ON JUNE 21, 1783, a band of mutinous soldiers surrounded the Pennsylvania State House. Interested only in receiving their back pay, they offered no violence to the Congress then in session. It seems odd, in retrospect, that a government which had endured the rigors of revolution and the privations of war should pale at such importunings. But the Congress and its President, Elias Boudinot, unduly sensitive of their insecure dignity and apprehensive of their physical safety, adjourned with all dispatch for Princeton.

Thus was Philadelphia, capital of a rich Province and State for over a century and queen city of the new nation, with a tradition of government forged in the hard crucible of war and the trying times of the early Confederation, probably lost to this nation as a permanent capital. By most standards Philadelphia should have been the capital. Tradition had grown up about it. Most of the great

achievements in government, the Declaration of Independence, the 
conduct of the war, and the framing of a new Constitution, had 
taken place there. Geographically it was the heartland of the 
eastern seaboard. Culturally it equalled "all but a few of the greatest 
cities of Europe." Better known to most Americans than any other 
of their cities, Philadelphia with its society, taverns, theatres, 
museums, and public entertainments, provided diversions and ac-
commodations for every taste. Despite these and other obvious 
advantages, the precipitate action of a highly susceptible Congress 
lost to the young nation its natural seat of government.

This essay attempts to trace, briefly, the efforts of the City of 
Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to lure the 
Federal government back home, and to record some of the high-
lights of the story of that government during its temporary, though 
important, return to its birthplace.

When Congress left the State House in 1783, the effect on 
Philadelphia was at first scarcely discernible. An attitude of "you 
left without our knowledge you may return without our invitation" 
seemed to prevail. With the passage of time, however, a note of 
apprehension was felt by the citizens of Philadelphia, which 
deepened no doubt as they observed the other cities madly scram-
bling for the honor of becoming the national capital. Philadelphia 
then took the first step towards reconciliation with an address by 
her citizens carefully sweetened to congressional taste and cal-
culated to bring Congress back where "comfort, content and even 
happiness awaited them." At first most members of Congress 
favored a return, but no decisive action was taken.

This lack of decision gave time for already existing under-
currents of dissatisfaction with Philadelphia to grow and spread 
among the Congress. Some felt that Congress should locate in a 
place of "less expense, less avocation and less influence than are to

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2 Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, Philadelphia in 
the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), 361.
3 John Montgomery to Benjamin Rush, July 8, 1783, in Burnett, Letters, 
VII, 216.
4 Attractive offers were made by New York, Maryland, Delaware, and 
New Jersey. Ibid., VII, 133, 172, 180-182, and 182n.
5 Burnett, Continental Congress, 585.
6 James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, July 17, 1783, in Burnett, Letters, 
VII, 229; Burnett, Continental Congress, 584-586.
be expected in a commercial and opulent city." Perhaps even more
dangerous to Philadelphia's ambitions than discontent with that
city was the growing preoccupation of Congress with the thought
of a city of its own, "a Federal City," completely under the control
of the national government. It was this idea which proved in the
end most disastrous to Philadelphia's hope of becoming the per-
nnianent capital. For now the southern states, who may have en-
joyed the spectacle of various northern cities wooing the footloose
Congress, took an active and decisive part. For in 1783 James
Madison proposed "exclusive federal jurisdiction over a capital on
the Potomac," and the Virginia delegates strongly supported the
measure.8

The Congress of the Confederation, after moving in turn to
Princeton, Annapolis, and Trenton, settled finally in New York.9
There, amid acrimonious debate, but still determined to resist
Pennsylvania's blandishments to the end, almost the final act of
the old Congress was to designate New York City the meeting
place for the first Congress under the Constitution.10

New Yorkers were elated—they thought they had won another,
and perhaps final, victory over Philadelphia. Major L'Enfant was
commissioned to remodel the City Hall in a manner worthy of the
new regime. Rechristened "Federal Hall," the building on April
30, 1789, witnessed the inauguration of George Washington as the
first President of the United States.11

With the convening of the First Congress, the principal adversary
of Philadelphia changed from New York to the advocates of the
site on the Potomac. The idea of a Federal City, first broached in
1783, was now a part of the Federal Constitution.12 In order to

