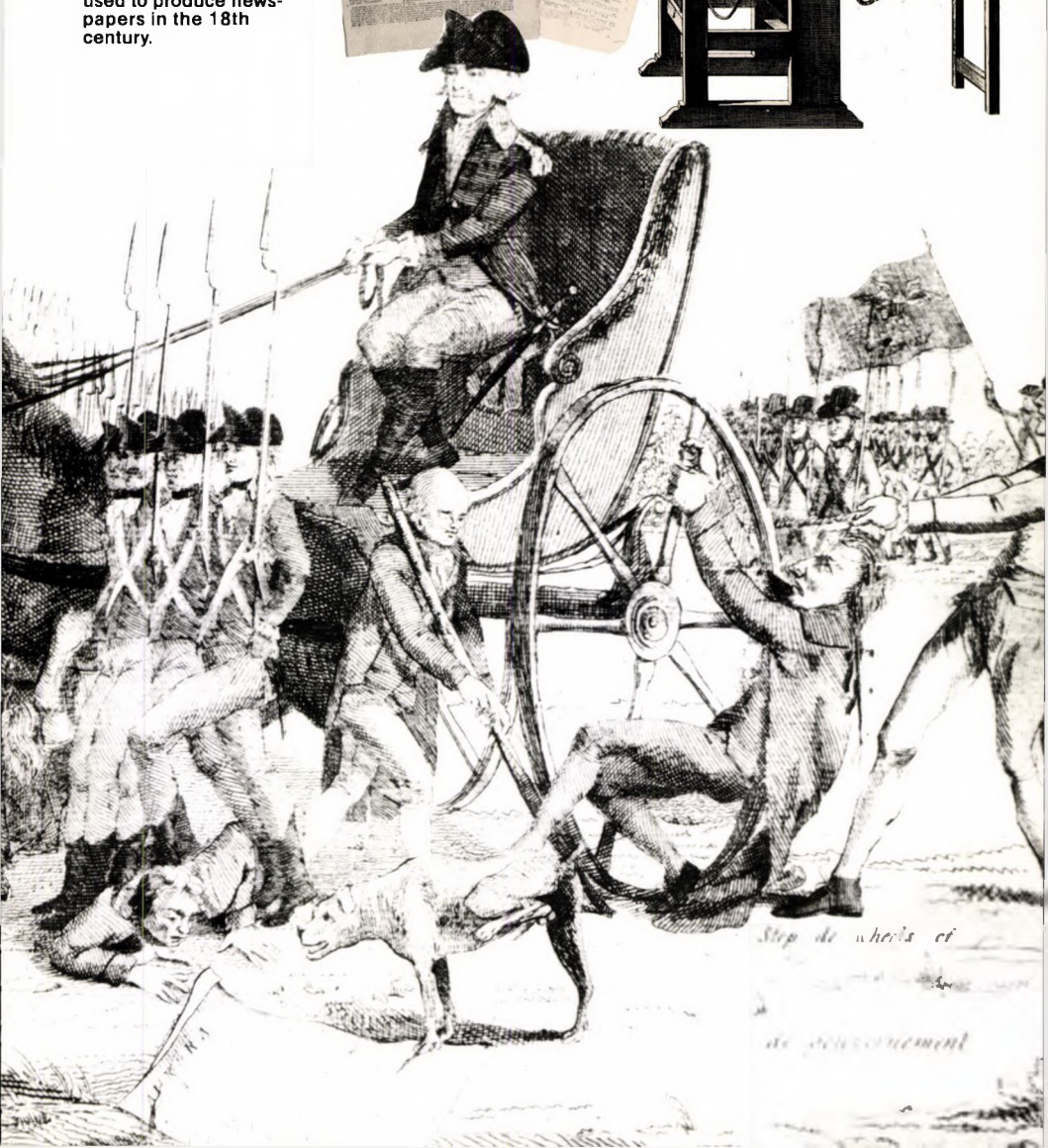

GENERAL ADVERTISER,

Political, Commercial, Agricultural and Literary Journal.

FRIDAY, October 6, 1790.

General Advertiser.





