

# read censored history, thwart fascists.



**A zine documenting the  
National Park Service's  
“Life Under Slavery at  
George Washington House” Exhibit  
—removed by the government  
January 22, 2026 in an act of censorship.**

Exhibit, text by the National Park Service; photos of exhibit by  
Stan Horowitz, NPS, & Michaela Althouse/PhillyVoice

Zineification by Amanda Wyatt Visconti

# THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE

## Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation

# Life Under Slavery

This zine tries to document the **now-censored exhibit** at the National Parks' "President's House Site", aka "George Washington House".



"Although the house was demolished in 1832, the foundations still remain visible in this unique exhibit focusing on the contradiction of liberty and enslavement in the new nation." - NPS Photo & text

### Exhibits

The outdoor exhibits examine the paradox between slavery and freedom in the new nation. Presidents Washington and Adams, and their households, once lived and worked at a house on this site. Although the house was demolished in 1832, some of its stories are preserved through videos shared from the perspective of enslaved individuals who lived and worked here, and text panels shed light on everything from visiting tribal delegations to the work of the executive branch.

NPS  
webpage,  
1/27/2025



# what happened?

“Exhibits honoring nine people who were enslaved at George Washington's house in Center City were dismantled by National Park Service employees Thursday afternoon [1/22/2026], months after a Trump administration review put the memorial's future in doubt.

“Exhibits on the exterior of the house at Sixth and Market streets, where Washington lived as president in Philadelphia, were stripped from the brick facade of the building. Monitors and text displays, which told the stories of the enslaved people and offered background on the slave trade, were gone by nightfall.

...In May [2025], U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum ordered a review of any federal display that ‘disparages Americans past or living.’ Exhibits across the country, including 20 at Smithsonian museums in Washington, were flagged by the White House as ‘ideological’ displays subject to review and removal.”

- Michael Tanenbaum for *The Philly Voice*, 1/22/2026  
[phillyvoice.com/national-park-service-slavery-exhibits-presidents-house](https://phillyvoice.com/national-park-service-slavery-exhibits-presidents-house)

"This thing is here, so children 5, 10, 20 years from now won't have the gaps in history that I had from not knowing... **It's an open-air library to tell you everything you need to know** about George Washington here in Philly, about slavery here in Philly."

- Michael Coard, “the criminal defense attorney who spearheaded the memorial's installation in 2010”  
[phillyvoice.com/national-park-service-slavery-exhibits-presidents-house](https://phillyvoice.com/national-park-service-slavery-exhibits-presidents-house)

## THANKS & PHOTO CREDITS

Thank you to **the workers of the National Park Service** for creating and maintaining this exhibit up until its censorship, and for the text and images quoted from the NPS website. The photo appearing on the cover & page 2 is by **Michaela Althouse/PhillyVoice**, taken from the quoted *Philly Voice* article. Thank you to all for documenting this censorship. Thanks also to **Stan Horowitz** ([@stanurbanbikerider.bsky.social](https://stanurbanbikerider.bsky.social)), who took (on 10/2/2025) most of the photos of the exhibit this zine transcribes & shares. His album of the exhibit: [srhphotos.smugmug.com/George-Washington-House-slavery-](https://smugmug.com/George-Washington-House-slavery-)

### **Please help complete this zine's documentation!**

This zine was made quickly, and from photos I've found elsewhere online (such as "The Dirty Business of Slavery" panels pictured below, in too small a resolution to zoom in on the text adequately) I know this zine does not yet document the entire exhibit. Please share corrections & photos of missing exhibit posters to [@literaturegeek.bsky.social](https://literaturegeek.bsky.social).



**PLS NOTE** The text that follows is directly from the NPS exhibit. It does not necessarily represent my own understanding of history, knowledge of many white people with no problem not being evil “products of their time”, or where I’d tell the founding racists to shove it.

# STOLEN

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Some people trace their roots back many generations with letters, a family Bible that records events, and stories that connect them to the past or identify the place from which their family came. The descendants of enslaved Africans who were brutally kidnapped and forcibly brought to America with few personal possessions find tracing their family histories difficult.

By the chilling and oppressive system of enslavement, Africans were torn from their families and deprived of many direct ties to their cultures, values, and religions. Enslavement interrupted their connection to the rich oral histories of Africa and to the numerous powerful and sophisticated civilizations that thrived there. In fact, some of those communities derived their wealth and strength from engaging in the slave trade.

## INTENTIONAL BRUTALITY

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Slave owners, North and South, feared rebellion. The enslaved people were often beaten to break their spirits and whipped to compel them to obedience. Some owners worked their enslaved people to exhaustion and deprived them of adequate food, clothing, and shelter.

Owners were free to beat, torture, or rape the people whom they enslaved. Families might be torn apart as mothers, fathers, and their children were separately bought and sold to new masters. Most were intentionally kept illiterate. Few slave-authored written records survive except for autobiographies written after escaping or gaining freedom. Yet, family histories were kept alive through storytelling, lore, and oral histories.



# ENSLAVED ON PLANTATIONS

The day-to-day lives of enslaved people varied from place to place. Most enslaved people who lived in southern states were physically more remote from their slaveholders and were able to preserve more of the cultural attributes of the African societies they had left behind. They integrated African traditions with European and Native American cultures, creating strong communities sustained by religious faith.

## RESISTANCE

Resistance to bondage took many forms. The most dramatic were physical assaults against slaveholders and their property. Rebellions and uprisings were met with swift retaliation and harsh punishment or death. Those who managed to escape were often returned to the exhausting and inhumane conditions they had fled; and those who harbored escapees were dealt with harshly.

Freedom appealed to all enslaved people. Many like Hercules and Oney Judge took action and escaped. Sympathetic individuals also provided refuge for others desperate for freedom. Free African sailors, numerous in Philadelphia, helped some escape by boat from the West Indies and U.S. coastal ports to freedom in the North.

Oney Judge, with the aid of free people of African descent in Philadelphia, successfully found passage on a ship to New Hampshire after fleeing the President's House. **Washington advertised for her return.** Concerned about his public image, he had his steward, Frederick Kitt, sign this advertisement. Washington later learned her whereabouts and **made repeated efforts to have her returned.** She remained free, though a fugitive from the law, for the rest of her life.

## Ten Dollars Reward.

**A** BSCONDED from the household of the President of the United States, on Saturday afternoon, **ONEY JUDGE**, a light Mulatto girl, much freckled, with very black eyes, and bushy black hair—She is of middle stature, but slender and delicately made, about 20 years of age. She has many changes of very good clothes of all sorts, but they are not sufficiently recollected to describe.

