Independence

Independence National Historical Park
Pennsylvania

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Liberty Bell cracked long ago, but as an icon of freedom its voice has never been stilled. To Americans who demanded independence on this site, and to those who even now seek self-determination, it still declares "Proclaim Liberty throughout All the land unto All the Inhabitants Thereof." Its crack is a reminder that liberty is imperfect, hopefully evolving to include those who have been denied full participation in a democratic society.

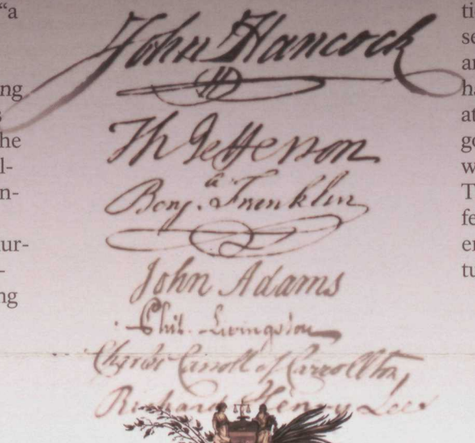
The bell was first heard in 1753 atop the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia. Its inscription was prophetic, for it was in this city that colonial representatives took some of the earliest steps towards independence from Great Britain. In response to Parliament's punitive Intolerable Acts, the First Continental Congress gathered in September 1774 in Carpenters' Hall, where it drew up a Declaration of Rights and Grievances and an appeal to King George III. No concessions were forthcoming, so the Second Continental Congress convened in the State House in May 1775. By this time the first shots had been fired at Lexington and Concord. Delegates who had been managing an economic battle over trade and taxes now had to direct a war.

Independence, however, was not yet the goal. Many colonists remained loyal to Britain, and some, though anxious to throw off Parliament's yoke, still wished to keep the stability and security that came with being citizens of the British empire. George III, unmoved by Congress's Olive Branch Petition affirming the colonies' loyalty to the crown, declared them to be in a state of rebellion. In June 1776 Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee moved that the colonies be proclaimed "Free and Independent States." Thomas Jefferson drafted the formal declaration, appealing to natural principles of justice and equality. The delegates adopted the Declaration in Independence Hall on July 4; what had been colonies were now sovereign states on the road to becoming one nation.

"A More Perfect Union"

With the bold phrases of the Declaration of Independence still echoing through the land, the Continental Congress had to translate an assertion of freedom into a working reality. In November 1777 it produced the Articles of Confederation, which, rather than providing for real union, were in James Madison's words "a treaty of alliance between independent and Sovereign States." Individual states were jealous of their sovereignty, allowing the central government few real powers other than to direct the war. Yet it was the first halting step towards a stable federalism, in which power was shared by a central government and local states.

The Articles served the new nation during the war, but their obvious inadequacies, and popular movements demanding debt relief, spurred widespread sentiment for reform. Fifty-five delegates were sent to Philadelphia in 1787 to revise the Articles for "the preservation of the Union." Soon after convening, however, the delegates agreed to create an entirely new constitutional government. The Great Compromise, calling for a House of Representatives with proportional representation and a Senate with each state represented equally, ensured that small states and varied sectional interests would all have a voice. The states retained some attributes of sovereignty, but the central government had stronger powers, now with executive and judicial branches. Though the Constitution was not perfect—it failed to adequately address slavery—it provided a firm yet flexible structure around which to build a nation.



Yale University Art Gallery, Trumbull Collection

Richard Henry Lee *(far left)* formally proposed that the colonies declare independence. Thomas Jefferson *(second from left)* drafted the document, and John Adams *(second from right)* worked tirelessly for its approval. Benjamin Franklin *(right)*, Adams, and Congress revised the draft, but the Declaration's enduring words we owe to Jefferson.

John Trumbull's painting depicts the presentation of the Declaration to John Hancock, President of the Second Continental Congress.

The sunrise detail on the president's chair appears over Hancock's signature *(far left)*.

Franklin portrait courtesy National Portrait Gallery. Photograph of Liberty Bell by Top Guns Corporate Photography. All images not otherwise credited are from the National Park Service collection. Painting of Independence Hall NPS, by Lynn Gallagher.

The Road To Nationhood

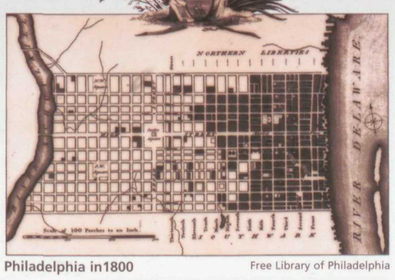
1774

Parliament punishes Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party by passing the Intolerable Acts; Boston Harbor is closed to commerce. Other colonies rally to Massachusetts's cause. In May 1774 the Virginia Assembly calls for a meeting in Philadelphia of representatives from all the colonies to plan a response—the First Continental Congress.

1775

Armed conflict begins in Massachusetts at Lexington and Concord in April; the Second Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia in May, appointing George Washington as commander in chief of the Continental forces. As Congress debates its course of action, the first pitched battle of the Revolution takes place in June at Bunker Hill.

