

# Museums and Historic Sites Related to the Constitution



## Federal Hall

26 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005  
212-825-6990

<http://www.nps.gov/feha/>

On this site stood Federal Hall, when the Congress under the Articles of Confederation met in 1787, while the Constitution was being written in Philadelphia. The First Congress met here from 1789 to 1790, and George Washington was inaugurated as the first President on its balcony. It was in this hall that the first Congress debated and passed the amendments that became the Bill of Rights. Federal Hall was demolished in 1812. The current building opened in 1842 as the U. S. Customs House. In 1920, it became a Federal Reserve Bank. The museum includes a video and exhibits that highlight the events that occurred in Federal Hall.

## Gunston Hall, George Mason's home

10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck, VA 22079

<http://www.gunstonhall.org/>

Although he served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, George Mason did not sign the Constitution because it lacked a bill of rights. Mason, the author of Virginia's Declaration of Rights, lived in Gunston Hall, a plantation twenty miles south of Washington, D.C. Today, you can visit this Georgian house, constructed between 1755 and 1760, on a 550-acre site in Fairfax County, Virginia.

## Independence Hall

6th and Market Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-965-2305 (Visitor Center)

<http://www.nps.gov/inde>

Located in Center City Philadelphia, Independence National Historical Park is the birthplace of the United States, the location of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the drafting of the U.S. Constitution. The park also interprets events and the lives of the diverse population of Philadelphia during the years from 1790 to 1800, when the city was the capital of the United States. A section of the park where Benjamin Franklin's home once stood is dedicated to teaching about Franklin's life and accomplishments. Spanning approximately forty-five acres, the park has about twenty buildings open to the public.

## Manzanar National Historic Site

P.O. Box 426, Independence, CA 93526-0426  
760-878-2194 ext. 10

<http://www.nps.gov/manz/>

At the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California's

Owens Valley, during World War II, the Manzanar War Relocation Center served as one of ten camps in which Japanese American citizens and resident Japanese aliens were interned. Today it stands as a monument to a lapse in our constitutional civil liberties. Its interpretive center offers exhibits and a twenty-minute introductory film.

## Montpelier, James Madison's home

11407 Constitution Highway, Montpelier Station, VA 22957  
540-672-2728

<http://www.montpelier.org/>

In Orange County, Virginia, about midway between Washington, D.C., and Charlottesville, stands the home of James and Dolley Madison. Montpelier is a 2,750-acre estate that includes farmland, racecourses, a terraced 2-acre formal garden, a panoramic landscape, a National Landmark Forest, active archaeological sites, and more than 130 buildings, including the main house. The Montpelier Education Center features exhibits on Madison's life and his role as an architect of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

## Mount Vernon, home of George Washington

3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway

Mount Vernon, VA 22121

703-780-2000

<http://www.mountvernon.org>

At Mount Vernon, representatives from Maryland and Virginia met in 1785 to discuss navigation rights on the Potomac River. This meeting set in motion a chain of events that culminated with the Constitutional Convention in 1787, over which Washington presided. The farm where Washington lived and is buried was called the Mansion House Farm. Today about five hundred acres remain of the original eight thousand. It stands on the shore of the Potomac River, south of Washington, D.C.

## National Archives and Records Administration

700 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408

202-501-5000

<http://www.archives.gov/>

The Constitution and other original documents are on display in the Rotunda of the National Archives. There are also interactive exhibits on the "Treasures of the Vault," featuring samples of the records of the United States government housed in the Archives.

## National Constitution Center

525 Arch Street, Independence Mall, Philadelphia, PA 19106  
866-917-1787

<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/index.shtml>

Established by the Constitution Heritage Act of 1988, the National Constitution Center opened on July 4, 2003. Located on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, it stands within sight of Independence Hall. The center tells the story of the U.S. Constitution through interactive and multimedia exhibits, photographs, texts, films, and artifacts. A striking feature is its Hall of Signers, where visitors can wander among life-size bronze statues of the framers of the Constitution.