7 Oliver Ellsworth to Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, June 4, 1783, in
Burnett, Letters, VII, 180; see also complaints, ibid., V, 73, 161, 182-183,
VI, 84, 200, 251, 255, 414, and VII, 156.
8 Irving Brant, "James Madison and His Times," American Historical
Review, LVII (July, 1952), 857. The Virginia delegates proposed the idea
in a letter to Governor Harrison as early as April 10, 1783. Burnett,
Letters, VII, 133-134.
9 For a readable account of the various capitals, see Robert Fortenbaugh,
The Nine Capitals of the United States (York, Pa., 1948).
10 Ford, Journals of Congress, XXXIV, 359-360, 522-523; Burnett, Con-
tinental Congress, 715-719.
11 See I. N. Phelps-Stokes, Iconography of Manhattan (6 vols., New York,
1915-1916), II, 429-430, 445-449, and Plates 57 and 67; Elizabeth S. Kite,
12 Article I, Section 8.
forestall this new threat, the City of Philadelphia, through the Pennsylvania Assembly, offered, as early as December 15, 1787, the use of the public buildings in the City. On the same day, the Assembly of Pennsylvania resolved that, as soon as the Commonwealth's new Constitution went into effect, it would cede to the Federal government jurisdiction over any place in Pennsylvania, not exceeding ten miles square, for the seat of government, with certain exceptions. The delegations from the southern states, however, would not yield in their determination to locate the permanent capital in the South.

After preliminary skirmishing, the question of the location of the capital became a major item in Congress by early fall. Every effort was made by the Pennsylvanians to locate the permanent capital in Philadelphia, but without success, although they almost managed to locate it in nearby Germantown. And each new assault of the Pennsylvania delegation was promptly blocked or checked by a counter-proposal from the southern coalition.

The deadlock was finally broken by the famous deal between Hamilton and Jefferson whereby the southern states, in return for votes for assumption, obtained a promise of the permanent federal capital on the banks of the Potomac; and the Pennsylvania delegation under the leadership of Senator Robert Morris and Congressman Thomas Fitzsimons, as a consolation prize, brought the temporary capital to Philadelphia for ten years.

New York, the arch rival which had done so much to retain the capital for itself, was sorely disappointed. Robert Morris, generally credited with bringing the capital to Philadelphia, was bitterly castigated by the New Yorkers in cartoons and letters in the public press. An unidentified poet gave vent to his feelings in a satirical poem which derides the entire congressional delega-

35 Annals of Congress, II, 2294, usually referred to as the "Residence Act."
36 A particularly vicious attack was the cartoon depicting Morris and the devil as they led the Congress from New York to Philadelphia. This cartoon is in the possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
CARTOON, 1790

depicting Senator Morris, led by the Devil, removing the capital from New York. Federal Hall in background.

Courtesy Historical Society of Pennsylvania

The Valedictory (Spoken by a fisherman Paules Hook)
Addressed to the Pennsylvania members

Farewell stupid Wynkoop, Peet Mull and George Clymer
To salute you at parting, 'tis meet I turn rhymer;
Seering Tom whose nose led thee with the great giant Scott
And blundering Hartley—ye will all go to pot.

Bawdy Bob may support ye awhile d'ye see
But at last you'll be bit by the biter, old Lee:
Neither Maddisons caution, nor Pages great sense,
Will ever stop Bobby from fobbing the pence.

Yet had not FitzSimons supported the scheme
The whole would have ended in smoke like a dream;
For Fitz has more influ'nce whenever he will;
Then staggering Bob with his noted long bill:
Mark this Philadelphia; Fitz alone was the man
Who bit Sedgwick and Lawrence in th' residence plan
Tis to Fitz you should pay the debt of thanks due,
For Fitz was the man that sent Congress to you

Fred Augustus, God bless his nose and fat head,
Has little more influ'nce than a speaker of lead;
And now sister Phila, we return you your clowns
Transformed into shapes like Men bred in Towns.

When some of them first made their 'pearance in York,
The[y] scarcely knew how to hold a knife or fork,
But by living some time 'mongst people well bred,
They've learned to walk and to hold up a head.

Our taylors and barbors have learn'd them some taste,
Yet these wandering Members have departed in haste;
Farewell silly Congress—and repent all your lives,
For following the devil wherever he drives.

New York August 1790

Philadelphians rejoiced at the victory over New York; it was not quite what they had hoped for, but then a temporary capital was better than none. Moreover, optimistic city officials and the state legislators believed that the gay social life and conveniences of the city would influence Congress to change its mind and name Philadelphia the permanent capital. Advocates of the Potomac site feared this very thing. There were many congressmen, also, who were skeptical about the Potomac site, which at that time was a "mosquito-infested morass."

