



Foundation Document Overview

Independence National Historical Park

Pennsylvania



Contact Information

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Description

Established in 1948, Independence National Historical Park was created to protect the historic places associated with the birth of the American republic, standing as icons of freedom and democratic ideals for people around the world. The park spans more than 51 acres within the City of Philadelphia, preserving and interpreting a rich collection of the United States of America's Colonial, Revolutionary, and Federal period heritage. The park's designers were strongly influenced by the City Beautiful Movement as well as the trend toward colonial revival in design introduced at Williamsburg, Virginia. While the urban renewal movement in Philadelphia was underway, the National Park Service was working collaboratively with local preservationists and stakeholders in developing Independence National Historical Park. Pioneering historic structure restoration in the 1950s and 1960s, with architects, engineers, archeologists, curators, and historians working on Independence Hall as well as other park structures, landscapes, and collections, led to development of a modern methodology and rigorous standards for restoration and reconstruction that are still a model for the National Park Service and private sector professionals. Most of the park's historic structures are located in the vicinity of the four landscaped blocks between Philadelphia's Chestnut, Walnut, 2nd, and 6th Streets. Here, along these streets, amid these venerable houses and public buildings, colonists began their quest for freedom and independence. Here too, the United States of America was born and its ideals enacted in the Constitution.



The centerpiece of the park is Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the United States Constitution were debated and adopted in the late 18th century. Independence Hall and nearby Congress Hall were the principal meetinghouses of the Second Continental Congress from 1775 to 1783 and the Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1787. In Independence Square, the Declaration of Independence was read publicly for the first time on July 8, 1776. The legacy of the nation's founding documents—universal principles of freedom and democracy—has influenced lawmakers around the world and distinguished Independence Hall as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.

Across the street from Independence Square, the Liberty Bell, an iconic symbol of independence and an international symbol of freedom, is displayed in the Liberty Bell Center. Hung in the State House in 1753, it summoned the Pennsylvania Assembly to work. In the 1830s anti-slavery groups named it the Liberty Bell. The bell cracked sometime around 1846, but its message still rings out. Surrounding the Liberty Bell Center is the park's Independence Mall, one of Philadelphia's great outdoor public spaces, which runs between 5th and 6th Streets, from Chestnut Street to Race Street.

Description

Independence National Historical Park is much more than Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. The park preserves and interprets many of our country's most important resources associated with the establishment of the government of the United States of America. Carpenters' Hall is the site of the First Continental Congress held in September 1774. The Supreme Court of the United States first met at Philadelphia's Old City Hall. The site of the President's House, where George Washington and John Adams and their households lived and worked during their terms as the first and second presidents of the United States, prior to Adams' move to the White House in 1800, is interpreted by the park, especially in the paradox of the Washingtons bringing their enslaved people to work and live there. Franklin Court preserves the site of Benjamin Franklin's house and businesses, providing a window into the life and times of this founding father. Washington Square, one of William Penn's five original squares, is home to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution.

The park also protects the First and Second Bank buildings of the United States; the Merchants Exchange Building; and the faithfully reconstructed social, cultural, and political center of Philadelphia during the park's period of significance, the City Tavern. These are just a few of the many historic buildings and landscapes managed and protected by Independence National Historical Park.

With so many important places under its care, Independence National Historical Park works collaboratively with many partners and stakeholders in the stewardship of our national heritage. The park works closely with the city of Philadelphia and the state of Pennsylvania, and with the Independence Visitor Center Corporation jointly managing the Independence Visitor Center located on 6th and Market Streets. Some of the historic buildings in the park are still owned by private organizations such as the American Philosophical Society and the Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia, so the park must work closely with these groups on the protection and interpretation of these properties. The park is also involved with numerous