As there was no suspicion of her going off, and it happened without the least provocation, it is not easy to conjecture whither she is gone—or fully, what her design is; but as she may attempt to escape by water, all masters of vessels and others are cautioned against receiving her on board, altho' she may, and probably will endeavour to pass for a free woman, and it is said has, wherewithal to pay her passage.

Ten dollars will be paid to any person, (white or black) who will bring her home, if taken in the city, or on board any vessel in the harbour; and a further reasonable sum if apprehended and brought home, from a greater distance, and in proportion to the distance.

**FRED. KITT, Steward.**

May 24

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## AFRICANS IN PHILADELPHIA

As a port city and the nation's capital, Philadelphia attracted a diverse population, and by 1790, it was the largest city in the nation with a population of 28,522. By 1800, the population had grown to 41,220; its inhabitants included free and enslaved people of African descent, immigrants and indentured servants from Europe and the Caribbean, and many who fled the violence of the Haitian revolution by escaping to the United States. Trade with other U.S. cities and foreign nations made Philadelphia a bustling port with commerce, construction, and government that created opportunities for African descendants and others seeking employment and to learn a craft or trade.

## ENSLAVED IN PHILADELPHIA

Enslaved people of African descent in the North, deprived of fundamental freedom, endured profoundly difficult lives. Controlled by others, their families were always threatened by forced separation, and their work, often exhausting, was nearly always unpaid.

Most of those enslaved in Philadelphia lived in or near houses with white people. They worked to support their owners' lives, and they also observed their daily routines. Few enslaved people arrived in Pennsylvania directly from Africa after 1764, but African culture persisted in some rituals, such as burials. By the 1790s, they were the second or third generation born in North America and had adapted to the culture that surrounded them. Most were increasingly removed from the world their forebears had left.

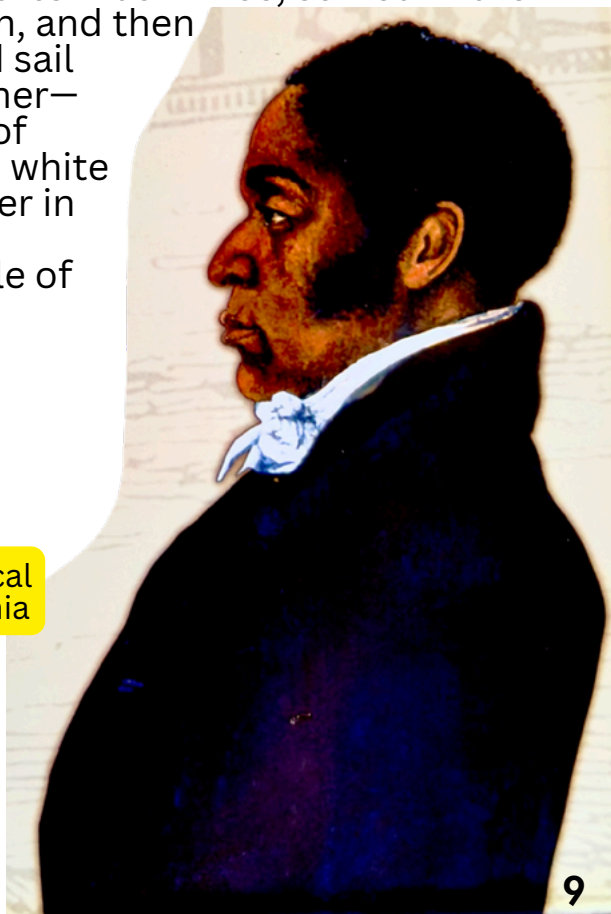


Philadelphia's enslaved people observed first-hand how free African descendants moved about the city. The city was a hub of several escape routes for many seeking freedom. Here, those seeking their freedom often found sympathetic assistance, despite the threat of punishment for helping fugitives.

Philadelphia was the scene of numerous trials to free or deny liberty to— the enslaved. In 1800, Judge Richard Peters heard the case of two American ships carrying enslaved Africans captured by the U.S. sloop Ganges. Peters ruled that the ships violated the 1794 Slave Trade Act that prohibited American ships from engaging in the overseas slave trade. All Africans on board were freed into the care of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and given the surname "Ganges."

Pictured is **James Forten**: born free, served in the American Revolution, and then became a respected sail maker, business owner—employing workers of African descent and white workers—and a leader in Philadelphia's free community of people of African descent.

*James Forten*, artist unknown, n.d.  
Courtesy, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).  
The Leon Gardiner Collection.



# HOW DID ENSLAVED PEOPLE BECOME FREE?

## THE LAW

Owners always were legally able to emancipate enslaved Africans and their descendants. A few, such as George Washington, chose to do so in their wills; some emancipated them during their lifetimes.

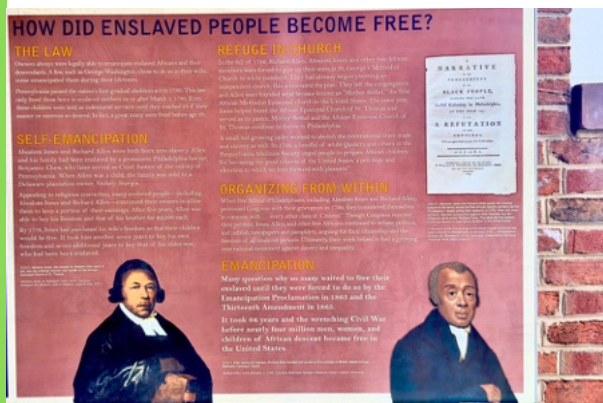
Pennsylvania passed the nation's first gradual abolition act in 1780. This law only freed those born to enslaved mothers on or after March 1, 1780. Even these children were held as indentured servants until they reached 28 if their master or mistress so desired. In fact, a great many were freed before age 28.

## SELF-EMANCIPATION

Absalom Jones and Richard Allen were both born into slavery. Allen and his family had been enslaved by a prominent Philadelphia lawyer, Benjamin Chew, who later served as Chief Justice of the colony of Pennsylvania. When Allen was a child, the family was sold to a Delaware plantation owner, Stokely Sturgis.

Appealing to religious conviction, many enslaved people—including Absalom Jones and Richard Allen—convinced their owners to allow them to keep a portion of their earnings. After five years, Allen was able to buy his freedom and that of his brother for \$2,000 each. By 1778, Jones had purchased his wife's freedom so that their children would be free. It took

him another seven years to buy his own freedom and seven additional years to buy that of his older son, who had been born enslaved.

