

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER FUN FACTS

The Making of the National Constitution Center:

- The National Constitution Center is the first-ever museum dedicated to the U.S. Constitution.
- A permanent memorial to the U.S. Constitution in Philadelphia was first proposed around the celebration of the centennial of the Constitution in 1887. It did not begin to take shape until the idea was proposed again 100 years later during the celebration of the document's bicentennial in 1987.
- President Ronald Reagan signed the "Constitution Heritage Act of 1988" on September 16, 1988, which established that a national center for educating, studying, and interpreting the Constitution was to be built at a site on or near Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.
- The Center is made of American products, including 85,000 square feet of Indiana limestone, 2.6 million pounds of steel, and a half-million cubic feet of concrete.
- The limestone used in building the Constitution Center is from the same quarry as the Empire State Building's materials.
- The Center's address is **525 Arch Street**, specifically chosen because **May 25th (5/25)** is the date that the Constitutional Convention began in Philadelphia in 1787, right across the street from our building at Independence Hall.
- During the design process, Governor Ed Rendell (who was at the time Mayor of Philadelphia) came up with the idea of putting the Preamble on the front of our building. It was the one stipulation he insisted on during the building of the Center. Gov. Rendell frequently visits the Center and often has lunch on the terrace overlooking Independence Mall.

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ADD ONE/FUN FACTS

- President Bill Clinton attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the National Constitution Center, which was held on September 17, 2000 – exactly 213 years after the Constitution was signed.
- Over one million archaeological artifacts were unearthed on the site of the National Constitution Center from 2000-2003, making it the richest find of colonial artifacts in an urban area in America.
- The Center received its copy of the first public printing of the U.S. Constitution on September 11, 2001 (almost 3 years before opening).
- The U.S. flag hanging in the Grand Hall Overlook has traveled around the country and flown over every state and territory capitol. It was hung at the Center in a special Flag Day ceremony on June 14, 2003 by Muhammad Ali.
- More than 4 million people have visited the Center since opening on July 4, 2003.
- If you completed every element in the main exhibition, it would take you almost three full work days to get through it.
- The Constitution is written on glass panels above the exhibit elements and there are empty panels for any future amendments.
- If laid out in a straight line, the glass Constitution circling the top of the permanent exhibit space would be approximately two city blocks long.

Constitution Fun Facts:

- The Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787. The Center annually celebrates Constitution Day on September 17, and continually strives for more people across the country to become familiar with this important date.
- The Constitution is the oldest and the shortest written constitution of any government in the world: there are 4543 words in the original, unamended document, including the signatures.
- The first national “Thanksgiving Day,” established on November 26, 1789, was originally created by George Washington for “giving thanks” for the Constitution.
- Over 11,000 amendments have been introduced in Congress, but only 33 have gone to the states to be ratified, and 27 have received the necessary approval from the states to actually become amendments to the Constitution.
- In 1997, the Center conducted a poll in which we discovered that more teens can name the Three Stooges than can name the three branches of government. Now that the Center is open to the public, we hope that these statistics have changed.

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ADD TWO/FUN FACTS

VIP Guests of the National Constitution Center:

- The Center is an A-list stop for many political and government VIPs: Laura Bush, Lynne Cheney, Bill Clinton, Barney Frank, and Supreme Court Justices Stephen Breyer, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Antonin Scalia.
- The Center has hosted several debates, town hall meetings, and political events, including a 2008 Democratic presidential primary debate between Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, a town hall meeting with Senator John McCain, and a 2006 PA Senatorial debate between Republican incumbent Rick Santorum and Democratic challenger Bob Casey, among others.
- We have also been a popular destination for celebrities, including Bono, Barbara Streisand, James Earl Jones, and Bon Jovi.
- Global guests have also visited, including Prince Charles and Camilla. In addition, the Center acts as a guide for international visitors to the region. Ambassadors who have visited from around the world include the Mayor of Mosul, Iraq; the former Prime Minister of Australia; and a delegation from the Brazilian Senate.
- President George H.W. Bush serves as Chairman of the Constitution Center. He has referred to the Center as a "jewel of America."