Indeed there was some ground for the belief that, once established in Philadelphia, Congress would be reluctant to depart, for, in contrast to the uninviting Potomac site, Philadelphia was Amer-


The feeling was voiced in the Congress, during the protracted debates on the Residence Bill, that if the Federal government moved to Philadelphia, it would never leave. See, for instance, the remarks in the House of Representatives of Congressmen Burke, Lawrence, and Madison on July 6 and 7, 1790, in Annals of Congress.

ica’s principal city in 1790. The City proper formed a great triangle running for about two and a half miles along the banks of the Delaware River between Vine and South Streets with its apex lying back about a mile on High Street. Beyond Sixth Street the houses thinned out, and west of Twelfth Street lay open pasture land. Experience had proven the practicability of the checkerboard plan of William Penn’s surveyor, Thomas Holme; and Philadelphia with its fine brick houses, imposing public buildings, pebble-paved streets, raised brick sidewalks, and public squares, was considered by the well-traveled La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt “one of the most beautiful cities in the world.”

A most striking feature of the City was the arcaded, one-story market extending for nearly a mile up the center of High Street. There were other markets in Philadelphia, but the High Street market was the greatest in America. Philadelphia led New York in both imports and exports in 1792, and for many years after the close of the century it remained the nation’s chief center of business and finance. The taverns and inns of Philadelphia were especially noteworthy. City Tavern on Second Street was once considered the finest hostel in America, and the accommodations provided by Oeller’s, the Indian Queen, and numerous others, catered to every wish of the national officials.

During the last decade of the century, Philadelphia, the capital, had “a more brilliant republican court than the City of Washington was to show for a century to come.” The City’s social life was unsurpassed. The financial and political elite maintained a constant round of entertainments for the Federal officials. Also, the theatre, the excellent Library Company of Philadelphia, the American...
Philosophical Society, outstanding scientists, artists, writers and composers, provided a cultural milieu without an equal in America.

Even with these attractions, Philadelphia was to exert all her efforts to make her Federal guest a permanent resident. Thus, immediately after the passage of the Residence Act, Pennsylvania's delegation in Congress, writing from New York, outlined politely to Mayor Samuel Powel of Philadelphia what needed to be done for the accommodation of the Federal government. They thought the buildings now on the State House Square might prove adequate temporarily if properly fitted up, but would not do as a permanent arrangement, comparing unfavorably with the accommodations New York had provided earlier. More had to be done if a good impression was to be made. The letter continued:

> We are sensible that to begin any new work either extensive or splendid will require an expenditure beyond the common measure of prudent economy, but any reasonable calculations made of the lasting advantage to be derived from the occasion, not only to the City, but to the State, would in our opinion justify a degree of liberality, in this respect even to munificence. . . .

To the Pennsylvania congressmen, the new structures, flanking the State House and being built as a City Hall and a County Court-house, were simply expedients. Lest there be any doubt about it, however, they emphasized that "the existing buildings should be no longer employed to the uses of the United States, than until their places could be supplied by new erections, upon plans which

![THE STATE HOUSE](image)

with the Supreme Court (City Hall) building on the left and Congress Hall (County Courthouse) on the right. Engraving from Davies map of 1794. Courtesy Philadelphia Free Library
may combine some degree of taste and elegance with more convenience and accommodation.”

These recommendations of the congressmen were adopted by the “Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of Philadelphia, in Common Council assembled,” who promptly memorialized the Legislature, suggesting specifically that buildings should be erected for the Congress and the President of the United States. Having no money for the purpose, however, they hoped that the Legislature would provide the necessary funds. But the Legislature was not inclined to be so liberal; not, at least, those of its members who represented the back counties. They saw no need for a new building for Congress. The recently completed County Courthouse, with some alterations, together with the west wing of the State House, they thought, should prove entirely satisfactory.

The City government realized that much had to be done, prior to the convening of Congress, and before it was informed of the feelings of the Legislature on the matter, a committee of the Council was named to consider which of the public buildings would be most proper for the reception and accommodation of Congress. The committee had not completed its plans when the Congress adjourned in New York City on August 12, 1790, to meet in Philadelphia on December 6, 1790. Finally, on September 9, the City Councils resolved that the County Courthouse be fitted up and furnished for the accommodation of Congress.

