INDEPENDENCE HALL is a symbol of more than political significance. It is a symbol of freedom of the mind as well. During the late eighteenth century, it presided over a noble group of buildings and a company of great men who were the germinating cell of American culture.

The story of the work of conservation and redevelopment now being undertaken to bring these buildings (long hidden amid slums, warehouses, and skyscrapers) back into public view, is told here by one who was Chairman of the State Committee on Conservation of Cultural Resources during World War II and Vice-President of the Independence Hall Association—Dr. William E. Lingelbach, Professor Emeritus of History and former Dean of the College of the University of Pennsylvania, at one time Vice-President and now Librarian of the American Philosophical Society.

PHILADELPHIA AND THE CONSERVATION OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE

By William E. Lingelbach

HISTORIC Philadelphia is not just another city or geographical area in which historic sites and buildings are located. It is the old Quaker city, developed during the century and a half after its founding by William Penn on a well-chosen site between two rivers—the Delaware and the Schuylkill—with a beautiful country to the west and north as perfectly adapted to the manorial system as was the city proper, with its fine waterfront, to commerce and industry. With its rectangular street system, a central square of ten acres, and four others of eight acres each, it was the first formally planned city in the British Colonies. Its growth was rapid. Although founded sixty years after New York, and half a century after Boston, it soon outstripped them, and became the first city of the American Colonies, with a population of forty thousand, second only to London in the British Empire at the beginning of the Revolution.
INDEPENDENCE SQUARE
looking east from Sixth Street. Left to right: (1) Congress Hall; (2) the State House; (3) the Hall of the American Philosophical Society; (4) the Hall of the Library Company of Philadelphia. From the Columbia Magazine, 1790.
Courtesy Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Although the city may not have been officially declared the capital of the country, it was the seat of the government during most of the Revolution and the decade from 1790 to 1800, and the real metropolis of the nation till the second decade of the nineteenth century. It was noted for its schools, colleges, hospitals; its preeminence in science and medicine; its libraries, among them the old Library Company, started by Franklin "to bring books to every citizen," the Library of the American Philosophical Society, designed more particularly for scientific and scholarly ends; popular bookshops, famous book auctions, artists' supply shops catering to artists like Charles Willson Peale, Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully, and others; and an amazing number of fine churches of every faith—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—all enjoying the broad religious toleration established by the Founder; two theaters; and the first great natural history museum in America.

Its homes and places of business were modest and in good taste. Those that stand today—and there are surprisingly many—speak quite as eloquently as do the journals, contemporary newspapers, diaries, and correspondence preserved in manuscript or early imprints in our libraries, of the extraordinary intellectual and cultural life of this busy industrial and commercial city.

Of all the areas involved in the redevelopment program, Inde-
Independence Square, with its superb group of colonial buildings, is unique, and properly the center with which the others in the old part of the city are all to be integrated. The remarkable role of this historic square in the stirring formative events of the nation's history was beautifully expressed by the late Carl Van Doren several years before his death:

The United States was created in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, when the Continental Congress voted the final form of the Declaration of Independence. The United States was perpetuated on September 17, 1787, when the Federal Convention completed its work on the Constitution and referred it, through Congress, to the individual states for ratification. Both these great decisions were made in the same chamber in what is now called Independence Hall, but was then the Pennsylvania State House. It would still be merely the old State House if independence had not been achieved and if the Constitution had not been ratified and put into effect. The noble building, so venerable to later ages, might not even have survived, but might have been swept away in the surging growth of a modern city. In that case, a few students of history would sometimes remember the site as the stage of those lost causes. Instead, Pennsylvania's State House has become Independence Hall for the entire United States. . . .

Tall buildings look down on Independence Hall and the other ancient structures in the Square and neighborhood, but cannot overshadow their plain honorable dignity. Abraham Lincoln, speaking at Independence Hall on Washington's birthday in the troubled year 1861, said what many have felt but nobody else so well expressed. "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. . . ."

Because of these things, redevelopment and conservation in Philadelphia involve very unusual opportunities, not to mention responsibilities. In the past, conservation has been more or less indifferent and sporadic. Nevertheless, three major examples redound greatly to the credit of Philadelphia. First is the conservation and occasional restoration of the historic buildings on Independence Square: Independence Hall, Congress Hall, and the Old City Hall. The second represents the work of historically-minded organizations like the Society for the Preservation of Historical Landmarks in rescuing priceless private homes like the Powell House in Society Hill from being demolished. The third relates to the houses and estates of the well-to-do who had obtained titles from Penn and were in general quite active in the affairs of the city and the Colony. The fact that many of these so-called manorial
surrounded on the east, west, and south by modern sky-scrapers. The plans of the National Park Service involve the demolition of the Drexel Building and the clearing of the old site for Library Hall of the American Philosophical Society. In the immediate foreground, to the left, is the Old Custom House, once the Second Bank of the United States.

