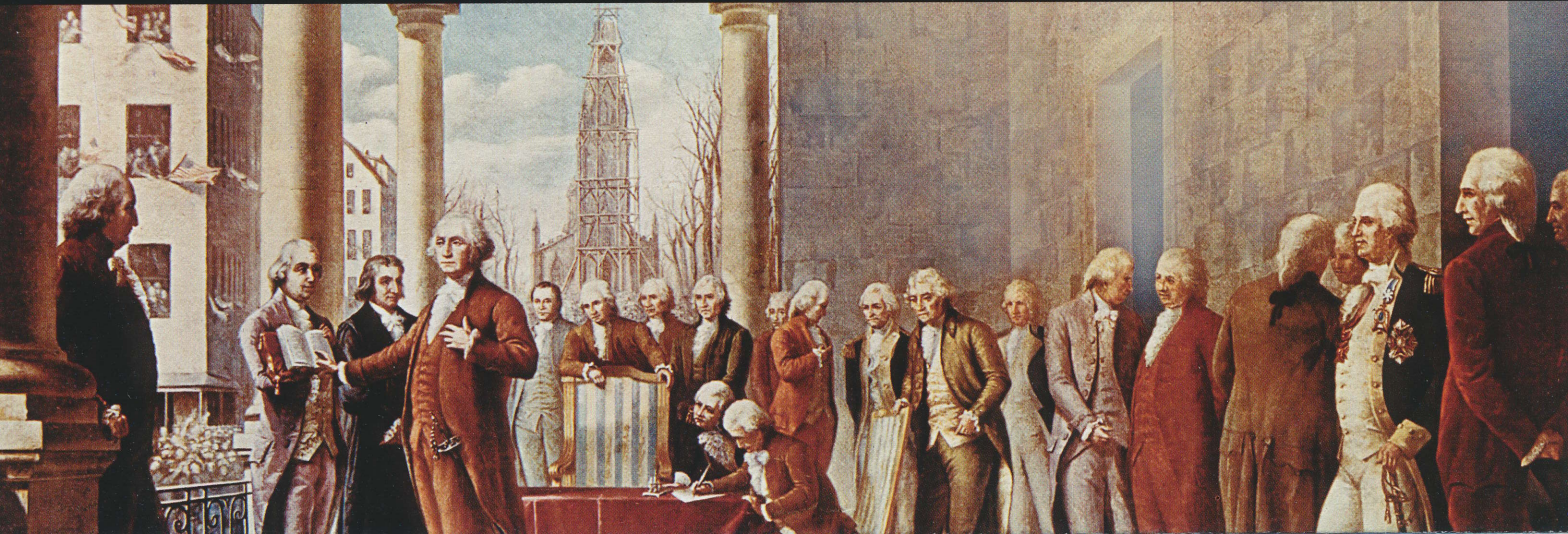


Federal Hall

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Federal Hall National Memorial
New York



George Washington was sworn in as first President of the United States on a second-floor, open-air balcony overlooking Wall

Street on this site on April 30, 1789. The small Bible held by Secretary of the Senate Samuel Otis is on exhibit in today's Federal Hall.

George Washington Inaugurated Here as First U.S. President

In our progress toward political happiness my station is new; and if I may use the expression, I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent.

—George Washington, January 9, 1790

On April 30, 1789, the corner of Wall and Broad streets was awash in people. As a hush settled on the crowd all eyes fixed on the tall man standing above them on the balcony. He was surrounded by officials of the new government of the United States and of the city and state of New York. The man was George Washington, and he was by now a living legend. His journey from Mount Vernon to this balcony had been one long parade, with town after town turning out to greet him with salutes, bands, and elaborate pageantry.

Already older than most people present, the building where Washington stood

had been built in 1703 for the British royal governor's council and the assembly of New York. This was also New York City Hall, so prisoners were held and trials conducted here. In an influential verdict in 1735 a jury found printer Peter Zenger not guilty of libel. Articles in Zenger's newspaper had criticized the Royal Governor. Zenger's defense was that he only printed the truth!

