



## *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*

### The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon



*(Harpers Ferry Center Commissioned Art Collection, National Park Service)*

Residents of Philadelphia in 1776 would not have been able to direct a visitor to the "Liberty Bell." It was there--ringing out from the tower of the Pennsylvania State House--but it had yet to be transformed into an international symbol of liberty. By the time the grandchildren of those early Philadelphians were grandparents themselves, however, they could easily have directed a visitor to the site of the famous Liberty Bell. It was still housed at the old State House, but by then the building had been renamed Independence Hall.

Shaped by national and world events, the power of the 2,000-pound Liberty Bell's message grows in strength: a wreath is laid beneath the bell to commemorate the Thirteenth Amendment, which made slavery illegal in the United States; a crowd gathers outside the Liberty Bell Pavilion for a candlelight vigil to exercise their First Amendment right to disagree with their government; and tourists from all over the world come to see this international symbol of freedom.



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### Where this lesson fits into the curriculum

**Time Period:** Late 18th century, 19th century, early 20th century

**Topics:** The lesson could be used in units on 18th- and 19th-century American history and in civics and government courses. Students will practice their skills of evaluating the accuracy of historical sources, and of observation, analysis, and interpretation related to history, geography, and the social sciences.

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### **Relevant United States History Standards for Grades 5-12**

*This lesson relates to the following National Standards for History from the UCLA National Center for History in the Schools:*

#### **US History Era 4**

- **Standard 3A:** The student understands the changing character of American political life in "the age of the common man."
- **Standard 4B:** The student understands how Americans strived to reform society and create a distinct culture.

#### **US History Era 6**

- **Standard 2C:** The student understands how new cultural movements at different social levels affected American life.

#### **US History Era 7**

- **Standard 1B:** The student understands Progressivism at the national level.

#### **US History Era 9**

- **Standard 4A:** The student understands the "Second Reconstruction" and its advancement of civil rights.

### **Relevant Curriculum Standards for Social Studies**

*This lesson relates to the following Curriculum Standards for Social Studies from the National Council for the Social Studies:*

#### **Theme I: Culture**

- **Standard C:** The student explains and gives examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.



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### **Theme II: Time, Continuity and Change**

- Standard D: The student identifies and uses processes important to reconstructing and reinterpreting the past, such as using a variety of sources, providing, validating, and weighing evidence for claims, checking credibility of sources, and searching for causality

### **Theme III: People, Places, and Environment**

- Standard A: The student elaborates mental maps of locales, regions, and the world that demonstrate understanding of relative location, direction, size, and shape.
- Standard G: The Students describe how people create places that reflect cultural values and ideals as they build neighborhoods, parks, shopping centers, and the like.

### **Theme IV: Individual Development and Identity**

- Standard B: The student describes personal connections to place - as associated with community, nation, and world.

### **Theme X: Civic Ideals, and Practices**

- Standard A: The student examines the origins and continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government, such as individual human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law.
- Standard J: The student examines strategies designed to strengthen the "common good," which consider a range of options for citizen action.

### **Relevant Common Core Standards**

*This lesson relates to the Common Core English and Language Arts Standards for History and Social Studies for middle and high school students:*

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.2

#### **Craft and Structure**

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.6

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.7
- CSSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.8

#### **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**

- CSSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.10



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### About This Lesson

This lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration file, "[Independence National Historical Park](#)" [<https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/66000683.pdf>] (with [photographs](#) <https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Photos/66000683.pdf>), and other sources about the Liberty Bell. It was written by Joanne C. Blacoe, Park Ranger at Independence National Historical Park. TwHP is sponsored, in part, by the Cultural Resources Training Initiative and Parks as Classrooms programs of the National Park Service. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into the classrooms across the country.

### Objectives

1. To analyze the historical and cultural influences that shaped the symbolic meaning of the Liberty Bell;
2. To critically evaluate the reliability of particular sources as a way of determining historical accuracy;
3. To determine from the historical record how popular ideas about the past are shaped and changed by current events;
4. To research the way patriotic symbols are used in their own communities as well as the nation.

