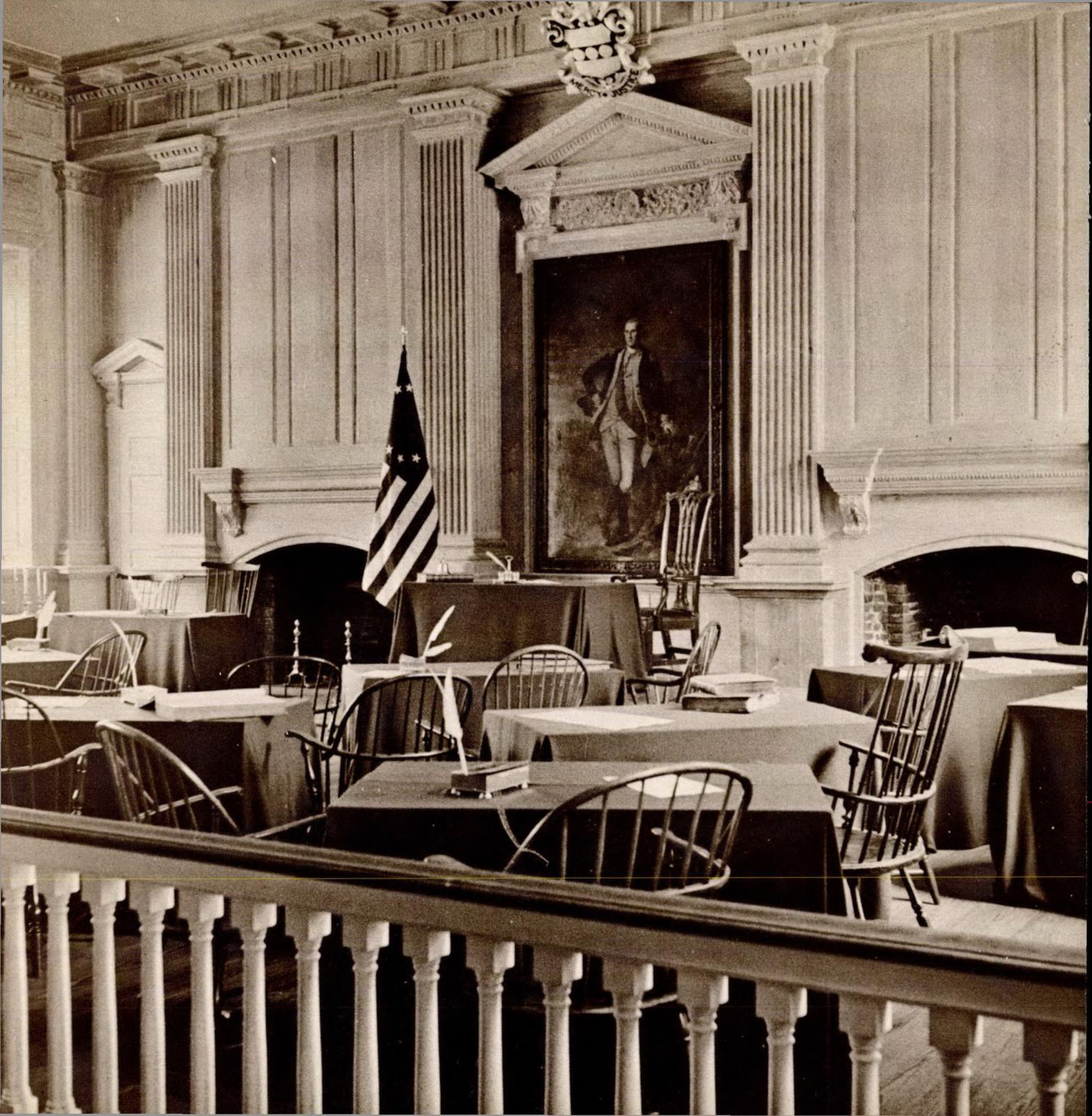


Restoration and  
Refurnishing of  
INDEPENDENCE HALL  
1953-1963



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The Role of the  
General Federation of Women's Clubs  
in the  
Restoration and Refurnishing of  
Independence Hall  
1953-1963