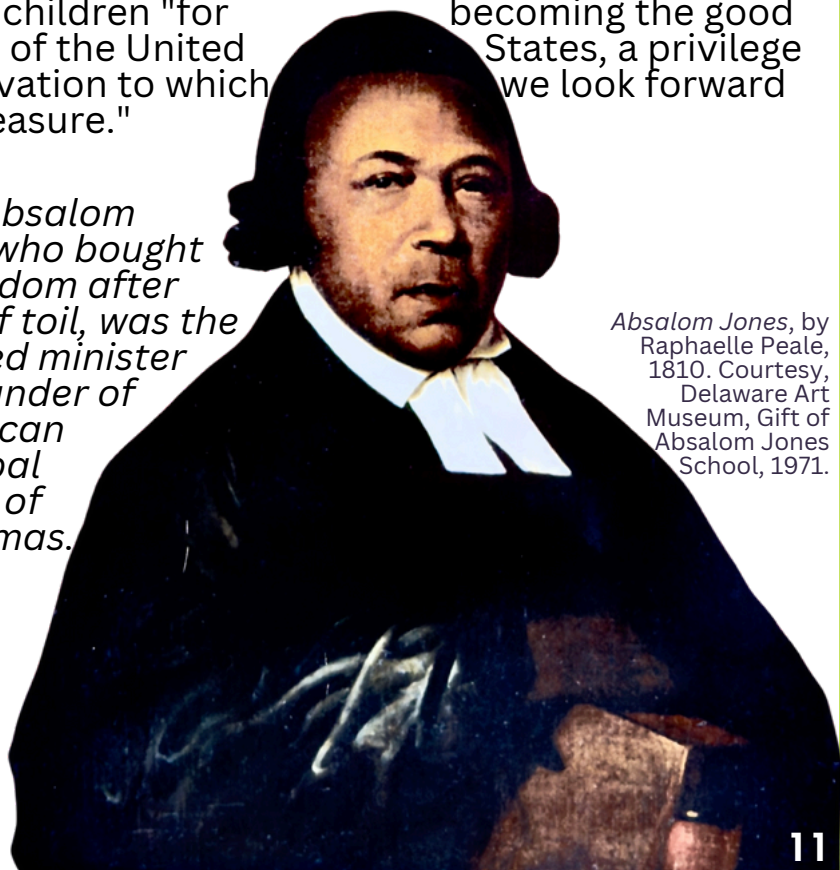


## REFUGE IN CHURCH

In the fall of 1792, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and other free African members were forced to give up their seats in St. George's Methodist Church to white members. They had already begun planning an independent church; this accelerated the plan. They left the congregation and Allen soon founded what became known as "Mother Bethel," the first African Methodist Episcopal church in the United States. The same year, Jones helped found the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas and served as its pastor. Mother Bethel and the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas continue to thrive in Philadelphia.

A small but growing cadre worked to abolish the international slave trade and slavery as well. In 1794, a handful of white Quakers and others in the Pennsylvania Abolition Society urged people to prepare African children "for becoming the good citizens of the United States, a privilege and elevation to which we look forward with pleasure."

Right: *Absalom Jones, who bought his freedom after years of toil, was the ordained minister and founder of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas.*



*Absalom Jones, by  
Raphaelle Peale,  
1810. Courtesy,  
Delaware Art  
Museum, Gift of  
Absalom Jones  
School, 1971.*

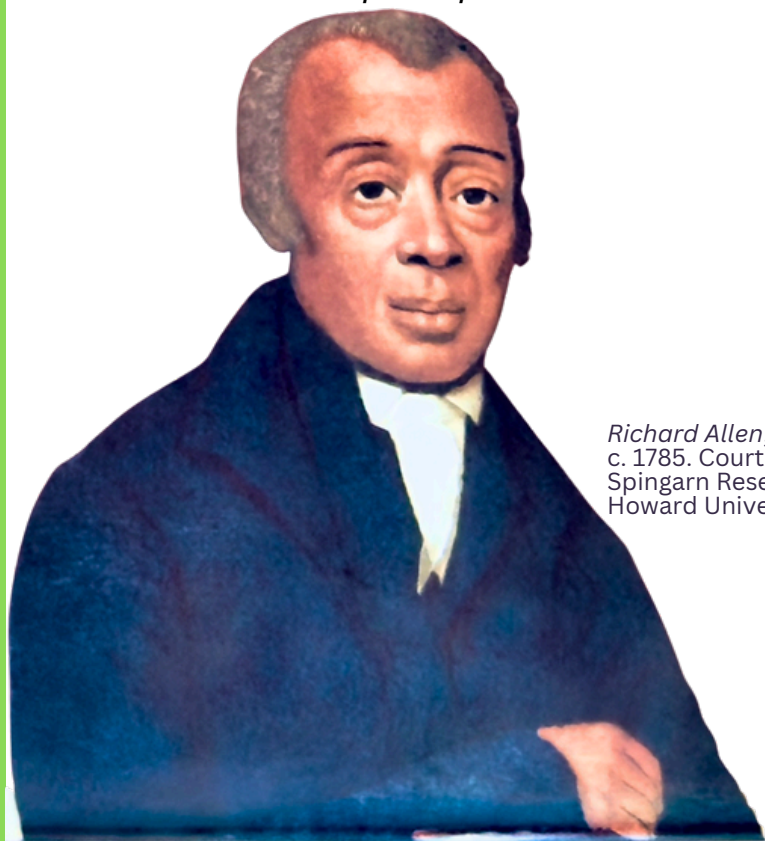


## ORGANIZING

When free African-Philadelphians, including Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, petitioned Congress with their grievances in 1799, they considered themselves "in common with ... every other class of Citizens."

Though Congress rejected their petition, Jones, Allen, and other free Africans continued to debate, petition, and publish newspapers and pamphlets, arguing for their citizenship and the freedom of all enslaved persons. Ultimately, their work helped to fuel a growing international movement against slavery and inequality.