*Courtesy American Philosophical Society*
homes stand today in their natural environment, is a great tribute to the wisdom and foresight of a few patriotic citizens. By hook or crook, they persuaded the city to purchase estate after estate and add them to Fairmount Park. A dozen or more of these grace the rugged and picturesque valley of the Schuylkill: Lemon Hill, where Robert Morris barricaded himself against his creditors, Mount Pleasant, Strawberry Mansion and others on the east bank, with Solitude (John Penn’s estate), Belmont, Chamonix and others on the west. The preservation of this galaxy of well-built beautiful homes along with others, and the preservation and care, even if not always consistent, of those on Independence Square, is a good record for any community.

This is all the more true because, for a century or more, a sort of general apathy prevailed with respect to historic landmarks. In the pursuit of industry and commerce, the acquisition of new territory, and the rush of new immigrants unfamiliar with America’s past, the spiritual element of the national heritage was all too often neglected. Many historic buildings associated with the great events of our history were destroyed or allowed to fall into decay. Even Independence Square was at one time threatened with being cut up into building lots. On another occasion plans were made to build
the new City Hall on the Square. Fortunately the pressure was relieved by the movement of the population and business westward, and Philadelphia was spared the irreparable loss of historic buildings and sites which occurred in some other cities. More than a hundred buildings and sites related to our early history survive in Old Philadelphia. On the other hand, a recent survey revealed that many are totally neglected and in danger of destruction.

From this general apathy Philadelphia, like the nation, was rudely awakened by the great depression of the thirties and the devastating bombings of Europe’s historic shrines during the Second World War. An extraordinary interest was aroused by the National Society of Architects, studies of the WPA, and the efforts of the Committees for the Conservation of Cultural Resources set up by order of the President in every state. State and local historical societies, schools and many private organizations combined to arouse interest in the nation’s cultural resources. To this was further added a large-scale movement for city planning, in which the conservation of historic shrines—symbols of the national heritage—was accepted as axiomatic. An awareness of historic buildings and sites, which had been dormant or sporadic, developed throughout the nation. Municipal, state, and federal authorities came to the aid of civic and patriotic organizations in co-operative programs for the preservation of historic shrines.

At the close of the war, interest had become so strong, especially in Pennsylvania, that under the leadership of the State Historian the many local and state societies combined to form a strong national organization, the “American Association for State and Local History,” and establish a new magazine, the American Heritage.

In Philadelphia representatives of more than fifty civic and patriotic organizations met in the Hall of the American Philosophical Society and organized the Independence Hall Association. Under the dynamic leadership of Judge Edwin O. Lewis private and public interest was widely aroused. Attention naturally focussed on Independence Square and its environs, the latter having deteriorated to such a degree that fire and other hazards were a serious menace to its safety. Plans for two major projects were developed, now known respectively as the Independence Mall and the Independence National Historical Park. The first is now being carried out by the Commonwealth, the other by the national government.
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK PROJECT
MAP SHOWING LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED

KEY:
1. INDEPENDENCE HALL
2. CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF THE ASSUMPTION
3. Rittenhouse Square (Old City Hall)
4. Independence Hall
5. Congress Hall
6. Independence Hall
7. Independence Hall
8. Old Custom House (Old Bank U.S.)
9. Christ Church
10. Old Custom House (Old Bank U.S.)

LIMITS OF LAND ACQUISITION:

OFFICIAL PLAN
FISCAL DATA
PERTAINING TO INDEPENDENCE MALL AREA

In 1943 Governor Martin, concerned over the unsightly approaches to Independence Square and the fire hazards from old buildings on the north side of Chestnut Street, set aside between three and four million dollars for a concourse or mall between Fifth and Sixth Streets from Independence Square to the Delaware River bridgehead. Formal agreement with the city of Philadelphia several years later provided for its construction as a state park, to be designated, "Independence Mall." Incidentally this extensive development, involving the demolition of the buildings in three crowded city blocks, is to form part of a great state and interstate highway system from the north, south, and west, affording a direct and spacious approach to the heart of historic Philadelphia. At this writing the first block has been cleared and construction on the Mall begun. Demolition of the buildings in the square north of Market Street is also in progress.