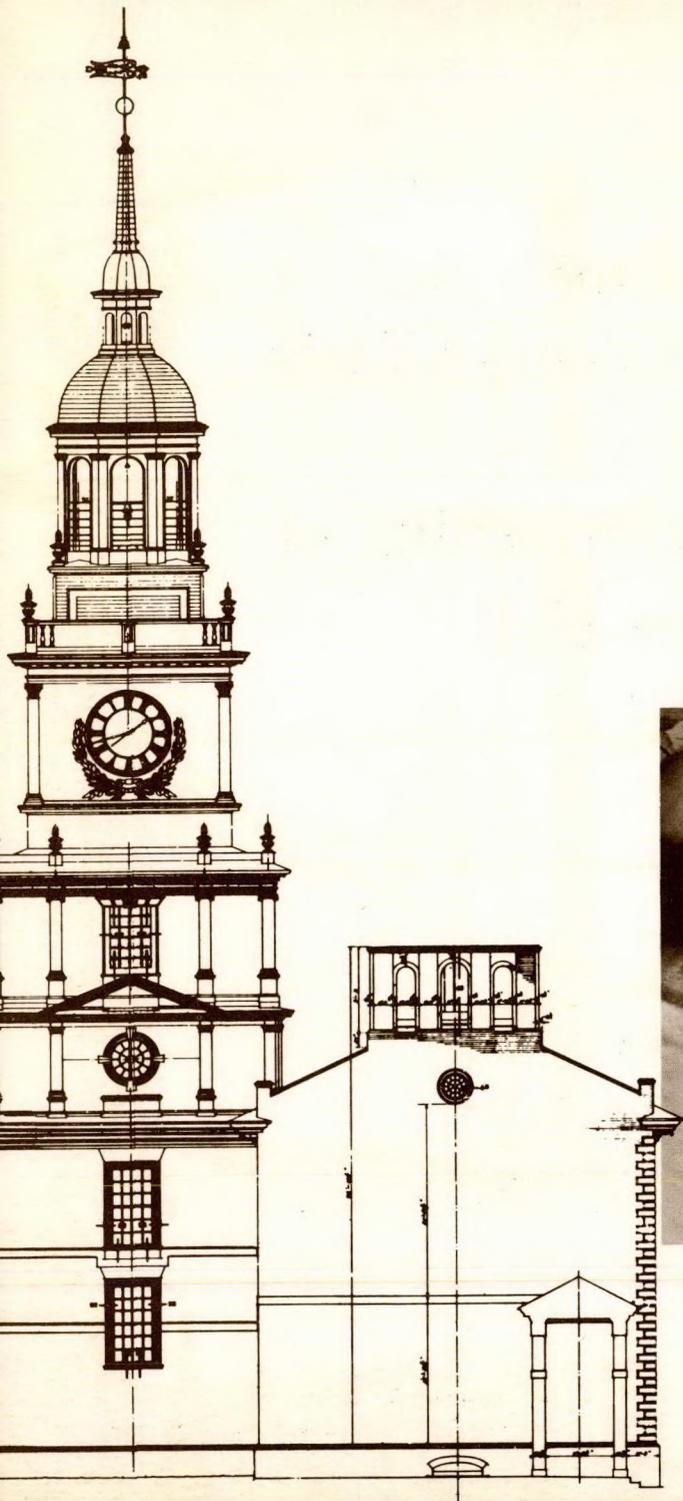
*A Report by the  
National Park Service*

*United States Department of the Interior*

*Ronald F. Lee, Regional Director, Northeast Region  
M. O. Anderson, Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park*