Syng inkstand used for the signing of the Declaration of Independence



Philadelphia in1800 Free Library of Philadelphia

1776

Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense* in January, galvanizing the colonists. Delegates to Congress sever ties to Great Britain and sign the Declaration of Independence creating 13 sovereign states. Benjamin Franklin is dispatched to France as one of America's first ambassadors.

1777

British General William Howe occupies Philadelphia in September and remains until June of the following year. The British troops take food from citizens and strip furnishings from the city's structures. Hundreds of American prisoners of war, succumbing to wounds and disease, are buried in Washington Square. After almost a year of debate, Congress adopts the Articles of Confederation in November.

Gen. George Washington
White House Collection

1778

France and America form an alliance, negotiated by Benjamin Franklin, obligating France to fight for American independence. Within four months, France and Great Britain are at war.

Political cartoon urging unity The Granger Collection

1781

Congress appoints Philadelphia merchant and banker Robert Morris as Superintendent of Finance to address the government's rising debt and the nation's rapidly growing inflation. Morris is the force behind the creation of the Bank of North America. His brilliant financial strategies help finance the victory at Yorktown. The Articles of Confederation go into effect as the last state ratifies them in March.

1783

Britain and the United States sign the Treaty of Paris, ending the war. Articles include cessation of hostilities, recognition of U.S. independence, and the withdrawal of British land and naval forces.

1786

The spectacle of a central government helpless to aid Massachusetts during Shay's Rebellion is a major reason for the convention in Philadelphia the following year.

Second Street and Christ Church, 1800, by William Birch

1787

A convention is called to reform the Confederation, which has no executive or judicial branches and no control over taxation. Delegates begin framing a new constitution in May and sign it in September. During the state ratification process, pro-constitutional essays published in the New York press, called the "Federalist Papers," have a marked influence on the debates.The last state required ratifies the Constitution in June 1788.

1789

The first Federal Congress convenes in New York. Ten amendments to the Constitution—the Bill of Rights—are ratified by the states in 1791.

1790

Philadelphia becomes the nation's temporary capital while the permanent site is prepared on the Potomac River.

1800

U.S. Government moves to Washington, D.C.

Visiting the Park

Welcome to Philadelphia and Independence National Historical Park, where so much of our Colonial, Revolutionary, and Federal-period heritage is preserved. Here, along these old streets, amid these venerable houses and public buildings, Americans began their quest for freedom and independence. Here, too, the United States was born, and its ideals were enacted in the Constitution. We invite you to make the most of your tour of this great historic place and wish you a rewarding visit. Start your visit at the visitor center.

A Cosmopolitan City

To painter Gilbert Stuart, early Philadelphia was the "Athens of America." With amazing speed it had grown from William Penn's "green countrie towne" of the 17th century to a thriving river port and the largest city of British North America. It was the most sophisticated of the colonial cities—the acknowledged cultural, financial, and political capital. Quakers and other English settlers, Scotch-Irish, Germans, immigrants from other American colonies, and those fleeing slavery formed a diverse community known for its tolerance and for the opportunities awaiting industrious artisans and young apprentices. The tight economic network of merchants, artisans, and shopkeepers formed the core of Philadelphia's revolutionary generation.

Planning Your Visit

To reach the parking garage under Independence Visitor Center on 6th Street between Arch and Market Streets: Eastbound via I-76 and I-676: Exit from I-76 to I-676 (left exit) and continue to 6th Street exit (Independence Hall). Turn right on 6th Street. Entrance to garage is on the left beyond Arch Street. Westbound via Benjamin Franklin Bridge (U.S. 30): Follow the signs for 6th Street, "Historic Area;" proceed to garage as above. Southbound via I-95: Take Exit 22 to Callowhill Street. Turn right on Callowhill Street to 6th Street. Turn left on 6th Street; proceed to garage as above. Northbound via I-95: Take Exit 22, I-676/Independence Hall (left exit). Stay to the right for I-676 East/Independence Hall to Callowhill Street. Continue straight on Callowhill Street to 6th Street. Turn left on 6th Street; proceed to garage as above.

For Your Safety Be careful crossing busy streets. Watch your step on uneven surfaces. Guard your valuables and lock your car.

For More Information
Independence National Historical Park
313 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215-597-8974 (TTY 215-597-1785)
Internet: www.nps.gov/inde
National Park Service: www.nps.gov.

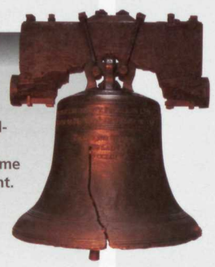
☆GPO:2001—472-470/40085 Printed on recycled paper

Map Legend

Park building open to public

Park building open by tour only; sign up at visitor center

Park building not open to public



Liberty Bell Pavilion

The Liberty Bell is an international symbol of freedom. Hung in the State House in 1753, it summoned the Pennsylvania Assembly to debate the Stamp Act and other burdensome actions by the British Parliament. The Bell cracked sometime between 1817 and 1846; exactly when remains a mystery.