### Materials for students

**The materials listed below can either be used directly on the computer or can be printed out, photocopied, and distributed to students.**

1. Three maps showing the Philadelphia area as it appeared in 1777 and today;
2. Three readings compiled from documents contemporary to several different time periods;
3. One timetable from the Liberty Bell's travels;
4. Six photographs of the Liberty Bell, both modern and historical.

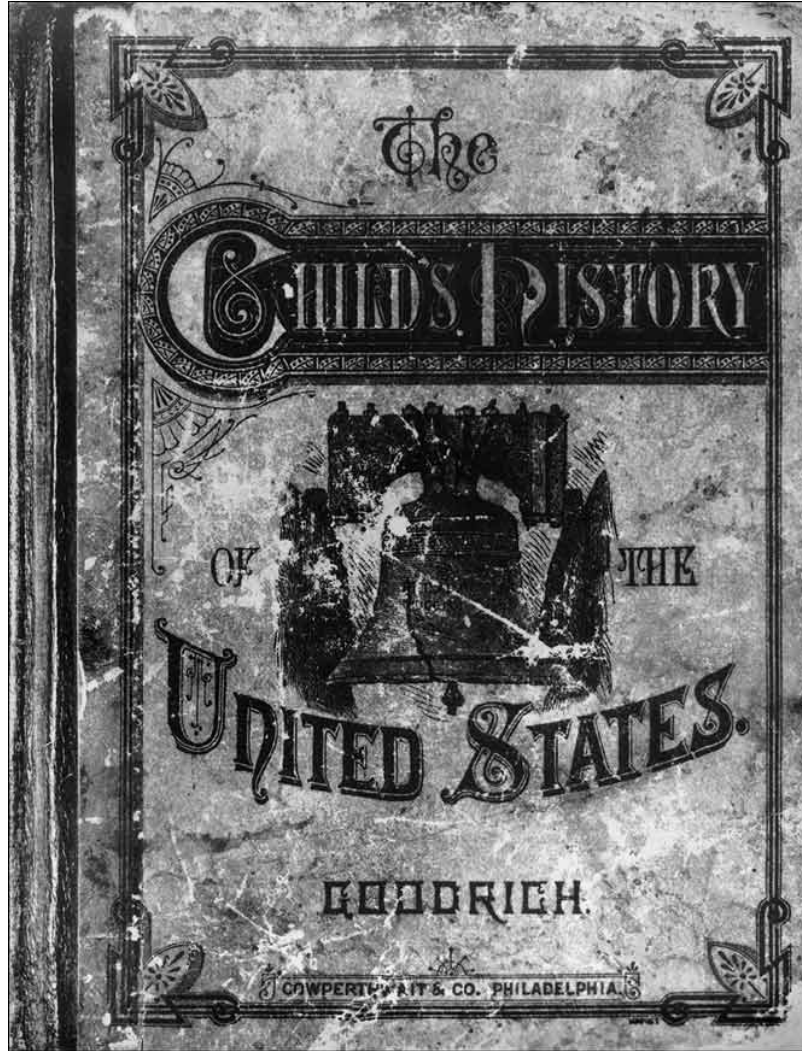
### Visiting the site

The Liberty Bell is part of the Independence National Historical Park, administered by the National Park Service. It is located on Market Street between Fifth and Sixth streets in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and may be viewed at any time, day or night, year round. For more information, contact the Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park, 313 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106 or [visit the park's web pages](#).





## Getting Started



**What famous U.S. symbol is used on this history text book? Why do you think it was chosen?**



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### Photo Analysis Worksheet

#### Step 1:

Examine the photograph for 10 seconds. How would you describe the photograph?

#### Step 2:

Divide the photograph into quadrants and study each section individually. What details--such as people, objects, activities--do you notice?

#### Step 3:

What other information--such as time period, location, season, reason photo was taken--can you gather from the photo?