*Stewart L. Udall  
Secretary of the Interior*

*Conrad L. Wirth  
Director National Park Service*

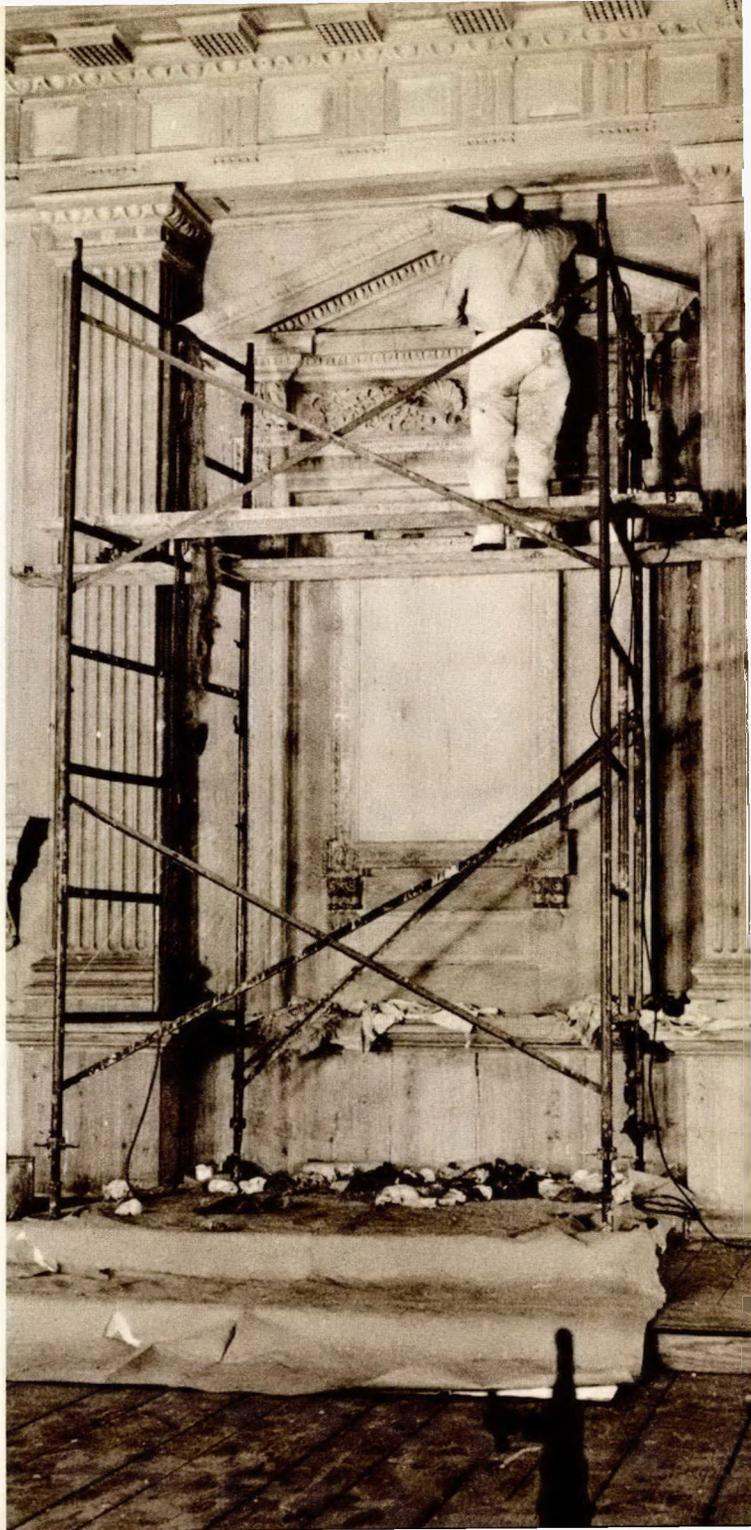


**To the Membership of the General Federation of Women's Clubs:**

*On June 17, 1953, almost ten years to the day, your then President, Mrs. Oscar A. Ahlgren, and I as Director of the National Park Service, met in my office in Washington and approved a plan. This plan, prepared by Mrs. John L. Whitehurst, former President and Chairman of your Americanism Department, outlined a nationwide campaign by the Federation to raise funds for the restoration and refurnishing of Independence Hall. The campaign was successfully completed during the following year and the National Park Service promptly undertook to carry out its end of the bargain.*

