Fort Necessity National Battlefield; the great road is the National Road, the first national highway in America; and the people who used them are an imaginary immigrant family who traveled the National Road in 1836 and stopped at many of its taverns, including the one at Mount Washington.

The brochure begins with the odd fact of history that George Washington came to own the land on which he fought his first battle, purchasing the site in 1769. Later he was unsuccessful in selling the property even though he prophetically advised his agents, "It is an excellent stand for an innkeeper."

As we travel westward with the immigrant family we learn about the famous highway on which work commenced at Cumberland, Maryland, in 1811. It was completed to Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1818 and finally terminated at Vandalia, Illinois, in 1839. We learn of taverns and tollhouses, and of almost endless lines of Conestoga freight wagons and passenger coaches, and of droves of farm animals. We learn that on this road America traveled west and the west sent produce east until shortly after 1850, when the railroads reached the Ohio River. Then steam became king and major east-west roads became local roads until the present century.

Pittsburgh

Niles Anderson


This informative bicentennial publication of the National Park Service commemorates the Constitution and those men who were the founding fathers of the United States of America. Signers of the Constitution is at the least a concise reference book for beginning students of history and, at the most, a pleasant collection of gossip and memorabilia for all Americans and others interested in the inception of a democratic republic. Should this taste of historical origins whet the appetite for more, the editor has supplied a short but excellent list of further suggested reading.

The format of the book is of a marvelously utilitarian design — as if drafted by an engineer. The first and main part of Signers of the
Constitution is the historical background leading to and including the actual composition, penmanship, and engrossing of the document. However, the chronicle does not end with the engrossing; the authors go on to follow the Constitution through its acceptance, ratification, amendments, and arguments until the present time.

The second part of the book is devoted to the collective and individual biographical sketches of the thirty-nine signers, arranged in alphabetical order according to the surname of each man. These are truly thumbnail résumés of the men's lives, and sharply remind one of obituaries.

The third part of the book is devoted to a survey of historic sites and buildings. As with the other sections, this too is well written — factual and concise — with photographs of most of the locations. These items are arranged in alphabetical order according to state. Each sketch is just that, and technically accurate as to description, giving rise to the impression that each was either written or dictated by an architect.

There is but one fault in this volume, and it is purely a quibble of personal preference. The Constitution and its history are relegated to the appendix, when they surely should have comprised a section of their own. As an added measure of interest, the actual travels and locations of the original engrossed document are followed to the present time. There was a time in the 1820s when James Madison did not know the location of the original document. In 1883 it was found folded in a small tin box at the bottom of a closet at the State, War, and Navy Building.

To the historically inclined, Signers of the Constitution is a must publication, precisely because it is a concise and accurate record of a great deal of factual information that is sometimes important and sometimes trivial — but always interesting.

Richmond, Virginia

Helen Collins


Traditionally Elbridge Gerry has been portrayed as a contradictory figure. He has been recognized as a stalwart defender of civil liberties, signer of the Declaration of Independence, framer of the