## National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

50 East Freedom Way, Cincinnati, OH 45202  
877-648-4838

<http://www.freedomcenter.org>

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center brings to life the struggles for freedom around the world and throughout history. Made up of three buildings that symbolize the cornerstones of freedom—courage, cooperation, and perseverance—the Freedom Center directly addresses the most contentious issue of the Constitution and the early republic, the existence of human slavery.

## The Newseum

Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
888-NEWSEUM or 703-284-3544

<http://www.newseum.org>

Scheduled to open in 2007, this interactive museum of news seeks to further public understanding of the news media. It is dedicated to the First Amendment rights of a free press, free speech, freedom to worship, freedom to assemble, and freedom to petition the government for redress of grievances.

## The United States Capitol

First Street, Washington, DC, 20001  
202-225-6827

<http://www.aoc.gov>

The United States Capitol is a magnificent monument, but it is also a working legislative building where the Senate and House meet to debate and vote on legislation. Among the historic rooms open to visitors are the original Supreme Court room, where Chief Justices John Marshall and Roger B. Taney presided over the Court; the Old Senate Chamber, where Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun debated; and Statuary Hall, the old chamber of the House of Representatives, where John Quincy Adams and Abraham Lincoln once served.

## The United States Supreme Court

One First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20543  
202-479-3211

<http://www.supremecourtus.gov>

Located on Capitol Hill, across from the U.S. Capitol, is the building the Supreme Court has occupied since 1935. In its chamber the Court hears oral arguments and renders decisions. The Supreme Court also offers a variety of educational programs, exhibits, and a theater, where a film on the Supreme Court is shown.

## The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20500  
202-456-7041

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/tours>

The White House has been home to every President since John Adams. Tours focus on the elegant state rooms on the first floor, where Presidential meetings, press conferences, and formal entertainments take place. Tours do not include the family quarters on the upper floors, or the West Wing, where the Oval Office is located and where the President, Vice President, and high-level presidential aides work, making it literally the hub of the executive branch of government.

## Women's Rights National Park

136 Fall Street, Seneca Falls, NY 13148  
315-568-2991

<http://nps.gov/wori/> In 1848 women's rights advocates met in Seneca Falls, New York, where they called for equal rights for women, including the right to vote. This was the beginning of the movement toward passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. The Women's Rights National Historical Park consists of four major historical properties: the Wesleyan Chapel, where the First Women's Rights Convention took place, and the homes of several people active in the movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock, and Richard and Jane Hunt. A visitor center offers a film and exhibits.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the U.S. Senate. He is the author of *Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps*; *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (which won the Organization of American Historians' Richard Leopold Prize); *American Journalists: Getting the Story*; *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*; James M. Landis: *Dean of the Regulators*; and *The Congress of the United States: A Student Companion*. He is the coauthor of *The Oxford Guide to the United States Government* and of several high school textbooks, including *The American Vision* and *The American Republic*. Dr. Ritchie has served on the editorial board of *The Public Historian*, edited the Twayne oral history series, and prepared for publication the previously closed hearings of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. A former president of the Oral History Association, he has served on the councils of the American Historical Association, the Society for History in the Federal Government, and the International Oral History Association, and has taught in the Cornell in Washington program.

## ABOUT JUSTICE LEARNING

Justice Learning is an innovative, issue-based approach for engaging high school students in informed political discourse. The web site uses audio from the Justice Talking radio show and articles from *The New York Times* to teach students about reasoned debate and the often-conflicting values inherent in our democracy. The web site includes articles, editorials, and oral debate from the nation's finest journalists and advocates. All of the material is supported by age-appropriate summaries and additional links. In addition, for each covered issue, the site includes curricular material from *The New York Times Learning Network* for high school teachers and detailed information about how each of the institutions of democracy (the courts, the Congress, the presidency, the press, and the schools) affect the issue.