*The tenth anniversary of that meeting affords me a most welcome opportunity to give you through these pages a brief, pictorial account of our stewardship of the funds you so generously donated. In expressing once again our most sincere appreciation of this generosity, I do so with the hope that you in turn will feel satisfied with the manner in which we are carrying out that promise to you — and the American people as a whole.*

*Conrad L. Witt*



In a letter dated August 2, 1954, Mrs. Oscar A. Ahlgren, president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, presented a check to the Director of the National Park Service in the amount of \$209,541.82. The check represented voluntary contributions by a vast number of organizations and individuals, brought together under the leadership of the Federation for the purpose of implementing the Federation's Americanism Program: to stimulate a greater consciousness of our national heritage.

The fund was to be used by the National Park Service, she wrote, "*in connection with refurnishing and restoring the first floor of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*" The letter prescribed eight specific conditions concerning the use of the fund, to which the Director readily assented. Two of the conditions specified, first:

*That the fund provided shall be specifically marked and reserved for use by the National Park Service to refurnish and restore, insofar as possible, the first floor interior of Independence Hall to its appearance during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, with particular regard for the period, 1775-1787,*

and second,

*That the refurnishing and restoration work . . . shall be carried forward by successive stages as available conclusive research data permits, refurnishing to receive priority attention. An initial and partial stage of refurnishing and restoration shall begin in 1954 following the deposit and availability of funds under this agreement. Additional work will be carried forward in 1955. Final completion of all phases of the project shall proceed as rapidly as the status of available funds and research data permits.*

Members of the Federation will be interested to know that the check their president sent that day represented the largest single amount ever applied to Independence Hall up to that time and came 222 years after construction of the building began, 201 years after the Liberty Bell was placed in the steeple, and exactly 178 years to the day after 55 representatives of the 13 original colonies affixed their signature to the now familiar engrossed parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence in the Assembly Room of Independence Hall.

Time and man brought many changes to this venerable building in which our Nation was founded, and had the Founding Fathers returned in 1954, they would not have easily recognized the scenes of their great work. The interior architecture reflected 19th century modernizations, restorations and reconstructions; the furnishings, except for the priceless inkstand used at the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the "Rising Sun" Chair in which Washington sat while presiding over the Constitutional Convention, were gone; and, as we were to discover later (in no small part due to the restoration work made possible by the Federation donation) structural deterioration had reached an advanced and dangerous state. The help of the Women's Clubs came at precisely the right hour. It was not a bit too soon.

Following receipt of the first donation, all of the technical resources of the National Park Service and of a distinguished panel of collaborators were brought into play. Staff historians of Independence National Historical Park began an intensive search of hitherto unexplored archives. They combed governmental and private records in depositories in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Washington, and even more distant places for evidence relating to the physical history of the building and its furnishings. Simultaneously, the Park's architectural staff began its investigations by removing the thick layer of paint



from the paneling of the Assembly Room. The exhaustive investigation and recording of architectural evidence uncovered for the first time in many years, it was fully expected, would take much longer than the actual paint removal. Members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs attending the 1955 Convention in Philadelphia had the unique opportunity of seeing the woodwork of the Assembly Room in its natural finish.

Substantial progress had been made by the time of that Convention in authentically refurnishing the Assembly Room of Independence Hall so that the ladies present for the ribbon cutting ceremony on the afternoon of May 22 were better able to visualize these great moments in our Nation's history when our patient forbearers signed the Declaration of Independence and established the basic framework of our government under the Constitution.