After Britain's imposition of the Stamp Act in 1765, delegates of nine colonies met here to air grievances, declaring "no taxation without representation." In 1775 the revolutionary Provincial Assembly of New York took over use of the building. After the American Revolution this became the nation's capitol when, in 1785, the Congress under the Articles of Confederation sat here.

Washington's arrival inaugurated a new era in the life of the struggling young nation. Four years earlier, representatives

of Virginia and Maryland had met at Mount Vernon to discuss weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, the United States' first plan of government. Their discussion led to meetings at Annapolis, Md., and, in 1787, Philadelphia. This last meeting would produce the system of government under which the United States of America operates to this day.

Ratifying the new Constitution had been a hard-fought battle, and many Americans harbored serious doubts about the document. The Constitution was indeed a compromise, a framework that would be filled in by experience and the actions of the new government. Most important was the passage here in 1790 of the first amendments to the Constitution, which became known as the Bill of Rights. Here at New York's old colonial city hall, now newly refurbished by architect Pierre L'Enfant and renamed Federal Hall, a new experiment would begin.

A flotilla climaxed Washington's eight-day trip overland from Mount Vernon in Virginia to New York City for his inauguration as first President in the new United States Government.



From City Hall to Federal Hall and Beyond

A Bill of Rights and the First Congress Launch the Nation

As the new government met, the stakes were high, and all eyes were again on new President George Washington and the Congress. Despite Washington's universal popularity, many worried about what presidential precedents he might set. The nation's direction was still in doubt.

Many states, including New York, had withheld approval of the Constitution until assured that it would guarantee rights like freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. North Carolina and Rhode Island still had not ratified the document as the new government met. However, passage of 10 of the proposed 12 new amendments guaranteed basic rights and fostered broad acceptance of the new system of government, even among skeptics.

This single, seven-month session of the first Congress left a lasting mark on the United States by filling in the framework of the Constitution with laws and precedents. In addition to the Bill of Rights, Congress passed the Judiciary Act that established the coexistence of state and federal courts and laws. Some important precedents set were the Senate's role in diplomacy, Presidential control of cabinet appointments, and how the President should be addressed. The republic was launched.

When Pierre L'Enfant remodeled Federal Hall he added a Greek Revival temple front

The Constitution (right) replaced the Articles of Confederation to guide the nation. When Washington was sworn in, two states had not ratified it.

Congress of the United States

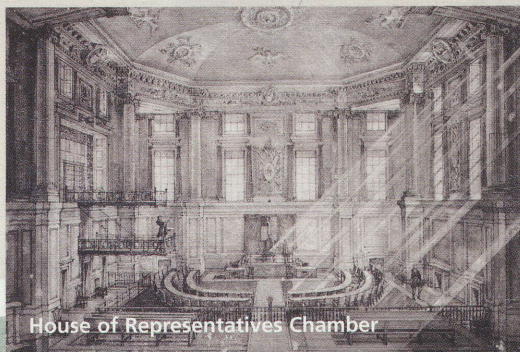
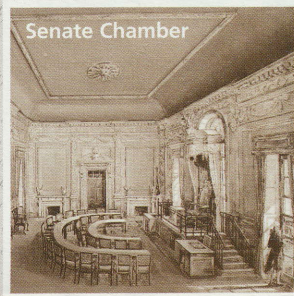
*Began and held at the City of New York, in
Wednesday the fourth of March one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.*

THE Constitution of the United States being ordained and established by the people of the United States in Convention assembled, on the fifth day of September one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven, and ratified by the States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, on the following days, to wit: New York, the twenty-first day of September; New Jersey, the twenty-seventh day of September; Pennsylvania, the twenty-eighth day of September; Delaware, the third day of October; Maryland, the seventh day of October; Virginia, the eighth day of October; North Carolina, the twenty-first day of November; South Carolina, the fifth day of December; and Georgia, the twenty-first day of December, one thousand seven hundred and eighty eight.