Meanwhile Philadelphia congressmen promoted the passage of an Act of Congress to establish the "Independence National His-
Historical Park.” The first paragraph of Public Law 795—80th Congress—is so pertinent to our subject that it is here given in full as an example of Federal participation in conservation and development.

AN ACT

To provide for the establishment of the Independence National Historical Park, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, for the purpose of preserving for the benefit of the American people as a national historical park certain historical structures and properties of outstanding national significance located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and associated with the American Revolution and the founding and growth of the United States, the Secretary of the Interior, . . . is authorized to acquire by donation or with donated funds, or to acquire by purchase, any property, real or personal, within the following-described areas, such park to be fully established as the “Independence National Historical Park” when, in the opinion of the Secretary, title to sufficient of the lands and interests in lands within such areas, shall be vested in the United States. . . . Provided, That the park shall not be established until title to the First United States Bank property, the Merchants’ Exchange property, the Bishop White house, the Dilworth-Todd-Moylan house, and the site of the Benjamin Franklin house, together with two-thirds of the remaining lands and interests in lands within the following-described areas shall have been vested in the United States.

The four separate areas which are to constitute the Independence National Historical Park as described in the Act are: first, the three city blocks between Walnut and Chestnut from Fifth to Sec-
and Streets; second, a memorial thoroughfare from the south side of Walnut Street to the north side of Manning Street; third, the site of the residence of Benjamin Franklin, called Franklin Court; and, fourth, Christ Church and certain land and buildings adjacent to it. The last section provides for an appropriation not to exceed $4,435,000 for the acquisition of the properties in the respective areas. To complete the picture it should be recalled that at different times in recent years the Federal Government had added Old Swedes, the Old Custom House, Independence Square, and Grumblethorpe to its national shrines.

The most important building from the historical and architectural standpoint in the area is Carpenters’ Hall, in which the First Continental Congress met in 1774. A monument to the good taste and workmanship of colonial builders, its association with some of the most stirring events of the Revolution give it an especial historic significance. Nearby stood the official house of the President of the Continental Congress; the Friends Academy and Alms House; the house of Alexander Hamilton; the Treasury Department; a row of fine houses on the south side of Chestnut Street below Fifth Street, one occupied by Gilbert Stuart; the Bishop White house; the houses occupied at different times by Benjamin Rush; the Dilworth-Todd-Moylan house; and many others. At the eastern end, on Second Street, was William Penn’s official mansion, the Slate Roof House, where he met with his Council. Immediately adjoining it on the south, stands the house, popularly known today as Kreider’s Gun Shop, in which according to tradition the first male child of Philadelphia was born.

After the Revolution the character of the area had gradually changed. Financial and government interests, banks, insurance companies, the Stock Exchange, the Merchants’ Exchange, the Customs, and the Post Office took over. Three striking survivals of this transformation stand today: the First Bank of the United States, later the Girard Bank; the Second Bank of the United States, more generally known as the Old Custom House; and the Merchants’ Exchange. Superb examples of the neo-Greek style of architecture, they chronicle the departure from the modest simplicity of the colonial style. The Old Custom House was designed by Philadelphia’s William Strickland. It is an important monument of the Greek Revival, being a very early adaptation of the Doric
temple form, which later appears in so many of our cities. The Girard Bank on Third Street, with its fine facade of Corinthian columns, was at one time the financial center of the nation. Un- tenanted for a time, it seemed in danger of demolition, when it was taken over by the Board of City Trusts, which now occupies it. Nowhere else in America are there found such superb survivals of the Greek Revival which, despite the strong nationalistic trend in the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century, spread into many American cities and even to Europe. Almost within a stone’s throw of each other, they are near neighbors to Carpenters’ Hall, the most significant survival of the colonial in the area.

Unfortunately the sum appropriated for the project was insuf- ficient and the work was temporarily delayed. In 1952, however, an Enabling Act was passed and signed by the President, allocating an additional $3,200,000. This has finally become available in July, 1953, after the approval of the Budget by the 83rd Congress and President Eisenhower. The stage is therefore set for a vigorous prosecution of the program and the official proclamation of the Independence National Historical Park.

A special feature of the Act of 1952 merits attention because it formally approves the petition of the American Philosophical Society, the oldest scientific and learned Society in the country, to build its new library in the National Park on the site once occupied
The home of the American Philosophical Society, organized by Franklin, 1743. It is the oldest scientific and learned Society in America.