This Courthouse, built on the southeast corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets between 1787 and 1789, occupied a lot on the State House Square specifically reserved for this purpose since 1736. The building, harmonious in architectural style with the State House, was a two-story brick structure, approximately fifty feet wide by sixty-six feet deep, with a projecting southern bay, a peaked roof, and a cupola in the center of the roof. Large rooms, suitable

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25 The letter, dated July 19, 1790, was read in Common Council; see Minutes of the Common Council 1789-1793, 288, M.S. at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
26 Ibid., 291-293, 297-299; the memorial was read in the Assembly on August 27, 1790, Minutes of the Assembly of Pennsylvania (February 2-September 3, 1790), 288.
27 A committee, consisting of Samuel Powel, John Nixon, George Meade, George Latimer, and John Dunlap, was appointed on July 26. Minutes of the Common Council, 237.
28 On September 9, the Council resolved that the city would pay any costs which the county declined to pay. Ibid., 322.
CONGRESS HALL

left, and the Chestnut Street Theatre, right, 1799. Drawn and engraved by W. Birch & Son.

Courtesy Historical Society of Pennsylvania

for the meetings of the Houses of Congress, were located on each of the floors. 29

In order to carry out the plans to fit the building for the use of Congress, feverish action was required. The fall of 1790 found the City Council, its committee, and the Commissioners of the County of Philadelphia preoccupied with this project. Materials were purchased, workmen hired, and furnishings obtained in a surprisingly short time. Just prior to the convening of Congress, the work was completed. On December 6, 1790, the Pennsylvania Packet reported: "This is the day appointed for the meeting of Congress in this city. The public building assigned for holding the session is now ready for the reception of both houses and is fully completed to the object."

The desire of the Philadelphians to provide all possible comforts for the Congress is shown by the fact that the City and

county paid a total of £2,903.14.5½ for alterations and furnishings, with only a hope that the State would eventually reimburse them. It must have been a relief when the State Legislature, on the last day of September, 1791, authorized the Governor to borrow £20,000, "upon the credit of the revenue arising from vendues," to reimburse the City and county of Philadelphia for the expenses already incurred in altering the Courthouse for the accommodation of Congress, as well as for future expenses involved in the erection of the President's house.

Although it has not been possible to ascertain all the exact details of the work on the Courthouse, many of the original vouchers are preserved in the Division of Public Records, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, and these documents provide particulars of the work accomplished. The first floor chamber, to be used by the House of Representatives, was fitted up with a gallery to accommodate about three hundred people. The chamber was furnished with mahogany desks and elbow chairs, carpeting, stoves, and venetian blinds, all of fine workmanship. The Senate Chamber on the second floor was even more elaborately furnished. The elegance of the furnishings is attested to by a prominent citizen of Philadelphia who visited the building on December 3, and recorded in his journal that the rooms were "unnecessarily fine."

Accommodation of the judiciary did not offer a serious prob-

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50 Journal of Senate of Pennsylvania (December 28, 1790-September 28, 1791), 301.
52 "Extracts from the Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer, 1768-1798," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XVI (1892), 414.

New Yorkers did not think much of Philadelphia's accommodations. An anonymous writer, quoted in Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser (March 4, 1791), wrote, in part: "... We are told that both houses of Congress are stored in a county court house, a single building, without portico or trees to shade them from the midday sun. In summer it must be as hot as Tophet. Was this contrived to fit the constitutions of the Southern members, or merely to save money, by driving away the northern members in the spring, and working short sessions? New York expended 25,000 [dollars] under the mere impression of propriety and respect. Philadelphia, more frugal, will not expend a tenth part of the money, though they are sure of ten years residence. Their little court house hooked up in a humble imitation of our city-hall, is found to be good enough for Congress, and the President is to continue in a noisy house in Market Street, much too small for his family, serenaded every morning with the music of waggoners. ..."
lem. At the time of the move, the new City Hall, at the southwest corner of Fifth and Chestnut Streets, was under construction. This building, similar to the County Courthouse in plan and appearance, was offered for the use of the Federal government. The space was not ready for occupancy, however, when the Supreme Court of the United States first convened in Philadelphia. On February 7, 1791, therefore, the justices sat for a few days in the chamber of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, the western room on the first floor of the State House. By the time of the second session, the City Hall was completed. Apparently, Chief Justice Jay and Associate Justices Wilson, Cushing, Blair, and Iredell sat in the Mayor's Court in the southern part of the first floor. Strange as it may seem to modern Americans, the Supreme Court appears to have retired, on occasions, to the Common Council Chamber on the second floor when their sessions conflicted with the Mayor's Court.

Preparing City Hall for the use of the Supreme Court seems to have entailed no extraordinary expenditures on the part of the City. Apparently, the Court used the facilities and furnishings already provided for the use of the Mayor. It also seems that the Supreme Court's use of the building did not inconvenience the City officials who carried out their duties in the building throughout this period. The Supreme Court of the United States did not at this time occupy the exalted position of later years. During its stay in Philadelphia few cases were presented to it for decision, although some of them were quite important.