*Below: After buying his freedom, Richard Allen founded and served as first minister of Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.*



*Richard Allen, artist unknown, c. 1785. Courtesy, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.*

## EMANCIPATION

**Many question  
why so many waited  
to free their enslaved  
until they were forced to do so  
by the Emancipation  
Proclamation in 1863 and the  
Thirteenth Amendment in 1865.**

**It took 66 years  
and the wrenching Civil War  
before**

**nearly**

**four**

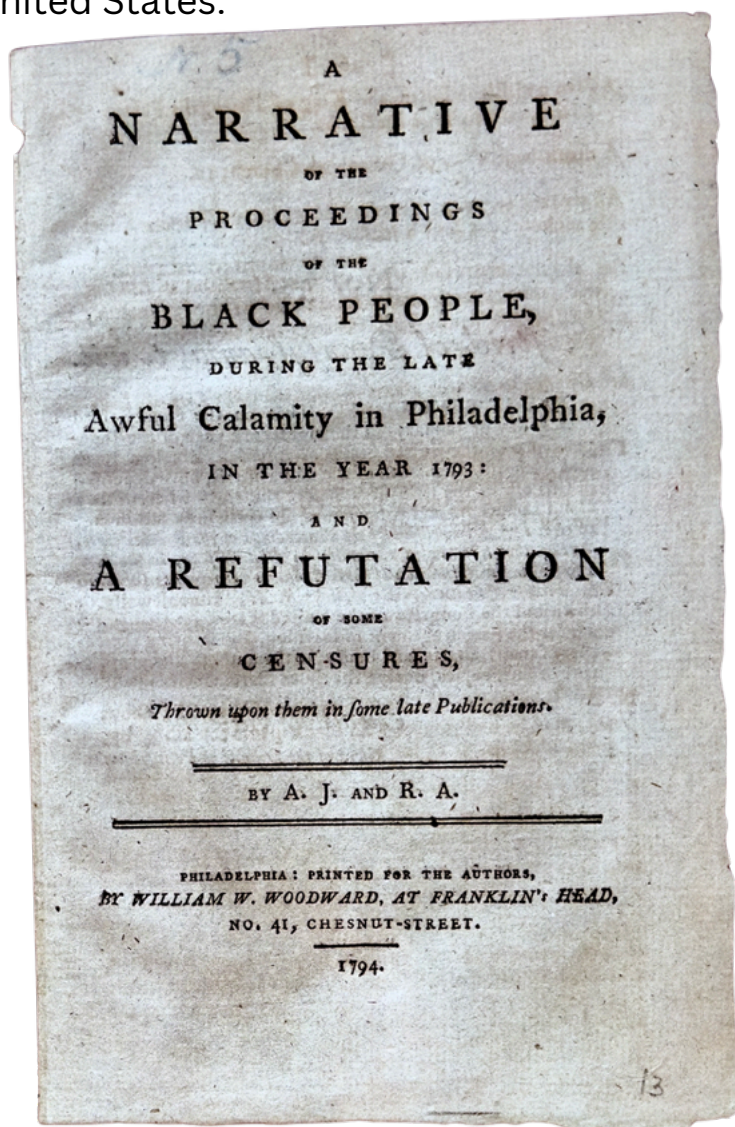
**million**

**men, women, and children  
of African descent**

**became free**

**in the United States.**

Absalom Jones and Richard Allen wrote this moving account of the heroic service by Free African Society members during Philadelphia's deadly yellow fever epidemic in 1793. Allen and Jones skillfully rebutted accusations against their members by the influential white writer, Mathew Carey. They were the first authors of African descent to copyright a pamphlet in the United States.



*A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the late awful calamity in Philadelphia, in the year 1793...* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1794). Courtesy, Independence National Historical Park (INDE10602).



# MOUNT VERNON TO PHILADELPHIA:

## A Path to Freedom—For Some

The nine enslaved men and women of the President's House were chosen by Washington to accompany him to Philadelphia. They were separated from their families back in Mount Vernon and rotated out of state regularly to prevent them from gaining freedom under Pennsylvania law.

### CHARACTERS

**Christopher Sheels**, *enslaved attendant to Washington*

**Hercules**, *enslaved cook*

**Richmond**, *Hercules' enslaved son*

**Giles**, *enslaved stable hand*

**Oney Judge**, *enslaved maid and seamstress to Martha*

**Austin**, *Ona's enslaved half brother, house servant*

**Paris**, *enslaved stable hand*

**Moll**, *enslaved maid to Martha*

**Joe Richardson**, *enslaved postillion for the presidential coach*



SERVANTS' EATING HALL



*"See the names of the nine enslaved members of President Washington's household who lived at this site. One of them, Oney Judge, seized her freedom while the Washington family was eating dinner. With the help of the free black community and a white ship captain, she eventually made her way to a new life in New Hampshire."*

- NPS, Independence National Historical Park: President's House Site, Memorial Wall

*(Both images: NPS photos. Photographs by Joseph E.B. Elliott. Public domain.)*







On November 22, 1790, President Washington arrived at the President's House to establish his home and office. With him were eight enslaved African descendants, **ordered by Washington himself to be rotated back to Mount Vernon to evade Pennsylvania's gradual abolition law** that would have allowed them to petition for their freedom after six months residence. The enslaved were Hercules, his son Richmond, Oney Judge, Oney's brother Austin, Moll, Christopher, Giles, Paris, and later Joe.





# The House of the People Who Worked & Lived In It

## A BRIEF TIMELINE OF FREEDOM AND SLAVERY AT THIS SITE

- Before** For hundreds of years, Algonquian-speaking peoples lived here.
- 1682** The city of Philadelphia was founded.
- 1767** The house was built by Mary Lawrence Masters, a slaveholder and wealthy widow of the former mayor.
- 1772** Mary Masters presented the house to her daughter, Polly, upon her wedding to Lieutenant Governor Richard Penn.
- 1777** The house was headquarters of General Sir William Howe, a leader of British forces during the British occupation of Philadelphia.
- 1778** The house was headquarters of Major General Benedict Arnold whose betrayal of the Revolution began here.
- 1782** Financier Robert Morris, a slaveholder, rebuilt and expanded the house after a major fire.
- 1790** Philadelphia became the nation's temporary capital for the decade. George Washington made additions to the house to make room for his official duties, his extended family, his secretaries, as well as for enslaved, indentured, and free household servants.
- 1797** Newly elected President John Adams and his wife Abigail moved into the house.
- 1800** The house was converted into Francis's Union Hotel after the government departed for Washington, D.C. Later it was remodeled for shops and a boarding house.
- 1852** The house was demolished except for the side walls and foundation and three stores were built within the gutted space.
- 1955** Stores were demolished.
- 1945-67** Creation of Independence Mall State Park.
- 1948** Congress established Independence National Historical Park (INHP).
- 1951** Last remaining walls of the former President's House were demolished to create Independence Mall.
- 1954** Public restroom for Independence Mall was built on the house site.
- 1973** Independence National Historical Park assumed management of the site.
- 1998** Independence National Historical Park announced redesign for the three blocks of Independence Mall.
- 2000** INHP unveiled the design for the Liberty Bell Center.
- 2001** Independence Hall Association, a citizens' group, asked INHP to mark the outline of the President's House at the site. Request was denied.
- 2002** The publication of an article in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* sparked public interest in the site and the presence of slavery in President Washington's household.
- Construction of the Liberty Bell Center began. A public outcry about the project arose from both African-American and white advocates once it was understood that the new building would cover the site where some of the enslaved stable hands slept. Avenging the Ancestors Coalition (ATAC), Generations Unlimited, and others in the African-American community continued to call for a commemoration of the people of African descent who were enslaved here.
- 2003** Liberty Bell Center opened.
- 2005** Funding for the design and construction of a commemorative exhibit at the President's House site was provided by the City of Philadelphia and federal government.
- 2007** Archeology revealed partial foundations of the house and back buildings.
- 2010** President's House exhibit and memorial to the enslaved opened.
- Today** You have the opportunity to explore this site and discover its important place in American history.