Photograph © 2001 John McGrail

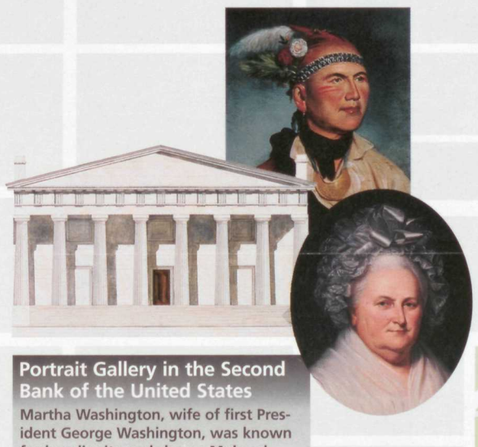
Independence Hall

Delegates meeting in the Assembly Room of the Pennsylvania State House created the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Old City Hall housed the U.S. Supreme Court from 1791 to 1800. The U.S. Congress met in Congress Hall from 1790 to 1800.

Paintings of buildings NPS, by Lynn Gallagher

Declaration House

In 1776, while a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Thomas Jefferson rented two upstairs rooms in the modest house of bricklayer Jacob Graff. Here, on his lap desk, Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence. This reconstruction dates from 1975.



Portrait Gallery in the Second Bank of the United States

Martha Washington, wife of first President George Washington, was known for her dignity and charm; Mohawk leader Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) was allied with the British, but was feted in Philadelphia in the 1790s.

Market Street Houses

In the 1780s Benjamin Franklin built three of these five rowhouses as rental properties. In one of them is an operating 18th-century print shop similar to Franklin's own business.

Carpenters' Hall

This well-crafted building was erected between 1770 and 1774 by the Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia, a guild dedicated to the improvement of its members' skills. The First Continental Congress met here in 1774.

Todd House

Lawyer John Todd and Dolley Payne Todd lived here from 1791 to 1793, when Todd died of Yellow Fever. Dolley later married congressman, and future president, James Madison. The house depicts middle-class life in 18th-century Philadelphia.

Bishop White House

William White was a bishop in the Protestant Episcopal Church formed after the Revolution. His home, decorated in the Federal style, typifies those of Philadelphia's elite. Political leaders were guests here, including President George Washington.

First Bank of the United States

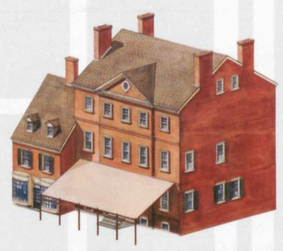
Alexander Hamilton was the force behind the creation of the First Bank of the United States in 1791 to regulate a national monetary system. The stately building, completed in 1797, is an early example of neoclassical architecture. *Not open to the public.*

Philadelphia Exchange

William Strickland's fine example of the Greek Revival style is a study in grace and bold form. Built in 1834, it was the hub of the city's growing commercial and financial activities, and is the oldest stock exchange building in the U.S. *Not open to the public.*

New Hall Military Museum

The Carpenters' Company erected a building on this site in 1791 for its own use, as well as for the offices of the first Secretary of War, Henry Knox. The reconstruction houses a museum devoted to the origins and early history of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.



City Tavern

This social, cultural, and political center—the "most genteel" tavern in America—was the site of business transactions, patriot gatherings, and musical performances. The restaurant now on the site is a faithful reconstruction.

Using Your Time at the Park

Where to Start Begin at the visitor center by seeing the 28-minute film *Independence*. Park rangers, along with orientation exhibits, can answer your questions and help you plan your visit. They can also provide maps in 12 foreign languages, information concerning seasonal programs, and special services for children, non-English-speaking visitors, and visitors with disabilities. Books, maps, souvenirs, and toys are available at park museum shops in the visitor center and Pemberton House.

Hours and Admission Most park buildings are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. These hours are subject to change without notice. In summer some buildings may remain open into the evening. Admission to the Todd and Bishop White houses is by tour only; reservations for these tours must be made at the visitor center on the day of your visit. All sites are free except house tours and the Second Bank Portrait Gallery.

For the current details about admission to park buildings and on how your user fees help to improve the park, please visit our website at www.nps.gov/inde or call 215-597-8974.

Although it is small in total area, the park contains a variety of sites that cannot easily be seen in one day. If you have only a short time to spend, we urge you to visit Independence Hall (a World Heritage Site) and the Liberty Bell Pavilion first. If you have more time, here are some additional suggestions on what to see:

Half-Day Visit
Visitor Center
Liberty Bell Pavilion
Independence Hall
Great Essentials exhibit
Congress Hall
Franklin Court
Carpenters' Hall

One- to Two-Day Visit
Visitor Center
Liberty Bell Pavilion
Independence Hall
Great Essentials exhibit
Congress Hall
Old City Hall
Portrait Gallery in the Second Bank of the United States
Franklin Court
Carpenters' Hall
New Hall Military Museum
Bishop White House
Todd House
Declaration House
Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial
Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site
Deshler-Morris House