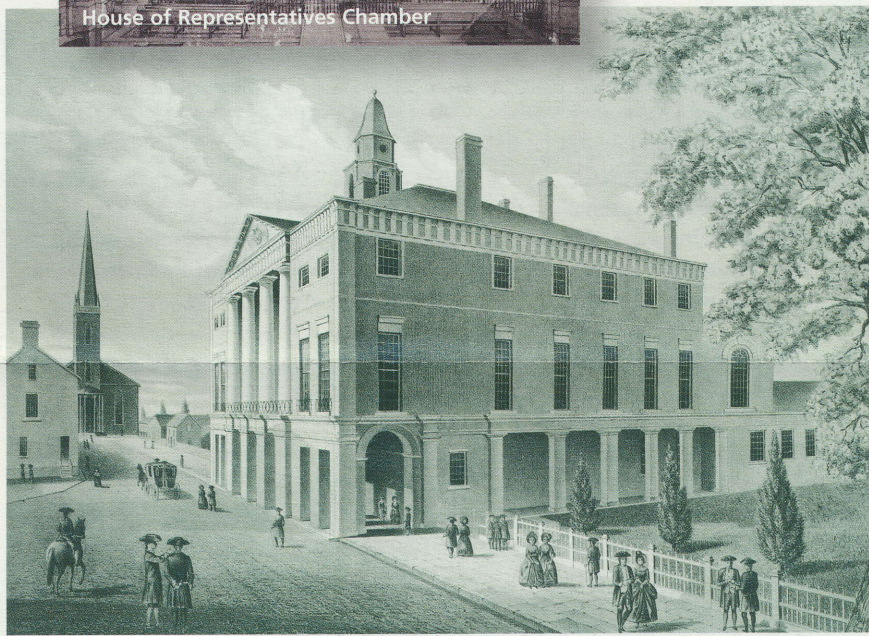
RESOLVED, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the said Constitution be and the same shall be the supreme Law of the United States.

ARTICLES in addition to, and amendment of the Constitution of the United States proposed by the Senate and House of Representatives, in Congress assembled, September 12, 1789, by which the said Constitution was ratified by the States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, on the following days, to wit: New York, the twenty-first day of September; New Jersey, the twenty-seventh day of September; Pennsylvania, the twenty-eighth day of September; Delaware, the third day of October; Maryland, the seventh day of October; Virginia, the eighth day of October; North Carolina, the twenty-first day of November; South Carolina, the fifth day of December; and Georgia, the twenty-first day of December, one thousand seven hundred and eighty eight.

Senate Chamber



House of Representatives Chamber



Custom House and U.S. Sub-Treasury

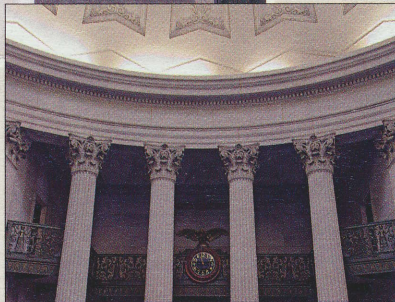
The first Congress sidestepped a root question: how could the government secure funds? Federal reliance on states for money had doomed the Articles of Confederation. By 1812, when Federal Hall was demolished, tariff and banking issues divided the nation.

The present building arose in 1842 as a splendid Greek Revival Customs House, by which time Wall Street was already established as a center of finance. In 1862 the building became one of six Federal Sub-Treasuries storing silver and gold, until replaced by the Federal Reserve Bank in 1920.

This statue of George Washington greets visitors to Federal Hall.
Below: The Federal Hall rotunda.



NPS/MIUSE



NPS/MIUSE



As a sub-treasury Federal Hall stored millions of dollars in gold and silver in its basement.

Planning Your Visit

Federal Hall, at 26 Wall Street between Nassau and William streets, is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday except national holidays. *Parking is limited and very expensive; use public transportation.* Visit www.mta.info for bus and subway routes and schedules.

Exhibits and a video honor the site's history. A museum, bookstore, and both guided and self-guiding tours are available.

More Information
National Park Service
Manhattan Sites
26 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005
212-825-6888
www.nps.gov/fehah

Federal Hall National Memorial is one of over 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about parks visit our website www.nps.gov.

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