# THE HOUSE



190 High Street was one of the finest properties in the city. It included a large walled garden, stables, back buildings, and an ice house, a novelty in the 1790s.

*Residence of Washington in High Street, Phila, by William L. Breton, c. 1830. Courtesy, Private Collection.*

In the 1790s, when Philadelphia was the temporary capital of the United States, this was the site of the executive offices and the residence of the first two presidents of the United States of America. From 1790 to 1797, President George Washington, members of his extended family, his secretaries, and the enslaved, indentured, and free household servants lived here. From 1797 to 1800, President John Adams and his wife Abigail lived here with their servants, none of whom was enslaved.



Abigail Adams, the 2nd First Lady, hired wage earners, some of whom were white and some of African descent. John Adams, the 2nd President of the United States, lived modestly with only a few servants, none enslaved.

This plan shows the house as it likely was in 1781 when Robert Morris took possession as purchaser. He enlarged and improved it as his family residence. After the city chose Morris' house as the president's residence, Washington enlarged it before arriving to take office in 1790.

*Abigail Smith Adams (Mrs. John Adams) and John Adams, both by Gilbert Stuart, 1800-1815. Courtesy, National Gallery of Art, Washington. Gift of Mrs. Robert Homans.*





# THE PRESIDENTS' VISITORS

## OFFICIALS

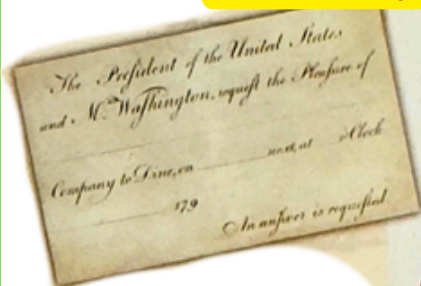
Many dignitaries met or dined with Presidents Washington and Adams, including men who would become presidents themselves—Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams. Visitors also included Supreme Court justices, cabinet secretaries, and congressmen.

## AMBASSADORS

Foreign ambassadors and emissaries were welcomed. Secretary of State Timothy Pickering met with Joseph Bunel who was sent by Toussaint L'Ouverture to strengthen economic ties with Haiti. L'Ouverture led the revolution that liberated the enslaved Africans in St. Domingue (Haiti) and was the first government leader in the Western Hemisphere of African descent.

Toussaint L'Ouverture rose from enslavement to lead a violent and successful overthrow of slavery in Haiti.

*Toussaint L'Ouverture*, artist unknown, n.d. Courtesy, The John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.



President Washington invited guests by sending this card with the name and date entered in the blanks. Blank dinner invitation from President and Mrs. Washington, c. 1790-1797. Courtesy, The Mount Vernon Ladies Association.



# THE PRESIDENTS' VISITORS

## NATIVE AMERICAN DIGNITARIES

Presidents Washington and Adams met with many delegations from indigenous nations. President Washington invited Thayendanegea, also known as Joseph Brant, a famous Mohawk leader of the Iroquois Nations.

Washington also invited a Chickasaw delegation, including Chiefs Piomingo, George Colbert, and William Glover, to the house to discuss future relations with the United States.

Other Native American chiefs, including Seneca Chief Red Jacket, met with Washington in the state dining room. Efforts to befriend the native tribes and secure treaties of peace during this period failed over time.

Thayendanegea, a Mohawk leader also known as Joseph Brant, was invited here by President Washington to ask his help with efforts to secure peace with warring tribes on the western frontier. *Joseph Brant/Thayendanegea*, by Charles Willson Peale, 1797. Courtesy, Independence National Historical Park.



# HOUSEHOLD LABOR

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## ENSLAVED AFRICANS IN THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE

George and Martha Washington transported nine enslaved African descendants from their Mount Vernon estate to Philadelphia. The enslaved included their cook Hercules, Hercules's son Richmond, Martha's personal maid Oney Judge, Oney's brother Austin, Christopher, Giles, Joe, Paris, and Moll.

## PAID ARTISANS AND LABORERS

Thousands of craftsmen and laborers, including free people of African descent, lived in Philadelphia in the 1790s and were essential to the city's prosperity. Some worked and lived in the presidential households.

## INDENTURED SERVANTS

George Washington also had indentured servants at the President's House and in nearby Germantown, where he lived for several weeks with his family and servants in the summer of 1794. Most indentures required at least three years of work without wages in exchange for ship's passage, housing, food, clothing, and training. At the end of the indenture, the servant was free to negotiate wages for labor.

## PRESIDENT ADAMS

John and Abigail Adams never enslaved Africans, and both were strongly opposed to slavery, though John Adams made no public move against slavery while president. He later wrote that during his presidency he had deferred decisions on slavery to southern politicians because he feared a bloody slave rebellion like those reported in the West Indies.

# SLAVERY IN THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE



*The Washington Family*, by Edward Savage, 1789-1796. Courtesy, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection.

George and Martha Washington lived in the President's House with her grandchildren: Nelly Custis and "Wash" Custis. This portrait also shows an enslaved African on the right wearing a livery uniform.

## WASHINGTON & MOUNT VERNON

Mount Vernon, Washington's 8,000-acre plantation in northern Virginia, helped make him one of the wealthier men in the United States.

In addition to dozens of hired people and indentured servants, **Washington controlled the lives of more than 300 enslaved Africans and their descendants.**



## MARTHA WASHINGTON AND THE DOWER SLAVES

Martha Dandridge Custis, the widow of Daniel Custis, married George Washington in 1759. Martha's inheritance from the Custis estate, which had 17,880 acres with 285 enslaved men, women, and children, provided the lifetime use of, and income from, one third the property, including at least 84 enslaved people. The rest of the estate was held in trust for her son and his heirs.