Among the furnishings acquired that year most interesting were two 18-century Windsor chairs which had been in the possession of the Ziegler family of Lititz, Pa. ever since Conrad Ziegler (according to family tradition) bought them at a sale of State House (Independence Hall) furniture about 1800 and hauled them to Lititz in his farm wagon. This acquisition received the enthusiastic approval of the committee of experts assisting the National Park Service with the refurnishing proj-



ect who attested to the early origin of the chairs: Mr. Charles F. Montgomery, Director of Winterthur, the DuPont Museum at Wilmington, Delaware; Mr. Charles Nagel, Director of the Brooklyn Museum (now Director of the St. Louis Museum); and (the late) Mrs. Francis B. Crowninshield, noted authority on 18th century furniture.

Federal appropriations that year permitted intensive engineering and architectural surveys which pointed the way to a complete rehabilitation and restoration of the entire building. This work is still in progress but its completion, anticipated in 1965, will insure the stability of Independence Hall, we believe, for centuries to come.

This work, however, while it necessarily caused a temporary removal of all furnishings from the Assembly Room, has not interfered with the program of acquiring authentic furnishings. That program continues and its tempo is governed solely by factors having to do with research and the finding of adequate historical evidence.

Since the refurnishing program of Independence Hall was inaugurated in 1954, we have purchased with funds donated by the Women's Clubs about 300 pieces for use in the Assembly Room and Supreme Court Chamber. A brief description of the various types of furnishings and some items of particular significance follows:



**Windsor Chairs.** We have acquired 33 antique windsor chairs and two antique windsor settees. Their use in the State House during the 1775-1787 period is well documented. Among the chairs are four which bear the brand of Francis Trumble who is known to have supplied many chairs of this type just before and during the Revolution.

**Tables.** For the Assembly Room we have acquired seven antique stretcher tables. At least six more are needed to replace the modern tables constructed in 1955 for temporary use. Recently discovered evidence also indicates the need for a large oval table for the lawyers in the Supreme Court Chamber.

**Table Accessories.** Each table in the Assembly Room is equipped with a pewter inkstand of the rectangular type shown in Edward Savage's painting of "Congress Voting Independence." About half of these are antique, the others reproductions of an 18th century American piece in the Brooklyn Museum.

Each table likewise is supplied with a pair of brass candlesticks of the 1750-80 period. These are placed on the tables every afternoon during the winter months and lighted for one to two hours, depending on the need for illumination in the room. The room looks especially handsome by candlelight.



**Fireplace Equipment.** Two pair of brass andirons and a ten-plate stove dated 1772, the year two such stoves were purchased by the Pennsylvania Assembly for its room, have been purchased.

**Paintings.** Charles Willson Peale's full-length portrait of General Washington, owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, was in the Assembly Room at least part of the time Congress sat there; Mr. C. Gregory Stapko of Washington, D. C., was commissioned and delivered an excellent copy. An original oil on canvas of the Pennsylvania coat of arms by George Rutter, who executed the original State House copy, was purchased for the Supreme Court Chamber.

**Manuscripts.** Since we have provided inkstands, quill pens and paper for the members of Congress, it seemed fitting to show actual documents penned in the room between 1775 and 1787. Twenty-eight such documents have been acquired, including official documents in the Secretary's hand and drafts of resolutions.