The third branch of the Federal government, the Executive, required special measures. This was especially true in regard to a suitable residence for the President. Before the Federal government moved, the Common Council of Philadelphia first explored the possibility of acquiring the Episcopal school on Chestnut Street, just west of the Hall to be occupied by the Congress.

34 Ibid., 584-585.
36 Minutes of the Common Council, 299.
When this property could not be acquired, the Council memorialized the Legislature for assistance in erecting a house for the President. As a temporary measure, the Council, for a period of two years, rented Robert Morris' house on the south side of High Street near Sixth Street, the largest and most elegant mansion in the City but facing a busy and noisy thoroughfare. The State agreed to reimburse the City for this expense.

This arrangement was considered merely a temporary expedient, since practically everyone agreed that a house for the President would have to be built. It was to be, however, a part of a grand scheme to build new and more adequate buildings for the accommodation of the Federal government. This plan would, it was thought, impress the Congress and the President and bring about a revision of the Residence Act so that Philadelphia might be named the permanent capital. Actually, the President's House was the only part of this grandiose plan carried through to completion. Since the history of this building is told fully and most interestingly elsewhere in this issue of Pennsylvania History by Dennis C. Kurjack, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it here. Suffice it to say that President Washington, who was so deeply interested in the Potomac site for the national capital that he had no wish to encourage Philadelphia's hopes by moving into the President's House when completed, found the Morris House in High Street perfectly satisfactory once necessary alterations were made. When President Adams, later, also refused to accept the President's House, Philadelphia's most expensive bid for the national capital failed.

The executive departments had to fend for themselves. Provision of office space for the small departments, however, was a

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28 Washington was an ardent advocate of the Potomac site. See, for instance, his letter to David Stuart, November 20, 1791, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799 (Bicentennial edition, 39 vols., Washington, 1931-1944), XXXI, 419-423.

29 President Adams declined the offer on the grounds that "by a candid construction of the Constitution of the United States," he would not be "at liberty to accept it without the intention and authority of Congress." Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States (10 vols., Boston, 1850-1856), VIII, 531.
relatively simple matter. Although office buildings, in the present sense of the word, did not exist in Philadelphia, the departments were able to rent houses and remodel them to serve as offices.\textsuperscript{10}

The First and Second Congresses were most comfortably accommodated in their new home. The Speaker of the House of Representatives in the First Congress, the portly Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania, was succeeded by Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut, the Speaker for the Second Congress, and the membership of the House was increased from 65 in the First Congress to 68 in the Second by the admission of Vermont and Kentucky to the Union. The Senate, in its smaller chamber above and presided over by Vice President John Adams, found its membership increased at the same time from 26 to 30. Despite these increases, however, the House and Senate were comfortably accommodated until 1793.

In that year the reapportionment of the seats in the House greatly increased its membership. This action was required by the Constitution (Article 1, Section 2), but it is doubtful that the size of the increase was realized until the figures of the first census in 1790 were compiled. When the reapportionment was made, it was found that the House membership would be increased by 37, making a total of 105 Representatives. Since this increase was to take effect with the convening of the Third Congress on December 2, 1793, and since the House Chamber could not possibly accommodate such a number, the Congress opened negotiations with the State through its Pennsylvania members.

The need for larger quarters had been placed before the State Legislature as early as December 18, 1792, in a message from Governor Thomas Mifflin. In this message, Governor Mifflin appealed to the Legislature's benevolence:

\begin{quote}
The disposition, which the Legislature of Pennsylvania has uniformly evinced to promote the ease and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10}Leonard D. White, \textit{The Federalists, A Study in Administrative History} (New York, 1948), 489-506. The departments of the Executive branch in 1791 were located as follows in Philadelphia: Department of State—northwest corner of High and Eighth Streets (307 High Street); Treasury Department—the old Pemberton mansion on the southwest corner of Chestnut and Third Streets (100 Chestnut Street); War Department—Carpenters' Hall on Chestnut Street between Third and Fourth Streets. See, \textit{The Philadelphia Directory} (Philadelphia, 1791).
dignity of the members of the different departments of the general government, assures me, that you will pay a cheerful attention to this subject; I shall only therefore observe, that the proposed measure may perhaps be accomplished without incurring the expense of a new building, either by enlarging that which Congress now occupies, or as the Legislature on a former occasion authorized, by surrendering for the use of the general government the State-House and the adjacent offices.  

The Legislature lived up to the expectations of the Governor, by appropriating $6,666.67 for the use of the Commissioners of the County of Philadelphia in making the necessary enlargements to the building occupied by Congress. As far as it can be ascertained, however, the Legislature did not seriously consider the idea of relinquishing their chambers in the State House for the use of the Congress as their predecessors had done in 1775.

