

November 13, 2023

Meeting Locations of Congress and Predecessor Legislatures

In 1987, as part of the Bicentennial Celebration of the Constitution, Congress held a joint commemorative meeting in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA—site of the Constitutional Convention. The joint commemorative meeting marked the first time since the U.S. Capitol moved to Washington, DC, in 1800 that Congress convened outside of the District of Columbia.

Since 1774, Congress and its predecessor legislatures—the First Continental Congress, the Second Continental Congress, and Congress under the Articles of Confederation—have convened in nine different cities: Philadelphia, PA; Baltimore, MD; Lancaster, PA; York, PA; Princeton, NJ; Annapolis, MD; Trenton, NJ; New York, NY; and Washington, DC. Since 1800, Congress has continuously met in Washington, DC, except for two joint commemorative meetings (see “Joint Commemorative Meetings Outside Washington, DC” below). For a full list of congressional meeting locations, see **Table 1**.

“I congratulate the people of the United States on the assembling of Congress at the permanent seat of their Government; and I congratulate you, gentlemen, on the prospect of a residence not to be changed. Although there is cause to apprehend that accommodations are not now so complete as might be wished, yet there is great reason to believe that this inconvenience will cease with the present session.”

— President John Adams, remarks to a joint session of Congress, November 22, 1800

Meeting Locations of Congress

Since 1774, Congress and its predecessor legislatures have met in nine different cities in four states. Since 1800, Congress has met almost exclusively in Washington, DC, at the U.S. Capitol.

First and Second Continental Congresses

Between 1774 and the ratification of the Articles of Confederation in 1781, the First and Second Continental Congresses met in four different locations. Shown in **Figure 1**, the First Continental Congress met at Carpenters’ Hall in Philadelphia between September and October 1774.

The Second Continental Congress began in Philadelphia in May 1775, before moving several times. The meeting locations included Baltimore, MD (Henry Fite’s House); the Lancaster, PA, Court House; and the York, PA, Court House. Additionally, the Continental Congress met at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA (then called the

State House or the Court House) at various times between 1775 and 1781.

Figure 1. Meeting Locations of the First and Second Continental Congresses



Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Buildings of the Department of State,” at <https://history.state.gov/departmentshistory/buildings>.

Congress Under the Articles of Confederation

On March 1, 1781, the last of the required 13 states ratified the Articles of Confederation. Between the ratification of the Articles of Confederation and the ratification of the Constitution in 1789, Congress met in five locations. Those were Philadelphia, PA (State House/Court House); Princeton, NJ (Nassau Hall); Annapolis, MD (State House); Trenton, NJ (French Arms Tavern); and New York, NY (City Hall and Fraunces Tavern). **Figure 2** shows four locations where Congress met under the Articles of Confederation.

Figure 2. Select Meeting Locations of Congress Under the Articles of Confederation, 1781-1789

Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Buildings of the Department of State,” at <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/buildings>.

Congress Under the Constitution

In 1789, the U.S. Constitution was ratified. Following the ratification, the first Congress met at Federal Hall in New York, NY. Since then, Congress has met in Philadelphia, PA (1790-1800), and Washington, DC (since 1800).

Joint Commemorative Meetings Outside Washington, DC

On two occasions, Congress has held joint commemorative meetings outside of the District of Columbia. Those were

- July 16, 1987—Congress met at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA, to “honor the bicentennial of the Constitution” and commemorate “the 200th anniversary of the Great Compromise of the Constitutional Convention” (H.Con.Res. 131, 100th Congress); and
- September 6, 2002—Congress met at Federal Hall in New York, NY, “in remembrance of the victims and heroes of September 11, 2001, and in recognition of the courage and spirit of the City of New York” (H.Con.Res. 448, 110th Congress; and H.Con.Res. 449, 110th Congress).

Table 1 lists the meeting locations of Congress and its predecessor legislatures between 1774 and 2023.

Table 1. Meeting Location of Congress and Predecessor Legislatures, 1774-Present

Date	City (State)	Location
First Continental Congress		
September 5, 1774- October 26, 1774	Philadelphia, PA	Carpenters’ Hall
Second Continental Congress		
May 10, 1775- December 12, 1776	Philadelphia, PA	State House
December 20, 1776 -March 4, 1777	Baltimore, MD	Henry Fite’s House
March 5, 1777- September 18, 1777	Philadelphia, PA	Court House
September 27, 1777	Lancaster, PA	Court House
September 30, 1777 -June 27, 1778	York, PA	Court House
July 2, 1778- March 1, 1781	Philadelphia, PA	College Hall; State House
Congress Under the Articles of Confederation		
March 1, 1781- June 21, 1783	Philadelphia, PA	State House
June 30, 1783- November 4, 1783	Princeton, NJ	Nassau Hall
November 26, 1783 -June 3, 1784	Annapolis, MD	State House
November 1, 1784- December 24, 1784	Trenton, NJ	French Arms Tavern
January 11, 1785- March 2, 1789	New York, NY	City Hall, Fraunces Tavern
Congress Under the Constitution		
March 4, 1789- August 12, 1790	New York, NY	Federal Hall
December 6, 1790- May 14, 1800	Philadelphia, PA	Congress Hall
November 17, 1800 -Present	Washington, DC	U.S. Capitol

Sources: U.S. Congress, House, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-2005*, 108th Cong., 2nd sess., H.Doc. 108-222 (2005), p. 33; Robert Fortenbaugh, *The Nine Capitols of the United States* (York, PA: Maple Press Company, 1948), p. 9.

Notes: In Autumn 1788, Congress under the Articles of Confederation met at Fraunces Tavern in New York. Following the War of 1812, while the Capitol was being repaired, Congress met at Blodget’s Hotel (1814) and at the Old Brick Capitol (1815-1819) in Washington, DC.

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