

= Congress Hall =

Congress Hall is a building near the intersection of Chestnut and 6th Streets in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania that served as the seat of the United States Congress from December 6 , 1790 to May 14 , 1800 . During Congress Hall 's duration as the capitol of the United States , the country admitted three new states , Vermont , Kentucky , and Tennessee ; ratified the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution ; and oversaw the Presidential inaugurations of both George Washington (his second) and John Adams .

Congress Hall was restored throughout the 20th century to its original appearance in 1796 . The building is now managed by the National Park Service within the Independence National Historical Park and is open for tours by the public . Congress Hall should not be confused with Independence Hall , which is located next door .

= = Background = =

Philadelphia served as the capital of the United States both during and immediately after the American Revolutionary War . Independence Hall , located next door , served as the meeting place of the Continental Congress until the Pennsylvania Mutiny in June 1783 . The failure of the Pennsylvania government to protect Congress from a mob of angry mutineers caused the representatives to withdraw to Princeton , New Jersey . The national capital then moved to Annapolis , Maryland in November 1783 , then to Trenton , New Jersey in November 1784 before finally moving to New York City in January 1785 . State delegates did not return to Independence Hall in Philadelphia until the United States Constitutional Convention in 1787 ; however , New York City remained the official capital even during the convention . Designed by architect Samuel Lewis , Congress Hall was originally built to serve as the Philadelphia County Courthouse ; construction began in 1787 and was completed two years later .

= = Temporary capitol = =

Article One , Section Eight , of the United States Constitution granted Congress the authority to create a federal district to serve as the national capital . Following the ratification of the Constitution , the Congress , while meeting in New York , passed the Residence Act on July 9 , 1790 . The Act established the District of Columbia on the banks of the Potomac River between the states of Maryland and Virginia to serve as the new federal capital . However , Robert Morris , a Senator from Pennsylvania , convinced Congress to return to Philadelphia while the new permanent capital was being built . As a result , the Residence Act also declared Philadelphia to be the temporary capital for a period of ten years .

In an attempt to convince Congress to keep the capital in Philadelphia , the city began construction on a massive new Presidential palace on 9th Street as well as an expansion to the County Courthouse into what would become Congress Hall . Upon the return of Congress to Philadelphia on December 6 , 1790 , the first level of Congress Hall had been transformed into the chamber for the House of Representatives and the second floor had been converted into a chamber for the United States Senate . Despite their efforts to construct new buildings for use by the federal government , the city 's residents failed to convince Congress to modify the Residence Act and make Philadelphia the permanent capital . Congress Hall served as the capitol building until May 14 , 1800 , when the offices of the national government moved to Washington , D.C.

= = Interior = =

The House chamber on the first floor is rather simple and featured mahogany desks and leather chairs . The room eventually accommodated 106 representatives from 16 states : the 13 original states as well as the representatives from the new states of Vermont in 1791 , Kentucky in 1792 , and Tennessee in 1796 . The room has been restored to its original appearance in 1796 .

The second floor , reserved as the chamber for the Senate , was more ornate and adorned with heavy red drapes . By 1796 , the room featured 32 secretary desks very similar to the desks that are still used in the current Senate chamber in the United States Capitol ; 28 of the desks at Congress Hall are original . Portraits of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette , presented as gifts from the French monarch following the American Revolution , hang in adjoining committee rooms . A fresco of an American bald eagle is painted on the ceiling , holding the traditional olive branch to symbolize peace . Also on the ceiling , a plaster medallion in the form of a sunburst features 13 stars to represent the original colonies . The design mirrors a similar pattern on the floor , where a carpet made by William Sprague , a local weaver , features the shields of each of the 13 original states . The carpet seen today is a reproduction of the original .

= = Legacy = =

During the almost ten years it served as the capitol , Congress Hall witnessed many historic events including the admittance of three new states . The United States Bill of Rights was ratified at Congress Hall in 1791 . The second Presidential inauguration of George Washington took place in the House chamber in 1793 , as did inauguration of John Adams in 1797 . Congress also used the time to establish the First Bank of the United States , the Federal Mint , and the United States Department of the Navy . The Jay Treaty , which secured a temporary peace with Great Britain , was also ratified at Congress Hall in 1796 . After the capital moved to Washington , Congress Hall returned to its original function as the Philadelphia County Courthouse and served as the location of both state and federal courts during the early 19th century . Also designed by Samuel Lewis , the Burlington County Courthouse in Mount Holly Township , New Jersey was built in 1796 and modeled after Congress Hall .

= = Restoration and present status = =

After its use as a courthouse in the early 19th century , Congress Hall , like other buildings in the area , had fallen into disrepair . In 1870 , the Pennsylvania General Assembly ordered the demolition of all the buildings surrounding Independence Hall . However , the law was never enforced and was officially repealed in 1895 . Under the leadership of a civic organization known as The Colonial Dames of America , the architect George Champlin Mason , Jr. began restoring Congress Hall in 1895 @-@ 96 , though this work was mostly limited to the Senate chamber . In 1900 , the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) began a study of Congress Hall and initiated a funding drive for the building 's complete restoration . After funds were secured , the City of Philadelphia approved the restoration project in 1912 under the supervision of the AIA . Work on Congress Hall was completed the following year when President Woodrow Wilson rededicated the building . Additional work to refurbish the House chamber was completed in 1934 . In 1942 , over 50 civic and patriotic groups met at the American Philosophical Society and joined to create the Independence Hall Association . The association lobbied for the creation of Independence National Historical Park , which was initially approved by Congress in 1948 and formally established on July 4 , 1956 .

Congress Hall is now maintained by the National Park Service , which operates guided tours of the building throughout the year on a first @-@ come , first @-@ served basis .

On December 2 , 2008 , the building hosted President @-@ elect Barack Obama 's meeting with the National Governors Association where they discussed the economic crisis then facing the country .