When they married, George Washington became the manager of Martha's enslaved people. However, he did not own them. In his will, George Washington directed that the 123 enslaved men, women, and children he personally owned be freed upon his wife's death. Martha in fact freed them in 1801, prior to her own death.

Washington attempted to find a financially sound way to free his enslaved workers during his retirement years, but he had no success. He lamented that intermarriage had created families that by his will would free some, while others would remain enslaved by the Custis estate. Martha Washington was not legally able to free the 153 people enslaved by the Custis estate, but evidence suggests that she

accepted the institution of slavery. These "dower slaves" were transferred as property to her four grandchildren, breaking up families that now had both free and enslaved members.

While some Americans chose to free their enslaved Africans during their own lifetime, others, like the Washingtons, decided the fate of the enslaved by the terms of their wills.



ABOVE: Martha Washington as the First Lady lived in a household that included a personal maid, a young enslaved woman known as Oney Judge. Oney escaped in 1796, settled in New Hampshire, married Jack Staines, and took the name Ona Maria Judge Staines. *Martha Dandridge Custis (Mrs. George) Washington*, by Charles Willson Peale, c. 1795. Courtesy, Independence National Historical Park.



## WASHINGTON'S DECEIT

Pennsylvania's Gradual Abolition Act (1780) granted freedom to any enslaved person brought into the state and held there for at least six months. Non-resident slave owners needed only to send their enslaved out of state for a day to start the six-month period again.

**President Washington, when reminded of the Abolition Act, chose to rotate some of his enslaved servants to Virginia to prevent them from claiming their freedom.** His correspondence indicates that he wanted to do this in secret.

## RESISTANCE AND ESCAPE

While residing here, Washington signed the Fugitive Slave Act in 1793, which required the return of escaped slaves who had crossed state lines, and allowed slave catchers to operate freely in every U.S. state and territory.

During Washington's presidency and retirement, four of the nine enslaved who spent time in Philadelphia attempted to run to freedom, but only two succeeded—Hercules from Mount Vernon and Oney Judge from Philadelphia. Though still legally considered a fugitive, Hercules, who had been owned directly by George Washington, was probably emancipated after Washington's death. Oney Judge Staines' freedom, however, was always endangered after she escaped to New Hampshire, until her death in 1848, as she was a dower slave owned by the Custis Estate.

**Be aware that here you are following in the footsteps of these enslaved**

as much as those of the Founding Fathers. **25**



## *"I will fear no Evil"*

Many evenings, Oney Judge would sit on her pallet where she slept at the foot of Martha Washington's bed, sewing and listening to the First Lady read the Bible, sing hymns, and pray with her two granddaughters in the next room.

In the 1840s, after nearly fifty years of freedom in New Hampshire, Oney (then Ona) Judge told her story to the press. Oney fled the President's House because she overheard Martha Washington state her intention of giving the young woman to her granddaughter. Oney wanted to learn to read and know about religion. Oney recalled that she had "never received the least mental or moral instruction of any sort."



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*"I am free now"*

Oney Judge's strong desire for freedom drove the 22-year-old enslaved seamstress to flee the President's House on May 21, 1796. With the help of friends of African descent, she found passage to New Hampshire, where she married, raised a family, and lived to old age.

*"Whilst they were packing up to go to Virginia, I was packing to go, I didn't know where; for I knew that if I went back to Virginia, I should never get my liberty. I had friends among the colored people of Philadelphia, had my things carried there beforehand, and left Washington's house while they were eating dinner."*

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### *The opener of the Way*

In 1793, Cap François, the capital of St. Domingue (Haiti), nearly burned to the ground during a massive uprising of the enslaved. White and Creole plantation owners, with enslaved people in tow, fled to Philadelphia and other American port cities. As a result, the population of Philadelphians of African descent increased by about one-third.

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In November of 1793, Washington, his staff and cabinet, along with many other Philadelphia upper and middle class residents, found temporary housing in Germantown nine miles away until the deadly yellow fever epidemic ended. In town, Philadelphians of African descent organized to nurse the sick and bury the mounting number of dead.





Clergymen Richard Allen and Absalom Jones organized their congregations and other free Africans who attended the sick and buried the dead during the raging yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Although misguided, the respected Dr. Benjamin Rush had encouraged their service under the belief that persons of African descent were immune to the deadly disease.

*"...the difficulty of getting a corpse taken away was such that few were willing to do it... We then offered our services in the public papers, by advertising that we would remove the dead and procure nurses."*  
 (Richard Allen and Absalom Jones)





## *Promoting the Abolition of Slavery*

On April 21, 1790, nearly 20,000 African and white Philadelphians lined the streets to view the funeral procession of Benjamin Franklin. Once a slave owner, Franklin was president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society at the end of his life and sent a biting parody attacking slavery to the press as his last word on the subject.

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# The Executive Branch

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled that a district of Territory not exceeding ten Miles square to be located as hereafter directed at

and the same is hereby accepted as the permanent seat of Congress and the government of the United States

And be it further enacted that the President of the United States be authorized and empowered to appoint three Commissioners to purchase

of land within the district as may be necessary and

grants of land for the use of the States and to erect thereon within

years good and suitable buildings for



ABOVE: President George Washington knew he was setting an example as the first president under the U.S. Constitution. George Washington, by Gilbert Stuart, 1796. Courtesy, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; acquired as a gift to the nation through the generosity of the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

ABOVE: The Residency Act of July 1790 designated Philadelphia as the temporary capital for ten years while the new U.S. capital in Washington, D.C. was being built. A bill to determine the permanent seat of Congress and the Government of the United States, 31 May 1790; Bills and Resolutions originating in the Senate (SEN 1A-B1); 1st Congress; Records of the U.S. Senate, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. Courtesy, National Archives and Records Administration.



ABOVE: John Adams had a long career serving his country. As the second president, however, he, like Washington, made no public comment on petitions and publications protesting slavery. John Adams, by John Singleton Copley, 1783. Courtesy, Harvard Art Museums, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Portrait Collection, Bequest of Ward Nicholas Boylston to Harvard College, 1828, H74.



# A NEW NATION:

## A NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT

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The federal government moved from New York City to Philadelphia in 1790. Years of contentious debate over where to locate the nation's capital contributed to the divide between North and South. Southern delegates favored a site along the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia, both slave states. Northern delegates favored New York or Philadelphia. Alexander Hamilton was eager to have Congress pass a bill that would allow the federal government to assume the states' huge financial debt from the Revolutionary War. A compromise was reached. In exchange for southern support of his debt relief bill, Hamilton and his supporters voted in favor of designating Philadelphia as the temporary capital for a period of ten years when the seat of government would move to Washington, D.C.