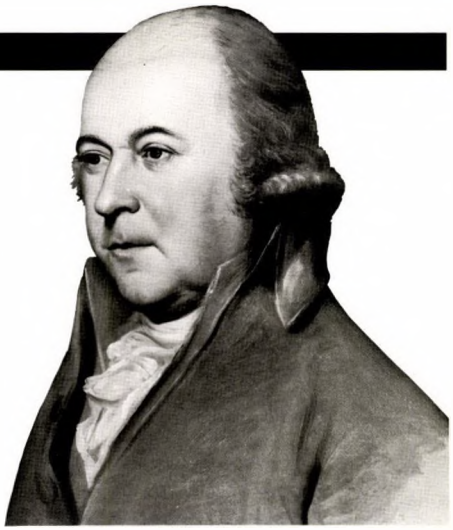
From Washington to Adams: The Peaceful Transfer of Political Power

The Presidential election of 1796 was the first bipartisan election in the history of the United States. Since the Constitution made no provision for political parties, candidates for President and Vice President were selected by Congressional caucus and listed together on a ballot with no distinction as to who was running for which office. Each State appointed electors equal in number to the total of the State's senators and representatives. Each elector voted for two candidates, and the highest vote getter (so long as it was a majority) became President and the next-highest Vice President. The Federalists nominated John Adams and Thomas Pinckney; the Republicans Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Adams won (by just three votes), and Jefferson came in second.

On March 4, 1797, the House Chamber was jammed with members of the Senate and House, foreign dignitaries, Government officials, and many Philadelphians. "Loud and reiterated applause involuntarily burst from the audience" as first John Adams (right), then Thomas Jefferson, and finally George Washington entered. Here to witness the inauguration of his successor, Washington "took a seat as a private citizen, a little in front of the seats assigned for the Senate." President-elect Adams addressed the assemblage and then received the oath of office from Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth. He left the room to the applause of the people. Thus, for the first time in American history and despite disruptions from near rebellion internally, violent politics, and international efforts

to sabotage the authority of our first president, the power of Government passed from one administration to another quietly, peacefully, and with dignity. The experiment in democratic government had taken root.

Engraver Amos Doolittle celebrated the new administration by issuing an Adams version of his popular print, *Display of the United States of America* (below). As in the earlier Washington edition, each State entry contained up-to-date population statistics plus the number of senators and representatives. The linked chain of States motif of the Washington version is echoed in the carpet William Peter Sprague designed for the Senate chamber in Congress Hall in 1791.



The Later History of Congress Hall

When the United States Government moved to Washington in 1800, Congress Hall reverted to its original use as the County Courthouse. Throughout the 19th century, the Orphans' Court and the Courts of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions met on the first floor, while the U.S. District and Circuit Courts used the Senate Chamber and other rooms upstairs. Congress Hall also served to house several municipal departments and the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

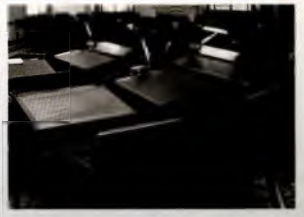
The building suffered from neglect, and the interior was rearranged several times to accommodate the needs of its various occupants. In 1895, the Pennsylvania Society of the Colonial Dames of America restored the Senate Chamber, but it was not until 1912-13 that the entire building was restored under the thoughtful and careful direction of a committee of the Philadelphia Chapter, American Institute of Architects.