#### Step 4:

How would you revise your first description of the photo using the information noted in Steps 2 and 3?

#### Step 5:

What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find answers to these questions?





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### Setting the Stage

In the 18th century, citizens across the colonies depended on bells to communicate important news. Bells might call them to put out fires, notify them of an approaching merchant ship, warn them about a possible attack by Indians or enemy soldiers, or tell them to gather to hear news important to the community. From the start, the bell that would become known as the Liberty Bell rang out for larger, more national purposes. Originally, it was commissioned for the Pennsylvania State House, which was built between 1732 and 1756. It knelled to mark the death of monarchs and pealed for the coronation of George III. It was muffled to toll the Stamp Act and was rung joyously when that act was repealed. It was probably rung on July 8, 1776, to gather Philadelphians to hear the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Some basic information about the Liberty Bell is found on the bell itself. On the waist is the inscription "PASS AND STOW"—the last names of the founders who cast the bell. Under the founders' names are the letters "PHILADA" (an abbreviation for Philadelphia) and the numbers "MDCCLIII" (1753), the year the bell was made. The inscription encircling the top of the bell reads: "BY ORDER OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE PROVINCE OF PENNSYLVANIA [sic] FOR THE STATE HOUSE IN PHILADA." It is often incorrectly noted that there is a misspelling on the Liberty Bell. In the 18th century, spelling was not standardized and it was acceptable to spell Pennsylvania with one "n," or in a number of other ways. The copy of the letter written by the Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly specifying the bell's inscription spells Pennsylvania with only one "n."

The top line of the inscription is a verse from the Bible, Leviticus chapter 25, verse 10: "PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT ALL THE LAND UNTO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF LEV. XXV X," and it was this inscription that fostered the transformation of the old State House bell into the Liberty Bell.

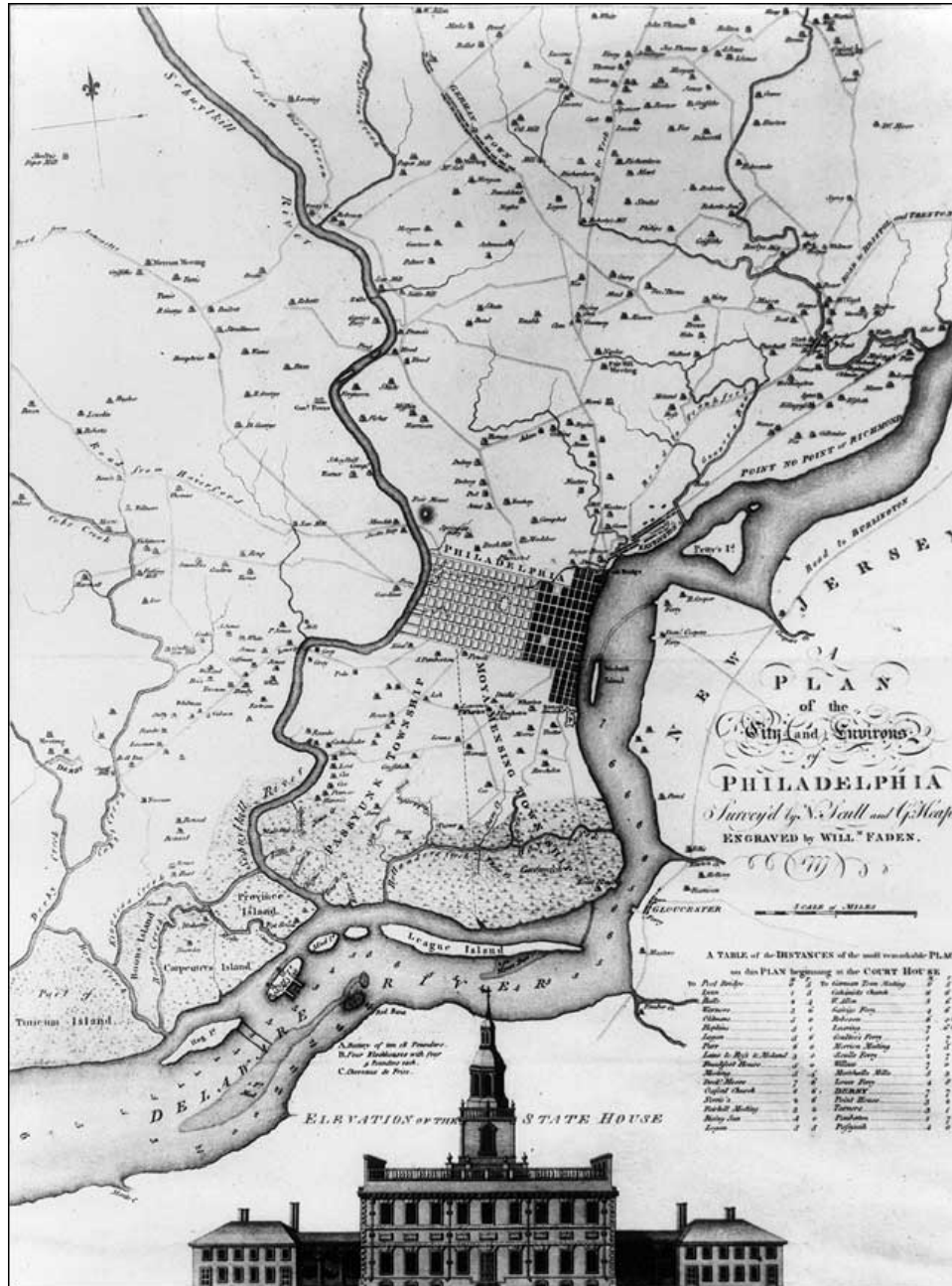
First called the "Liberty Bell" by abolitionist publications in the 1830s, the bell thereafter was adopted as a symbol to promote a wide variety of causes, from women's rights to civil rights, to protests against political oppression.