Courtesy the American Philosophical Society

by the Library Company of Philadelphia, organized by Benjamin Franklin and his friends in 1731 as the first subscription library in America. Section 3 of the Act reads:

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to permit the American Philosophical Society, a nonprofit corporation, without cost to the United States, to construct, operate, and maintain in the park a building to be located in approximately the original site of historic Library Hall to house the library of the American Philosophical Society and any additions to said library, such permission to be granted the society pursuant to a lease, contract, or authorization without charge, on such terms and conditions as may be approved by the Secretary and accepted by the society, and for such length of time as the society shall continue to use the said building for the housing, display, and use of a library and scientific and historical collections:

Provided, That the plans for the construction of the building and any addition thereto shall be approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

In order to recapture the simplicity and charm of this part of old Philadelphia, the elevation of the Library on the Fifth Street side is planned to conform with the original building, while the south elevation, on Library Street is to be integrated with the old
Custom House, Carpenters' Hall, and other historic survivals in this part of the Independence National Historical Park. The interior, apart from the historic reading room which will repeat the main features of the old Library, is to be thoroughly up-to-date, fire and dust proof, and air-conditioned, with special research facilities to emphasize Franklin’s intuitive respect for the dynamic force of ideas and the records of civilization preserved in libraries and archives.

This modified reconstruction of the old Library, adapted to present-day needs, is a rare example of a privilege granted to a private institution by the national government to build on land owned by the United States. It is, moreover, the sole example of planned reconstruction in connection with Philadelphia's two great redevelopment projects. So many private and public historic buildings of the earlier period still exist that conservation rather than
PHILADELPHIA AND THE NATIONAL HERITAGE

HISTORIC GROUP ON THE EAST SIDE OF FIFTH STREET

opposite Independence Square, showing (from right to left): the Philadelphia Dispensary, the Mercantile Library, and Library Hall of the Library Company—first subscription library in the United States, built by Franklin and his friends, 1789-1790, and demolished in 1887.

Courtesy of the Free Library

reconstruction has been adopted as the watchword by the Advisory Commission and the Department of the Interior.

But the case of the Library suggests yet another aspect of the redevelopment program. This is nothing more nor less than a constructive attempt to revive historic Philadelphia, not just as a museum of historic buildings, landmarks, and antiquities, but as a live area in which some of its oldest and most respected institutions will still carry on in the old tradition, mindful of the continuity of cultural history.
SOUTH ELEVATION OF THE PROPOSED NEW LIBRARY

of the American Philosophical Society. The recessed entrance, columns, and general treatment bring it into harmony with the Old Custom House and other historic buildings in the area of the Independence National Historical Park. Sydney E. Martin, F.A.I.A., Architect; Schell Lewis, Del.

AT INDEPENDENCE SQUARE

1735, PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY of Pennsylvania held first session in Independence Hall, then known as Province Hall, and, in a later period, as the State House . . . Pennsylvania legislature continued to meet there until 1799 . . .

1753, LIBERTY BELL hung in tower of Independence Hall . . .

1775, SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS met and formulated policies of resistance to the British crown . . . George Washington commissioned on June 15 as Commander of all the Continental forces raised for the defense of American liberty . . . First steps taken toward the establishment of American naval power with the adoption of “Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies” on November 28 . . .

1776, DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE adopted July 4 . . . Draft of the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union presented to Congress—ultimately ratified in 1781 . . . The Continental Congress adopted the name “The United States of America” . . . Benjamin Franklin, who began his public career as clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly, was directed by the Continental Congress to seek and obtain the help of France in the War of Independence . . . The Marquis de Lafayette commissioned a general of the Continental forces . . .
1777, THE DESIGN OF THE AMERICAN FLAG was adopted June 14...

1781, NEWS OF VICTORY at Yorktown received, whereupon the Congress resolved to go in procession to church and return thanks to Almighty God...

1787, CONSTITUTION of the United States of America drafted and adopted...
1790, FIRST CONGRESS of the United States opened sessions in Congress Hall. Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention drafted the State Constitution.

1791, PRESIDENT WASHINGTON informed Congress that the Bill of Rights had been ratified. First Bank of the United States, sponsored by Alexander Hamilton, authorized.

1793, WASHINGTON INAUGURATED March 4 for his second term as President of the United States.

1790, JAY'S TREATY with Great Britain, securing American possession of the lands between the Allegheny and the Mississippi, ratified.

1796, WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS read to Congress.

1797, JOHN ADAMS and Thomas Jefferson took their oaths of office as the second President and Vice President of the United States.

1798, UNITED STATES NAVY organized and construction of the USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," authorized.


JULY 8, 1776

The Reading of the Declaration of Independence.