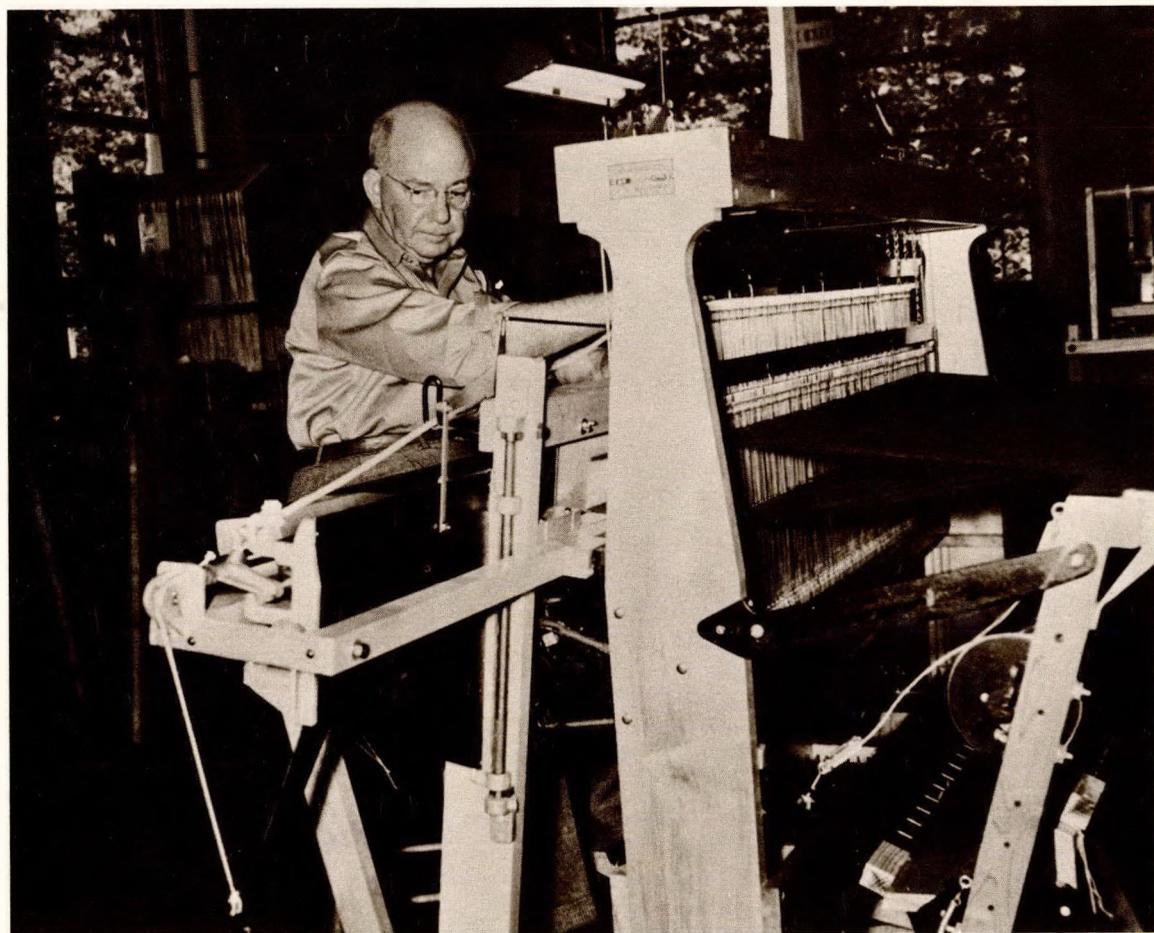
**Printed Matter.** We have acquired 77 books and pamphlets and seven broadsides. One book deserving special mention is a copy, in original binding, of the rare *Bible* published and printed by Robert Aitken in 1782, with the official endorsement of the Continental Congress, as attested in a printed statement inserted by the publisher between the Old and New Testaments.



## The Baize Table Covers

Both documentary and pictorial evidence indicates that the delegates' tables in Independence Hall were covered, at least part of the time, with ample covers of green baize, a rather coarse woolen fabric. When efforts to locate a modern material closely duplicating this proved unsuccessful, we turned to the Penland School of Handicrafts in the mountains of North Carolina. There, using many of the old techniques of spinning, dyeing and weaving illustrated on this and the next two pages, a group of dedicated craftsmen under the direction of Colonel Fishback produced for Independence Hall two complete sets of baize covers which are remarkably close in color and texture to the 18th-century swatch used as a pattern. We are particularly proud of this feature of the Assembly Room furnishings, which has drawn much favorable comment from visitors.





A number of important furnishing accessories have been acquired in the past three years, including two 1776 pamphlets — Parliament of Great Britain, *An Act to Prohibit All Trade with the Colonies* and William Smith, *An Oration in Memory of General Montgomery*; one newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Journal and the Weekly Advertiser* for August 8, 1787; four pairs of 18th-century brass candlesticks; three 18th-century pewter inkstands; and four 18th-century tobacco boxes.