While in Philadelphia, Presidents Washington and Adams had to make decisions regarding states' rights, executive power, citizenship, diplomacy, Native American territories, and slavery. Many of their initiatives, treaties, actions, and decisions determined the course of the nation for generations and contributed to establishing a national identity.

Both favored the strong central government supported by the Federalists, whose members included John Marshall and Alexander Hamilton. Republicans, such as Thomas Jefferson, were those who wanted more powers reserved for the states. Their bitter disputes led to the creation of the two-party system of government that still prevails.

# EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

## INTERNATIONAL

Both Washington and Adams faced shifting alliances with France and England, as well as issues regarding international trade. When war between France and Great Britain threatened to expand to the United States in 1794, Washington sent Chief Justice John Jay to conclude a treaty with Great Britain to settle all outstanding issues between the two countries and establish peace.

The terms of the Jay Treaty incensed many who felt that it conceded too much to England. Thomas Jefferson called the treaty an act "against the legislature and people of the United States." On July 4, 1795, Jay was hanged in effigy, and on July 25, a crowd gathered, screaming, "Kick this damn treaty to Hell!" Congress ratified the treaty, but it embittered relations with France, itself in the midst of a lengthy and bloody revolution.

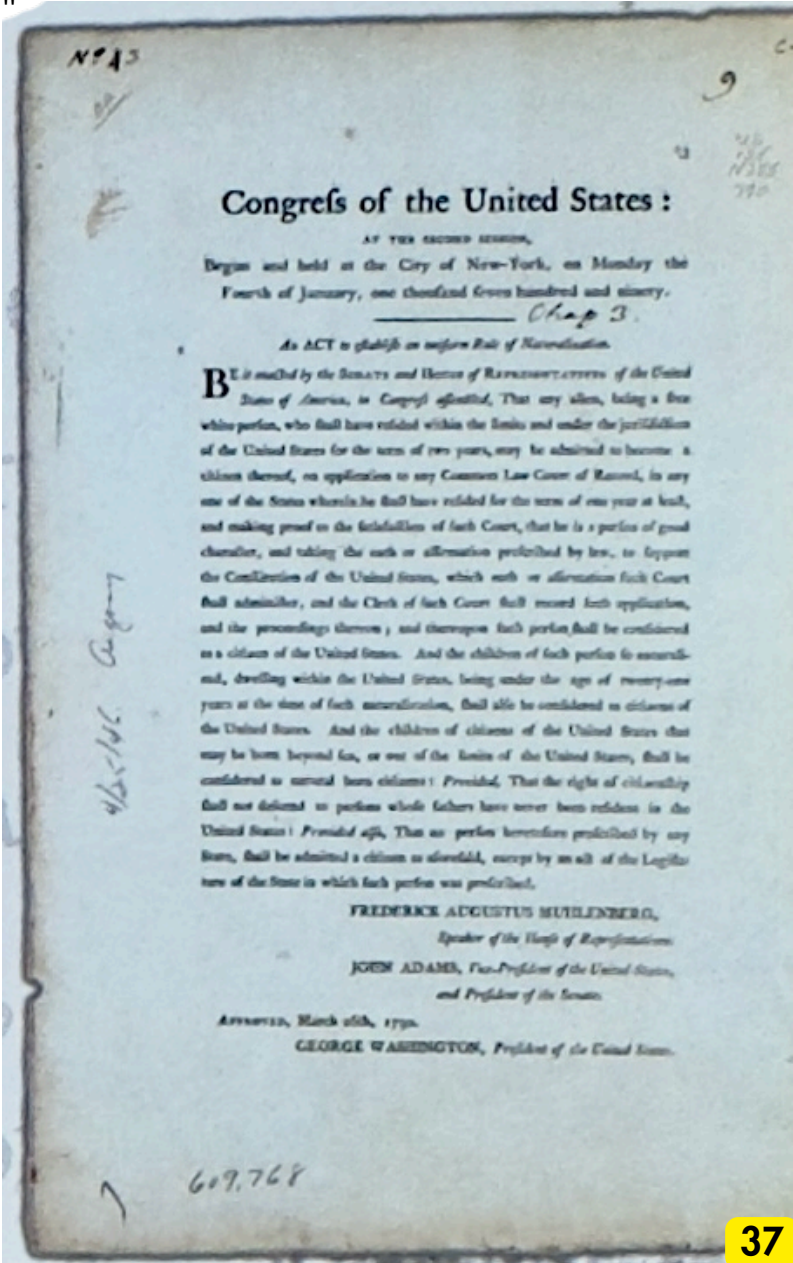
## NATIONAL

**Rights of individuals and states.** The Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution, was ratified in 1791 during Washington's presidency. The Bill of Rights protects basic civil liberties and rights of individuals. It also reserves all powers that are not explicitly granted to the federal government to the citizens or states. It addresses the separation of individual, state, and federal rights.

**These rights, however, did not apply to enslaved persons,** who were considered only property.



**Naturalization act of 1790.** Race was fundamental in determining citizenship in the new nation. In 1790, Congress debated a bill about the requirements to become a naturalized American citizen. While disagreement arose about religious and political affiliation, moral character, and length of residency, all agreed on the most fundamental point: future citizens must be "free white persons of good moral character."



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**Race, ethnicity, and country of origin.** In the 1790s, indigenous peoples occupied much of the land of this continent. Though chiefs of the Iroquois and other Indian nations received peace medals from President Washington, beneath this façade of friendship simmered struggle to define the relationship of land, autonomy, and citizenship on the North American continent. While many European immigrants were becoming American citizens, citizenship did not apply to most Native Americans because they belonged to their own sovereign nations.



*Delegates from Native American nations such as the Chickasaw came to Philadelphia to negotiate peace treaties.*





ABOVE: Bank of the United States, in Third Street, Philadelphia. Drawn, engraved and published by William Birch & Son, 1799. Courtesy, Independence National Historical Park.

## FIRST BANK OF THE UNITED STATES

The First Bank of the United States was chartered at the urging of President Washington's Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Established on February 25, 1791, the Bank unified and stabilized the many currencies in use. The Bank served as the national depository for government revenue and a vehicle for paying the foreign debt.

The original bank building still stands at 120 South Third Street, within Independence National Historical Park.