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### Locating the Site

Map 1: A Plan of the city and environs of Philadelphia, 1777

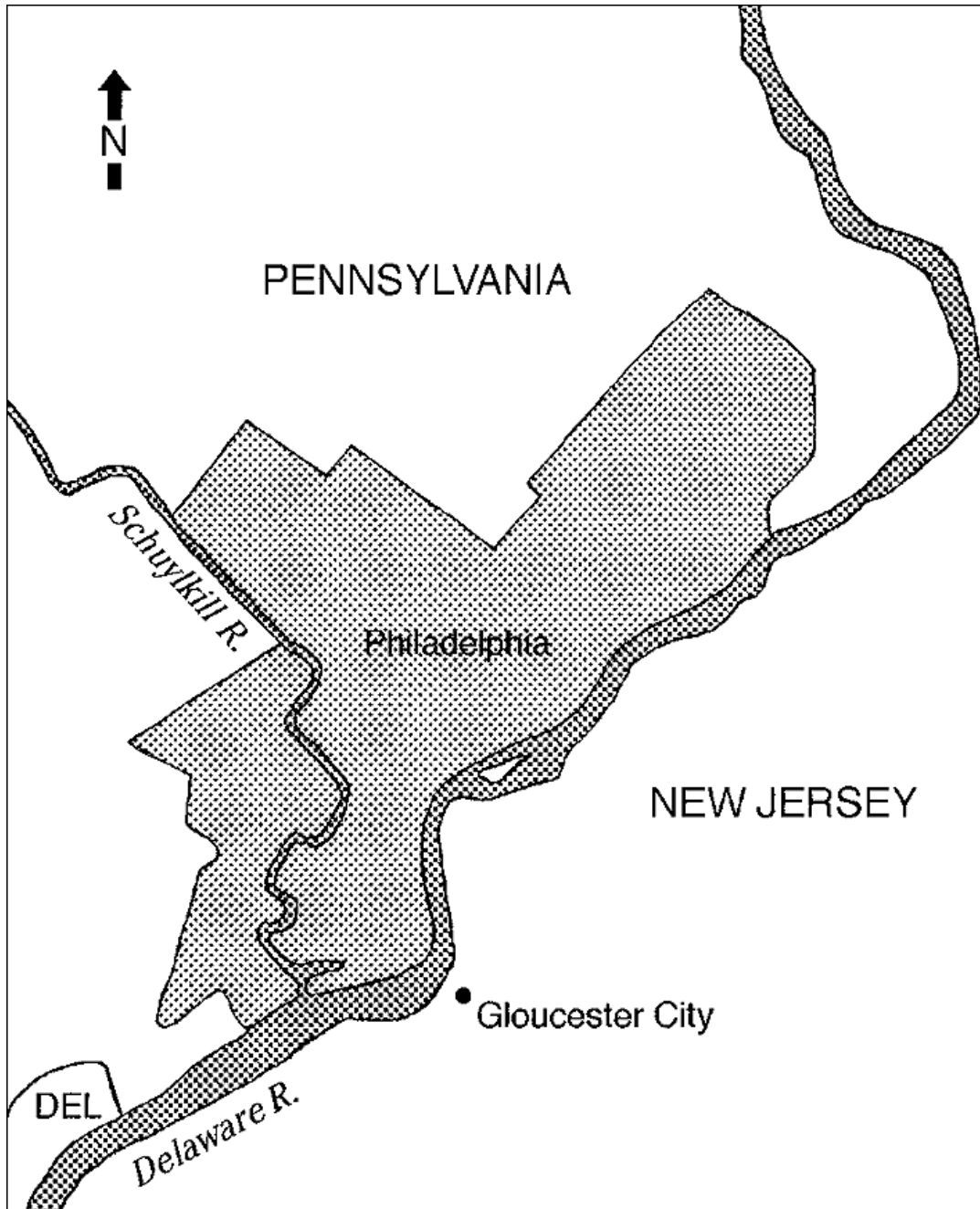




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### Locating the Site

#### Map 2: Philadelphia



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### Questions for Maps 1 & 2

1) Using Gloucester City, New Jersey as a point of reference on both maps, compare the size of Philadelphia today with the size of the city in the 18th century.