In May, 1793, the enlargement of the building began, and by December the new chambers were completed sufficiently so that the Congress could convene. The original south wall of the building was removed and an additional 26 feet added. The design of the south end, with the prominent bay, was preserved in the new wall. Additional furnishings, including mahogany desks, elbow chairs, and new carpeting were acquired.

After alterations were complete, Congress Hall—as the building was coming to be known—became an elegant and comfortable capitol, in keeping with the honor and dignity of the Congress of the United States. After 1793, a visitor upon entering the building from Chestnut Street found himself in an entry containing the stairway to the second floor. Crossing the entry he passed through “two folding-doors into the Hall of the National Representatives . . . [and] stood in the space reserved for strangers, between the entrance and the low partition which separated it

41 *Journal of House of Representatives of Pennsylvania (1791-1792)* (second part), 44.
42 *Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania*, XIV, 431.
44 Detailed information on the enlargement of the building can be found in the original vouchers preserved in Congress Hall Papers.
from the part occupied by the members. This space was small and without seats.”

Directly over the door was a bust of Dr. Franklin.

The House of Representatives’ room was large, airy, and well-lighted by five tall windows all on the east and west, together with three large bay windows to the south. The Speaker occupied “a large arm chair with a table before him like a toilette, covered with green cloth, fringed . . . elevated about 2 feet . . . on the west side of the hall.” A colossal bust of Minerva is said to have stood above and behind the Speaker’s chair.

The members of the House, sitting in mahogany elbow chairs covered with black leather, behind mahogany writing desks, were arranged in three rows, “rising one above another in the form

“CONGRESSIONAL PUGILISTS”

Scene: Congress Hall, House of Representatives, February 15, 1798. This cartoon, satirizing an incident in Congress, originally appeared with the caption: “He in a trice struck Lyon thrice Upon his head, enraged sir, Who seiz’d the tongs to ease his wrongs, and Griswold thus engag’d, sir.”

Courtesy New York Historical Society

45 Thomas Twining, Travels in America 100 Years Ago (New York, 1894), 50.
46 Theophilus Bradbury to his daughter, December 26, 1795, in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, VIII (1884), 226.
47 The bust is now in the possession of the Library Company of Philadelphia.
of a semi-circle, opposite the Speaker. . . .” Two fireplaces and stoves on each side of the chamber provided heat; the floor was covered with a woolen carpet.48

At the south end of the room a door on each side of the bay windows opened into the State House Square. Here, “holes for the Southern and Eastern mails” enabled the Congress to post letters without leaving the building.49

The smaller but more elegant Senate Chamber was directly above the House of Representatives. A description written in 1795 described the Chamber as follows:

The Senate chamber is over the south end of the hall; the Vice President’s chair is in an area (like the altar in a church) at the south end. The Senators’ seats, two rows of desks and chairs, in a semi-circle, but not raised from the floor. The floors of both halls are covered with woolen carpets. The lower room is elegant but the chamber much more so. You ascend the stairs leading to the chamber at the north end and pass through an entry having committee rooms on each side; in that on the east side of the Senate chamber is a full length picture of the King of France, and in the opposite room is one of his Queen; the frames are elegantly carved and gilt.50

At first the Senate did not provide a gallery for the public, and this was considered by many to be inconsistent with democratic principles. Shortly after the Federal government came to Philadelphia, consequently, dissatisfaction with the arrangement was voiced in certain quarters. In December, 1790, the States of Virginia and Pennsylvania urged its representatives to advocate the admittance of citizens to the debates. Senator James Monroe of Virginia followed by introducing a bill in February, 1791, to this effect, but it was promptly defeated; some Senators, it seems, preferred privacy. Two subsequent attempts were made before

49 Bradbury’s letter in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, VIII, 226.
50 Ibid. An English visitor in 1795 noted: “The senate chamber . . . is furnished and fitted up in a much superior style to that of the lower house.” Isaac Weld, Travels Through North America (2 vols., London, 1807), I, 10.
Monroe succeeded with his bill. In 1795, finally, a narrow gallery was constructed along the north wall of the Senate Chamber.\textsuperscript{51}

These expenditures of the State for the accommodation of the Federal government seem somewhat niggardly when one considers the long and bitter fight to bring the capital to Philadelphia. The proponents of the plan to make Philadelphia the permanent capital must have been greatly annoyed and frustrated by the "tight-fisted" attitude of many in the State Legislature. From the beginning, the economy bloc in the lower House led by Albert Gallatin blocked efforts to provide new buildings for the accommodation of the Federal government. The appeal of Philadelphia, therefore, was considerably weakened by the lack of interest on the part of many in the City and State, and particularly by the procrastinating and penurious attitude of the State Legislature at critical moments.