ABOVE: Washington personally joined the troops he called up to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania in 1794. Washington Reviewing the Western Army at Fort Mifflin, attributed to Frederick Kemmelmeyer, 1795. Courtesy, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## WHISKEY REBELLION

In 1791 Congress imposed a tax on distilled whiskey to help reduce the national debt. Several thousand armed men gathered near Pittsburgh to protest. In 1794 President Washington agreed to Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's request to lead a multi-state militia west to quell the resistance. The military action demonstrated the new government's power to enforce federal law. Resentment of this action helped elect Thomas Jefferson, a Democratic-Republican, in 1800.





ABOVE: The Treaty of Greenville was signed on August 2, 1795, between a coalition of Native Americans and the United States following the Native American loss at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. In exchange for goods, the Native Americans turned over to the United States large parts of modern-day Ohio, the future site of downtown Chicago, and the Fort Detroit area. *Treaty of Greenville, Ohio, 1795, artist unknown (member of Gen. Anthony Wayne's staff). Courtesy, Chicago History Museum.*

## DRIVING THE INDIAN NATIONS OUT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY

Presidents Washington and Adams proclaimed respect for the sovereignty of the Indian nations, but they could not control white settlers on the frontier who frequently violated, with no consequences, the tribal boundary treaties. In the Ohio Territory, the chiefs of the Shawnee and Miami refused to leave their ancestral lands. The Battle of Fallen Timbers (1794) and the Treaty of Greenville (1795) resolved the conflict. Most of Ohio was no longer Native American territory.

## CLOSING THE DOORS AGAINST "DANGEROUS ALIENS"

Amid an undeclared war with revolutionary France in 1798 and fearing foreign interference in American politics, Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts. Congress, with President Adams' support, also passed a new Naturalization Act that required an immigrant to be in residence for 14 years, rather than five, before they could become a citizen.

The **Alien Act of 1798** authorized the President to deport aliens considered "dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States" during peacetime.

The **Alien Enemies Act of 1798** allowed the wartime arrest, imprisonment, and deportation of an alien subject of an enemy power.

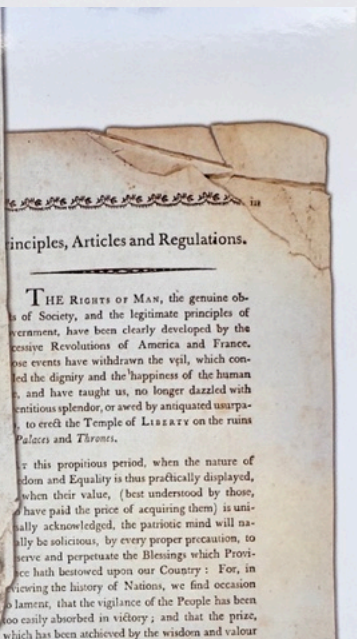
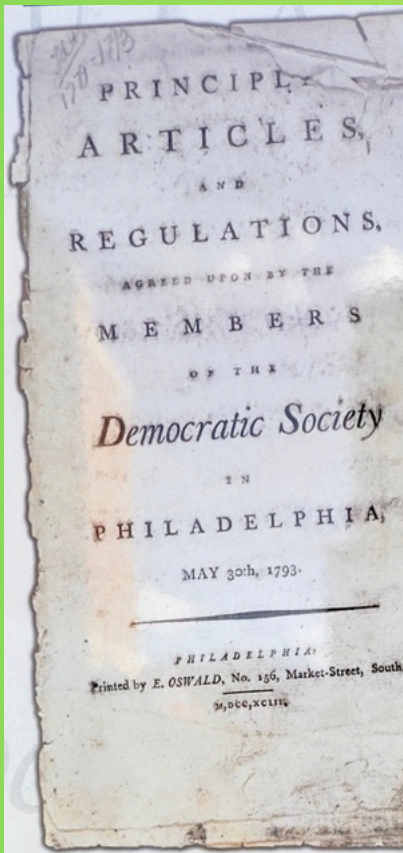
The **Sedition Act of 1798** stated that a treasonable act, including publication of any false, scandalous and malicious writing" against the government, was punishable by fine and imprisonment. The law was used to stifle dissent and silence newspapers that opposed the Federalists.

John Adams noted: "I knew there was need enough for both [the Alien and Sedition Acts], and therefore I consented to them."



Democratic Societies with revolutionary ideas sprang up in the capital. President Washington and his administration objected to their passionate political criticisms and tried to suppress them.

*Principles, Articles, and Regulations agreed upon by the Members of the Democratic Society in Philadelphia, May 30, 1793. Courtesy, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.*



ABOVE: When Barack Hussein Obama II was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States on January 20, 2009, he became the first person of African descent to hold this office. He is pictured here with the First Lady, Mrs. Michelle Robinson Obama and daughters, Sasha (left) and Malia (right).

Photo by Annie Leibovitz/Released by the White House Photo Office.





*"Burn this  
treaty  
to Hell!"*

On July 4, 1795, angry Philadelphians crowded the streets to protest the ratification of the Jay Treaty. The mob burned an effigy of former Chief Justice John Jay, who had negotiated a treaty with England that many people despised for its concessions to that country.

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Abigail wrote to her sister in May of 1798 expressing her fears as the political debate heated up over President Adams' policies towards France.

Over one thousand men marched in support of Adams on the street outside her window, while rumors spread that men opposed to President Adams and perhaps foreign agents meant to cause public havoc.

The mayor placed a guard in front of the President's House and "light horse" troops patrolled to keep order.



In March of 1793, Washington signed the Fugitive Slave Act, which gave slave owners explicit authority to recover escaped slaves from any part of the nation.

Some agents even took advantage of this law to kidnap free people of African descent.



# Suppressing the Opposition

On June 26, 1798, three weeks before Congress passed the Sedition Act, President Adams greeted dinner guests at the President's House. Two blocks away, Benjamin Franklin Bache, grandson of Benjamin Franklin and editor of the *Aurora*, was arrested for "libeling the President & Executive Government, in a manner tending to excite sedition...."



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*"You have invariably through the most trying times maintained a constant friendship and attention to the cause of our country and its independence and freedom."*

(George Washington to Samuel Fraunces)

Jamaican-born Samuel "Black Sam" Fraunces, owner of the Fraunces Tavern in New York City, was so highly regarded for his hospitality and patriotism that President Washington hired him as his steward in Philadelphia. The relationship went back to the Revolution when Fraunces often hosted Washington and his officers at the tavern. Despite his nickname, some believe him to have been white.

*[End of current documented photos/text of the exhibit; see page 2 re:potentially missing exhibit pieces!]*

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