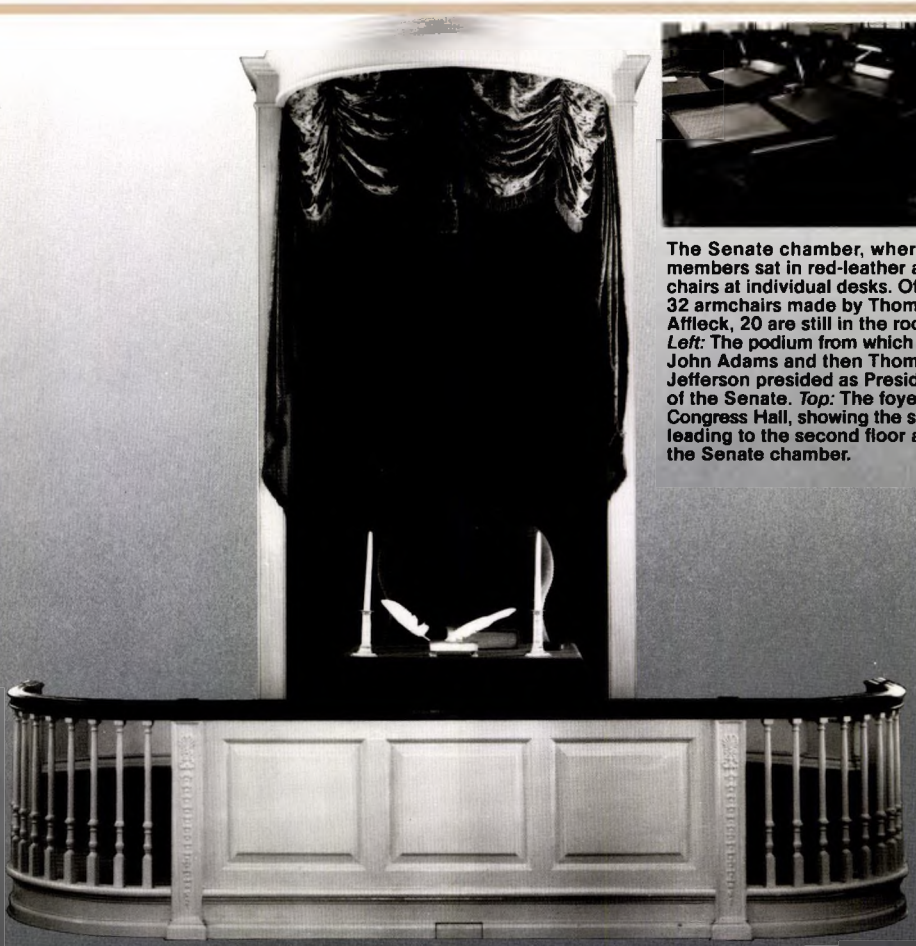
Congress Hall has been part of Independence National Historical Park since 1951. In 1960, after intensive historical research and architectural investigations provided the necessary documentation, the National Park Service began a thorough rehabilitation of the building and its furnishings. In 1962, an accurate and authentic restoration was completed (although old wooden timbers and trusses were reinforced with ones of steel). At that time, the restored and refurnished House of Representatives Chamber on the first floor was opened to the public. The Sen-

The House of Representatives chamber, where members sat in studded armchairs at mahogany desks arranged in a semi-circle. *Right:* The podium from which Frederick Muhlenberg presided as Speaker of the House during the First and Third Congresses.

ate Chamber on the second floor was refurnished and opened in 1963; four years later, the four smaller rooms on the second floor were also refurnished and opened.

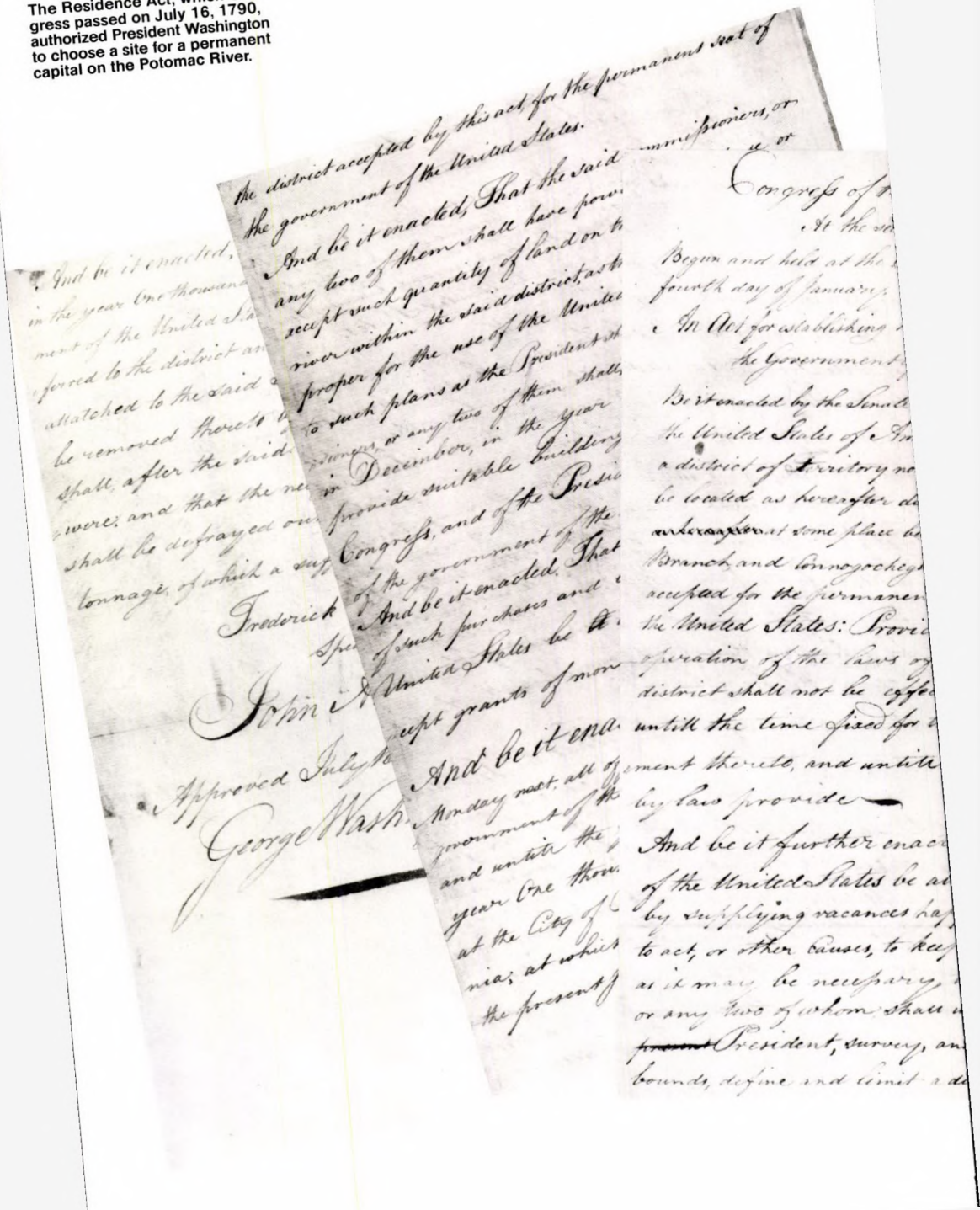
Today, Congress Hall, the oldest building standing that was once used by the Congress of the United States, is an impressive reminder of the men and events that shaped and influenced the formation of our Government.