Even as late as 1792, there was a chance that Philadelphia might win out over the Potomac site. When it appeared that the brilliant, but erratic, Major L'Enfant would exhaust all available funds before the first building of the new capital could be erected, the friends and supporters of the Potomac site were greatly worried.\textsuperscript{52} But, instead of pressing the advantage at this time, the Legislature delayed and let the opportunity pass. By the end of 1793, the dream of the permanent capital held by many Philadelphians for many years appeared beyond realization.

Another factor contributing to Philadelphia's ultimate loss of the permanent capital, conceivably, was the severe yellow fever plagues which struck Philadelphia in 1793, 1794, 1796, 1797, and 1798. The first epidemic, lasting from about August 1 to November 9, was a time of unrelieved horror for the City. Everyone having the means fled. President Washington and his cabinet, as well as the other officials of the executive departments, moved to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[51] \textit{Annals of Congress 1790-1793}, 625-626, 637-638; \textit{Pennsylvania Archives}, Ninth Series, II, 970, 1040; Congress Hall Papers, 1795.
\item[52] President Washington wrote to David Stuart, one of the Commissioners of the Federal District, on March 8, 1792, that "half friends of the New City" were predicting that unless vigorous measures were taken, "a feather will turn the scale either way." He continued, "if inactivity and contractedness should mark the steps of the Commissioners of that district, whilst action on the part of this State [Pennsylvania] is displayed in providing commodious buildings for Congress &c. the Government will remain where it now is." Fitzpatrick, ed., \textit{Writings of Washington}, XXXI, 503-508.
\end{footnotes}
Germantown until the frost ended the plague.  

The periodic return of the plague, even though the later visitations were not as disastrous as the first, can scarcely have encouraged Philadelphia's hope to be the permanent capital. Although it is impossible to ascertain the influence of the epidemic in this connection, members of Congress must have been impressed.

Although Philadelphia's building program had fallen woefully

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See Mathew Carey, A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia . . . (Philadelphia, 1794); [Select and Common Council], Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee . . . (Philadelphia, 1848); and J. H. Powell, Bring Out Your Dead (Philadelphia, 1949). President Washington rented Col. Franks' house in Germantown for a brief time in 1793 and again in 1794. This building, now called the Deshler-Morris House, has been restored by the National Park Service and is part of the Independence National Historical Park Project.

The yellow fever epidemics certainly played a part in convincing the legislators to move the State capital. See note 59.
short of its grand scheme to provide new buildings commensurate with the dignity and extent of the new government, the vivacity of her social life exceeded all expectations as she entered upon the fabulous decade 1790 to 1800.

Brought into this great metropolis, congressmen and others of the Federal government were caught up in its gay social whirl. To many, however, it must have been somewhat bewildering and frustrating. A public official in Philadelphia in the 1790's, having no independent income, must have been hard put stretching his meagre salary to meet social obligations.

Even the moderately wealthy first citizen of the land, President Washington, was often pinched financially, especially towards the end of his administration when the cost of living soared. Washington, however, fully conscious of the dignity of his office, maintained a most costly household in Philadelphia, and his entertainments and hospitality set a pattern which his less wealthy successor found burdensome. The regularly recurring public functions at the President's house were the President's levees on Tuesday afternoons at three o'clock, the State Dinners on Thursdays at four o'clock, and Mrs. Washington's Drawing-Rooms on Friday evenings. Besides these, there were special receptions on New Year's Day, the Fourth of July, and Washington's birthday.

The levees were always highly formal; among the foreign diplomats, the British Minister, Mr. Hammond, invariably appeared in diplomatic full dress. Mrs. Washington's Drawing-Rooms were more cheerful and were greatly frequented by the leading citizens of the City.