Signers' Hall:

- Through the help of former U.S. House of Representatives Historian Raymond Smock, extensive research was conducted to make the bronze statues in *Signers' Hall* as lifelike and accurate as possible. They are based on portraits and written descriptions of each man's appearance. The only signer without a detailed description was Jacob Broom, and because the Center did not want to misrepresent his appearance, he is the only one in the room with a partially covered face.
- It took 18 months and 50 artists, including sculptors, designers, and mold makers to produce the 42 bronze statues in *Signers' Hall*.
- George Washington and Gouverneur Morris were the tallest signers. In *Signers' Hall*, Gouverneur Morris is slightly hunched over in order to make George Washington stand out as the tallest man in the room.
- Since he was known as a rather brash individual, Alexander Hamilton can be seen standing alone in *Signers' Hall* with his head tilted upward. He is seen moving forward towards George Washington in support of his ideas.
- Benjamin Franklin (81) of Pennsylvania was the oldest member and Jonathan Dayton (26) of New Jersey was the youngest member of the Constitutional Convention.

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ADD THREE/FUN FACTS

- One of the most often asked questions by visitors is “where are the statues of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams in *Signers’ Hall*?” Almost ALL are surprised to be told that they did NOT take part in the four month long Constitutional Convention. At the time, Jefferson and Adams were serving as ambassadors to France and England, respectively.
- Several famous Founding Fathers were not delegates or signers of the Constitution. John Hancock was the Governor of Massachusetts at this time. Samuel Adams, also from Massachusetts, was not chosen as a delegate. Both, however, were instrumental in having the Constitution ratified in their state. Patrick Henry of Virginia refused to attend the Convention and became one of the leading anti-Federalists, arguing against the document during the ratification debates.
- Six of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. They were Roger Sherman of Connecticut, George Read of Delaware, and Robert Morris, Benjamin Franklin, George Clymer, and James Wilson of Pennsylvania.
- Seven of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were not born in the United States. Pierce Butler of South Carolina, James McHenry of Maryland, Thomas Fitzsimons of Pennsylvania, and William Paterson of New Jersey were all born in Ireland. Robert Morris and James Wilson, both of Pennsylvania, were born in England and Scotland respectively. Alexander Hamilton of New York was born in the West Indies.
- Twelve of the thirteen states were represented. Rhode Island, opposed to the creation of a stronger central government, boycotted the Constitutional Convention.
- All of the delegates were appointed by the legislature of the state that they represented. There was no restriction on the number of delegates a state could send, but when a measure was placed before the group, each state had only one vote.
- Alexander Hamilton is the only delegate from New York to sign the Constitution. The other two delegates from New York left during the summer because they were concerned about the new federal government overpowering state's rights. Since each state voted as one delegation, they clashed with Hamilton, who was a strong supporter of a strong, central government.
- A total of fifty-five delegates attended the Convention at some point, but only 39 signers and three dissenters remained on September 17th and are represented in *Signers’ Hall*.
- The convention began on May 25, 1787 and lasted until the day the finished document was signed, September 17, 1787.

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ADD FOUR/FUN FACTS

- The dimensions of *Signers' Hall* are the same as the room where the document was signed in Independence Hall, only two blocks away.

American National Tree:

- When “Deep Throat” was originally added to the American National Tree, a silhouette was used as the photograph since his identity was unknown. However, when it was revealed in 2005 that William Mark Felt, Sr. was “Deep Throat,” his image was added to the Tree.
- Entries on the Tree are updated periodically in response to visitor suggestions. The most recent entry, added on Constitution Day in 2007, was Elizabeth Eckford of the “Little Rock Nine.”

“Freedom Rising”:

- First Lady Laura Bush recently visited the Center and said of “Freedom Rising”, “I found it so moving I wanted to weep at the end of it.”

Constitution High School:

- In September 2006, the Center helped launch Constitution High School, a history and civics themed Philadelphia School District magnet school.
- In a unique constitutional student convention, the inaugural class of Constitution High School voted on their school colors, mascot, and motto. They chose the following:
Colors: Red, white, and blue
Mascot: The Generals
Motto: "United We Stand, Divided We Fall"

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