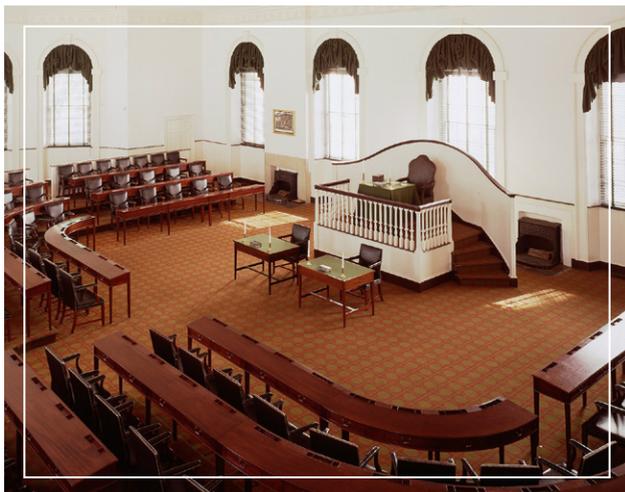
houses of worship and congregations, whose churches and cemeteries are an integral part of the historic significance of the park. Congress created the National Constitution Center as a private nonprofit organization in the park, located in a federally owned building on the mall, to be a nonpartisan interpreter of the history of the Constitution and its current relevance. There are numerous civic organizations, nonprofit groups, corporations, and countless stakeholders locally, nationally, and internationally that the park engages with on a regular basis. The diverse interests and passion of the park's many partners and stakeholders reflect the importance of buildings and resources protected by Independence National Historical Park.



Purpose



The birthplace of the United States of America, INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK preserves and interprets the buildings, grounds, and museum collections of outstanding national significance associated with the American Revolution and growth of the country. Individuals today can make meaningful connections with the events, ideas, and people represented by the park resources, including the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, a World Heritage Site.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Structures Associated with the Founding and Growth of the Nation**
- **Cultural Landscapes**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Archeological Resources**
- **Civic Responsibility and the Exercise of First Amendment Rights**
- **Pioneering Partnerships and Collaboration**

Independence National Historical Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

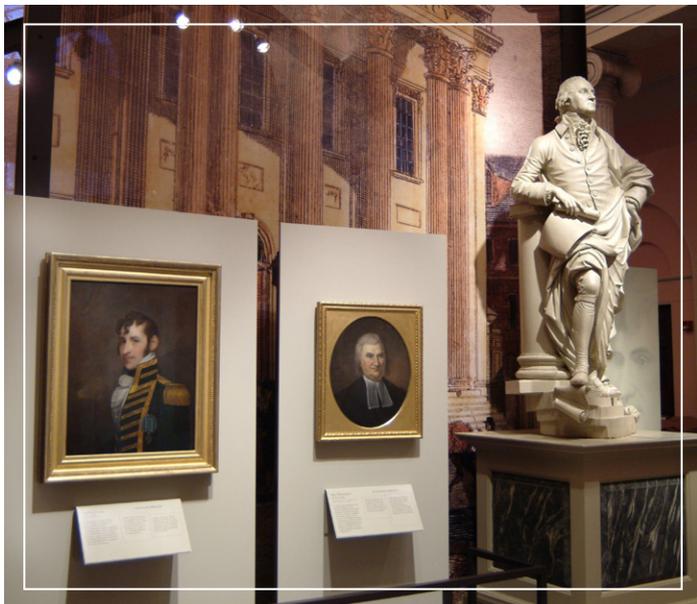
- **Appropriate Recreation**



Significance

Significance statements express why Independence National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- **Ideals of Freedom and Democracy:** Independence National Historical Park protects the buildings where the United States government was founded on the ideals of liberty, democracy, and religious freedom. Both the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, a World Heritage Site, are recognized as national and international symbols of these ideals.
- **The First and Second Continental Congress:** In 1774 the First Continental Congress met at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia to debate the need for a new course of action for the American colonies. Meeting again in 1776, this time at the State House, the Second Continental Congress expressed this new course of action through the Declaration of Independence, and provided direction to the American Revolution resulting in independence for a new nation.



- **Founding Documents of Democracy:** Within many of the historic buildings at Independence National Historical Park, the founding documents of modern democracy, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America were drafted, debated, and signed. These documents have served as models for other countries, contributing to the World Heritage Site designation for Independence Hall.
- **Establishment of the Executive Branch of Government:** The executive branch of the United States Government took shape here as the presidencies of George Washington (1790–1797) and John Adams (1797–1800) established enduring precedents for the executive office, and witnessed, with Adams' inauguration, the first peaceful transfer of executive power in the western world.
- **Establishment of the Legislative Branch of Government:** After the ratification of the Constitution of the United States, it was in Congress Hall where the legislative branch worked to bring the ideals of the revolution into reality by governing. Among the historic events that took place here were the establishment of the Bank of the United States, the Federal Mint, the Department of the Navy and the ratification of Jay's treaty with England. The Bill of Rights was fully ratified the year Congress first met in this building.