The State Dinners seated frequently more than thirty guests. These included the members of Congress who were invited in turn, foreign diplomats, and distinguished visitors to the City; the latter, however, sometimes found the affairs dull, although they had little complaint of a lack of food and drink.55

The major social functions, of course, centered around the President; but there were other diversions. The old Southwark Theatre at Cedar (now South) Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets afforded the latest plays. Early in 1794 a much larger and

more impressive theatre, "Old Drury," opened on the north side of Chestnut Street just west of Sixth Street. This new theatre attracted a most brilliant company of players, including Mrs. Whitlock, the sister of Mrs. Siddons, and Susannah Haswell Rowson, a leading playwright. The theatre served, in addition, as a forum for political discussion. It was here that the actor Joseph Fox sang for the first time "Hail Columbia!" for which Joseph Hopkinson of Philadelphia composed the verse.56

Another popular diversion was the circus, which consisted largely of the performance of feats of horsemanship, with some acrobats, tightrope walkers, and clowns. John Bell Ricketts in 1792 erected a circus on High Street, on the outskirts of the City. Ricketts, said to have been a Scot, was the most accomplished rider as well as an enterprising producer. He met with such success that he built an amphitheatre at Sixth and Chestnut Streets which could seat between 1,200 and 1,400 persons. It bore the name, "the Pantheon Circus and Amphitheatre," but was popularly called, "Ricketts' Circus."

If the theatre and circus did not appeal, a person could enjoy the exhibits at Peale's "Repository for Natural Curiosities," at Third and Lombard Streets (after 1794, in Philosophical Hall on the State House Square), or Bowen's Waxworks at Eighth and High Streets, or visit the Library Hall on Fifth Street across from Philosophical Hall which possessed an excellent collection of books.57

On the other hand, the public official might enjoy dancing. The Dancing Assemblies, traditionally the most popular form of amusement in Philadelphia, were held every two weeks from January to May. Here one could enjoy the company of the famed beauties of Philadelphia, and famed they were. If one could not follow through the stately measures of the dance, or had not perfected "the graces, and manners," he could receive instruction at a number of dancing schools in the City. Several of these schools were established by the French émigrés.

This decade, however, was not noted primarily in history for

its frivolity; it is remembered rather as the formative period for
the new government. In foreign relations, the Citizen Genêt
affair and repercussions of the French Revolution which brought
this country close to war with France, ended the historic Franco-
American Alliance of 1778. This is not the place to enumerate
all the important events which occurred during this period; but
among them must be mentioned the inauguration of Washington
for his second term in the Senate Chamber on March 4, 1793,
and the inauguration of John Adams as the second President of
the United States in the Chamber of the House of Representa-
tives on March 4, 1797.

It was also in Congress Hall that the first ten amendments, the
Bill of Rights, were formally added to the Constitution; the first
Bank of the United States as well as the Mint were established
as part of the comprehensive program developed by Alexander
Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, to rectify the disordered
state of government finances.\footnote{The imposing building erected for the first Bank of the United States is
included in the Independence National Historical Park Project. The Bank
occupied the building from July 1797 to March 1811 when its charter ex-
pired. The Bank was located in Carpenters' Hall from 1791 until 1797.

Here, too, Jay's Treaty with England was debated and rati-
fied; Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee were admitted to the
Union; and the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed. And it was
here that the Federal government successfully weathered an internal
threat to its authority, the Whiskey Insurrection of 1794.

With the close of the century Philadelphia ceased to be a cap-
ital. Yielding to the demands of the western counties for a more
convenient capital, the State government in 1799 moved to Lan-
caster, and later to Harrisburg.\footnote{In February, 1795, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives adopted
a resolution in favor of removal from Philadelphia, but the bill failed in the
Senate. After several unsuccessful attempts, a removal act was passed in the
spring of 1799. The dangers of the yellow fever epidemics was one of the
arguments advanced by the supporters of the removal. Scharf and Westcott,
\textit{History of Philadelphia}, I, 501.} The Federal government also,
in the spring of 1800, left Philadelphia for the Potomac site.\footnote{Although it must have been depressing to loyal Philadelphians to see both
governments leave, the City had gained much during the capital period. The
population, for instance, had increased 43 per cent—the 28,522 persons living
in the region between Vine and Cedar (South) Streets in 1790 had increased
to 41,220 persons in the 1800 census.}
The State House became an empty building, used apparently only at elections. Congress Hall and the Supreme Court building reverted to the uses for which they were originally intended, a county courthouse and a city hall.

With the departure of the Federal government went the last faint hope that Philadelphia might yet be the nation's capital. For, once settled on the Potomac site, the Government remained there despite its many inconveniences for years to come. It must have seemed strange to Philadelphians, even as they surveyed the web of circumstances which had brought about their defeat: mutinous soldiers, political deals, plagues, the lack of interest in and support of the "grand scheme" by Philadelphians and Pennsylvanians, and the short-sighted penuriousness of some back country legislators—that any such combination of fortuitous events could outweigh the forces of geographical location, tradition, national sentiment, and cultural environment which seemed, to them at least, to make Philadelphia the only possible location for the capital of the young nation.