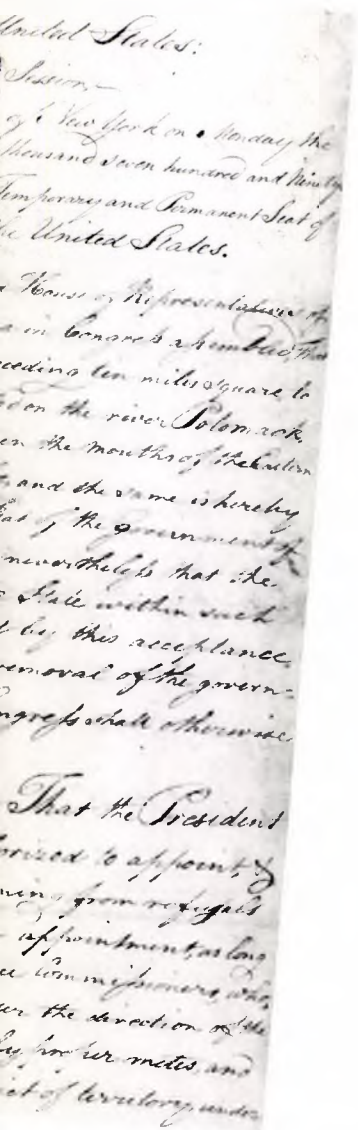


The Senate chamber, where members sat in red-leather armchairs at individual desks. Of the 32 armchairs made by Thomas Affleck, 20 are still in the room. *Left:* The podium from which first John Adams and then Thomas Jefferson presided as President of the Senate. *Top:* The foyer in Congress Hall, showing the stairs leading to the second floor and the Senate chamber.

The Residence Act, which Congress passed on July 16, 1790, authorized President Washington to choose a site for a permanent capital on the Potomac River.



Congress Moves to Washington



In December 1799 the first session of the Sixth Congress convened; its time in Philadelphia was drawing to a close. On December 18, John Marshall with "a voice that bespoke the anguish of his mind, and a countenance expressive of the deepest regret," informed the House that George Washington was dead. The next day he said: "Our WASHINGTON is no more! The Hero, the Sage, and the Patriot of America—the man on whom in times of danger every eye was turned and all hopes were placed—lives now only in his own great actions, and in the hearts of an affectionate and afflicted people."

Then in words written by Henry Lee, he voiced "the universal grief" at the "loss of a citizen, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Congress paid its final tribute to Washington a week later. Both the Senate and House chambers were draped in black, and "in front of the Speakers chair [was placed] a coffin covered with a black pall, bearing a military hat & sword." Finally, Congress voted to name the new Federal Capital for Washington, ordered that a fitting monument to him be erected there, and named his birthday a national holiday.