Significance

- **Establishment of the Judicial Branch of Government:** The Constitution established the Supreme Court as the judicial branch of the United States government; the court made its first decisions in 1791 while meeting in Philadelphia's City Hall, today known as Old City Hall.
- **First Bank of the United States:** As the first federally chartered bank, the first Bank of the United States established the first standard currency for the young country, resulting in greater economic stability, a central role for the federal government in the monetary system, and the ability for the nation to pay off debt resulting from the Revolutionary War.
- **Benjamin Franklin:** Franklin Court commemorates and preserves the location of Benjamin Franklin's home in Philadelphia. Its museum, working print shop, and post office provide a window into the life of Benjamin Franklin, who personified the spirit, ideals, curiosities, and ingenuity of 18th-century America.
- **Economic Growth of a Young Nation:** Designed by renowned architect William Strickland, the Second Bank of the United States and the Merchants Exchange Building, the first stock exchange in America, reflect the entrepreneurial spirit and developing economy of the young nation.



- **Washington Square:** With its multilayered history, Washington Square is one of the five original squares designated by William Penn in Philadelphia. The square is the 18th century burial ground for many Revolutionary War soldiers, yellow fever victims, and African Americans, and includes the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution.
- **Relationships with American Indians:** As the new national government of the United States took shape in Philadelphia, the executive and congressional branches formed sovereign-to-sovereign relationships with American Indian nations, while the president of the United States received visiting delegations to Philadelphia such as the Iroquois and Cherokee, and negotiated treaties with these tribes.
- **Paradox of Freedom and Slavery:** Seeking to win agreement for a new Constitution that would replace the Articles of Confederation, delegates to the Constitutional Convention postponed the discussion about slavery in America by stating that the importation of slaves would cease in 1808. Because this weak clause did not address the issues of slave ownership or the emancipation of individuals held in bondage, the paradox of a nation conceived in liberty but once bound by legalized slavery can be explored at Independence National Historical Park.

Significance

- **First Amendment Rights:** Since the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence by John Nixon in 1776, the grounds now constituting Independence National Historical Park have long been a venue for public dissent and a place to exercise First Amendment Rights, a tradition that continues today. Notable examples of exercising the freedom of free speech include abolitionist Frederick Douglass’s famous 1844 speech while a fugitive slave and Susan B. Anthony’s first public reading of the “Women’s Declaration of Rights” urging women’s suffrage on July 4, 1876.
- **Religious Freedom:** The many houses of worship and cemeteries affiliated with Independence National Historical Park represent the spirit of religious diversity and tolerance that began with William Penn and became federal law with the passage of the Bill of Rights.
- **Urban Renewal and Historic Preservation:** The making of Independence National Historical Park was achieved by creating public parks and open green space in order to showcase iconic historic buildings connected to the founding of the nation. Influenced by the City Beautiful Movement as well as the trend toward colonial revival in design introduced at Williamsburg, Virginia, the National Park Service worked with local preservationists in the development of Independence National Historical Park and pioneered many of the techniques commonly used in historic preservation today.



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Theme 1 – What Was “Revolutionary” About the American Revolution?**

The American Revolution was the result of new ideas expressed in our founding documents, which created profound changes in power, perception, and opportunity that continue to affect people in the United States and around the world.

- **Theme 2 – Liberty: The Promises and the Paradoxes**

The promises of liberty and equality granted in the founding documents present a paradox: not only are they ideals to strive for but also they are unfulfilled promises for people who struggle to be fully included as citizens of our nation.

- **Theme 3 – E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many, One**

The motto E Pluribus Unum, meaning “out of many, one,” illustrates a distinctive characteristic of the United States—a democratic nation of many states and diverse people with different cultures, beliefs, and political ideas—that contributes to the dynamic tension and growth of American society.

- **Theme 4 – Benjamin Franklin – the Relevant Revolutionary**

Benjamin Franklin was revolutionary in his thinking and actions. He struggled to achieve liberty but did not always extend it to others, and he worked to bring many people together for a common goal.