Our work continues. The pace is perhaps a little slower than initially but this is to be expected as we approach completion of the project. Only by relaxing the strict standards of research which the National Park Service considers vital in a historical program and which the General Federation of Women's Clubs also specified in the Agreement with the National Park Service could we change this—and neither wants this.



## Strengthening the Symbol of Liberty

Because of concern for the safety of the Liberty Bell under the impact of the more than 11½-million visitors that come annually to Independence Hall, The Franklin Institute was asked, in 1960, to study this problem. A special committee advised that certain engineering measures were needed to strengthen the aging framework that supports the bell.

Following plans prepared by Institute engineers, a steel plate which was placed inside the yoke in 1929 has been replaced by a hidden T-shaped steel beam strong enough to bear twice the weight of the 2,080-pound bell. Heavy bolts have replaced the former slender ones which attached the yoke to the pivot pins or trunnions on either side of the framework. Thus the wooden yoke, believed to date from 1753, has been relieved of its load-carrying function.

To eliminate a "slight rocking motion" attributed to lateral instability of the vertical supports, a new steel platform was made and rigidly joined to these supports.

The changes are all internal and do not effect its outward appearance. The Liberty Bell itself has not been altered in any way. The new pedestal, like the old one, is hidden inside the present wooden platform.



## How General Federation of Women's Clubs Donations were *Invested*

Total donation by the General Federation of Women's Clubs. . . . .	\$215,564.34
Expended for removal of paint from woodwork on first floor of Independence Hall; restoration and fabrication of parts, repainting Tower Room; including labor and materials; reinforcement of yoke of Liberty Bell; acquisition of original and period furnishings and fabrication of facsimiles; and copy of oil painting of Washington by C. W. Peale. . . . .	118,631.73
	<hr/>
Available balance as of April 30, 1963. . . . .	\$ 96,932.61

# The Emerging Picture of

*"I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself standing in this place, where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live."*

Abraham Lincoln, speaking at  
Independence Hall in 1861.

It is for this great purpose, to properly commemorate the scene of these stirring events which have shaped the course of our history, that Independence National Historical Park is being developed.

Estimated to cost more than \$15-million, this project constitutes one of the largest, most complex, and most important ventures in the preservation and interpretation of an historic area ever attempted in this country. Two phases have been completed. The first, acquisition of land and buildings (approximately five city blocks) cost more than \$7-million. The second involved the demolition of more than 100 non-historic structures, including the 10-story Drexel Building.

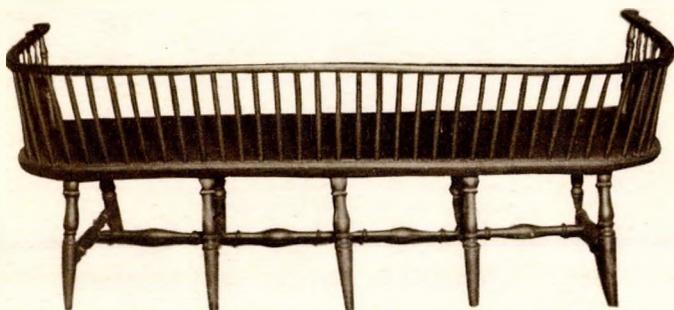
The third phase, restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures, is rapidly expanding, with seven structures currently undergoing restoration. Landscaping to provide a harmonious setting for the historic structures, the fourth phase, is nearing completion.

# Independence National Historical Park



## The Photographs

in this brochure depict work in progress on the restoration of Independence National Historical Park, and items of furniture and accessories acquired with funds donated for this purpose by the General Federation of Women's Clubs. The cover photo is reproduced through the courtesy of the Associated Press and the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin; the frontispiece through the courtesy of the Call-Chronicle Newspaper, Allentown, Pennsylvania. Those pictures illustrating the weaving of the baize table covers for the Assembly Room were supplied by the Penland School of Handicrafts, Penland, North Carolina.



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