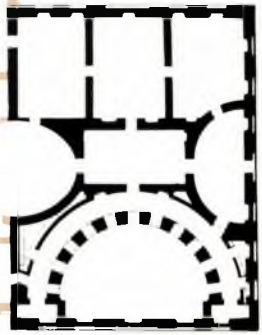
As Congress was winding up its business in Philadelphia, the Federalists warded off two attempts by the Republicans to repeal the Alien and Sedition Acts. On May 14, 1800, Congress adjourned, and the focus of national politics shifted to the swamps along the Potomac River where the new Capital was being built. Philadelphia, no longer either the State or Federal capital, slipped quietly into the 19th century and soon lost its pre-eminence among American cities.

The New Capital

The same political bargain that made Philadelphia the temporary capital in 1790 established the permanent seat of government along the Potomac River somewhere between two of its tributaries, the Eastern Branch (now Anacostia River) on the south and Conococheague Creek (west of Hagerstown, Maryland) on the north. President Washington chose the actual site, near the existing river ports of Georgetown, Maryland, and Alexandria, Virginia. For the architect of the new capital, he chose French-born engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant, whose plan for the new city left plenty of room for future expansion and growth.

Workmen began to clear the site in the summer of 1791, but the city (now named Washington) was far from being completed when officials began to arrive from Philadelphia in the summer of 1800. They found mud, mosquitoes, crowded lodgings, and half-finished government buildings. Members of Congress were appalled at the city's dreary appearance and lack of amenities. Representative Richard Griswold of Connecticut called it "both melancholy and ludicrous," while Senator Gouverneur Morris of New York concluded that all the new seat of American government really needed to make it perfect were "houses, cellars, kitchens, well informed men, amiable women, and other little trifles of this kind . . . ." It would be many months before Washington would shed its image of "a city in ruins" for one more befitting the capital of an aspiring nation.

The design of the Capitol building came about through competitive bidding, the winner receiving $500 and a city lot. Amateur architect Dr. William Thornton's entry (shown here in a slightly revised version, the original plan being lost) was selected in 1792 because it "captivated the eyes and judgment of all." Washington admired its "grandeur, simplicity and convenience." He laid the building's cornerstone on September 18, 1793. Thornton's design was later modified.



This watercolor by Philadelphia artist and engraver William Birch shows the North Wing of the Capitol building, the only portion completed by the time Congress assembled in Washington in 1800.

National Park Service

For Further Reading

Bowling, Kenneth R., and Helen E. Veit, eds. *The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

Christman, Margaret C. S. *The First Federal Congress, 1789-1791.* Washington, D.C.: Published by the Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery and the United States Congress, 1989.

Cunningham, Nobel E., Jr. *The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957.

Krout, John A., and Dixon Ryan Fox. *The Completion of Independence, 1790-1830.* A volume in A History of American Life Series. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930.

Miller, John C. *The Federalist Era, 1789-1801.* A volume in The New American Nation Series. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960.

White, Leonard D. *The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948.

National Park Handbooks are published to support the National Park Service's management programs and to promote understanding and enjoyment of the more than 350 National Park System sites, which represent important examples of our country's natural and cultural inheritance. More than 100 titles are in print. They are sold at parks and can be purchased by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

U.S. Department of the Interior

Illustration Credits
All illustrations are National Park Service or Independence National Historical Park except the following: 9, 26 (Rush), 27, Library Company of Philadelphia; 12-13, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; 14-15 (Malcolm painting), The Dietrich American Foundation, Philadelphia; 15 (Muhlenberg), 34, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; 21 (cartoon), Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.; 23 (Carroll), The Baltimore Museum of Art; 35, New York State Historical Association; 38-39 (cartoon), New-York Historical Society; 41 (Doolittle print), 46-47, Library of Congress. (The originals of all but one of the portraits reproduced on pages 22-25 hang in the Second Bank of the United States, Independence National Historical Park.)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Congress Hall, Capitol of the United States, 1790-1800: Independence National Historical Park, Pennsylvania/produced by the Division of Publications, National Park Service.
p. cm.—(Official national park handbook; 147)
Supt. of Docs. no.: I 29.9/5: 147
1. Congress Hall (Philadelphia, Pa.) 2. Independence National Historical Park (Philadelphia, Pa.) United States—Capitol and capital—History—18th century. 4. United States. Congress—History—18th century. 5. United States—Politics and government—1789-1797. 6. United States—Politics and government—1797-1801. 7. Philadelphia (Pa.)—Buildings, structures, etc. I. United States. National Park Service. Division of Publications. II. Series: Handbook (United States. National Park Service. Division of Publications); 147.
F158.8.C7C66 974.8'11—dc20 90-13556
ISBN 0-912627-42-5

☆GPO:1990—262-098/20001

Congress Hall

Capitol of the United States, 1790-1800

Official National Park Handbook

ISBN 0-912627-42-5