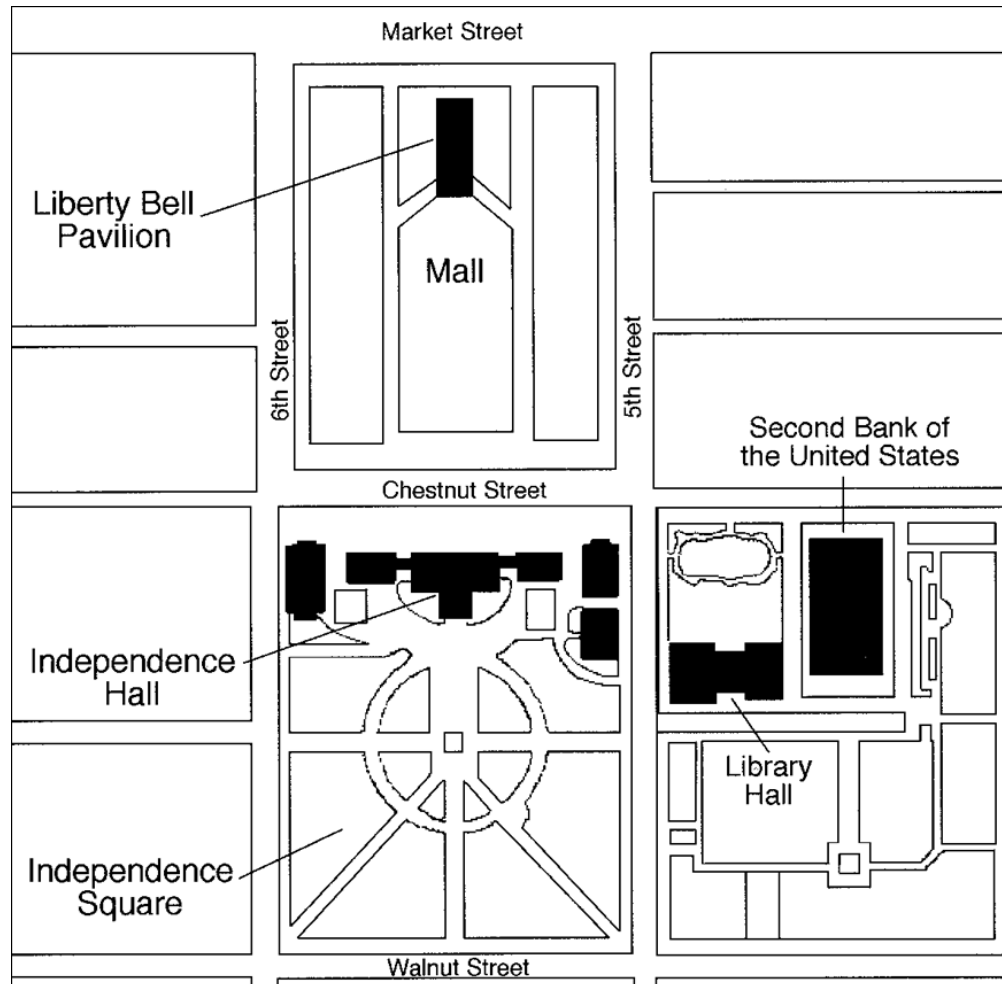
2) In 1777 citizens throughout the city could hear the State House bell announce meetings and important events. Do you think a bell could serve as a communication device in Philadelphia today?



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### Locating the Site

#### Map 3: Independence Hall at the Liberty Bell Pavilion



*(Based on National Park Service map)*

Since 1976 the Liberty Bell has been exhibited in a glass pavilion where it can be viewed by the public 24 hours a day.







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### Determining the Facts

#### Reading 1: The Growth of a Symbol

The following quotations demonstrate the symbolic importance of the Liberty Bell.

*James Silk Buckingham visited Philadelphia around 1840 when the bell's reputation as a relic of the American Revolution was beginning to grow.*

This bell [the Liberty Bell] though no longer used for general purposes, still occupied the place in which it was originally hung, and, like the great bell of St. Paul's in London, used on special occasions such as the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and visits of distinguished visitors such as Lafayette...it will no doubt be preserved as a national treasure.

--James Silk Buckingham, *American Historical, Statistic and Descriptive*, London, 1841

*Preparation for the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence led to a resurgence of interest in the American Revolution and in the Liberty Bell.*

This is true, there appears to have been no first jubilee to all the inhabitants on our fiftieth anniversary--too many millions of our inhabitants were then in slavery--we then could not fully carry out the text and proclaim liberty to all. But now upon the second fiftieth year we are able to do so. Cracked and shattered as the bell may be, the base upon which that motto is cast remains firm and solid, and shaken has our country been with the din of battle and bloody strife, that principle remains pure and perfect for all time to come and the whole text, Liberty Jubilee, will be literally carried out in 1876. 'Liberty can now be proclaimed thro' [sic] all the land to all inhabitants thereof.'

--John Shoemaker, Chairman of the Philadelphia Centennial Committee, in "The Centennial," Philadelphia, 1873

*In the early 20th century there was a debate about the advantages and potential problems of allowing the Liberty Bell to travel the country by rail.*

The Liberty Bell is undoubtedly of most interest--for those that can see it there at home in Philadelphia, where it made its never to be forgotten announcement that a new nation had been born....But even in Philadelphia, the bell is only near, not in, its original station, and it can go further afield to teach its lessons of history and patriotism....Wherever displayed it will set people, and especially young people, to thinking and studying in a way that cannot have other than good results. The chances that the bell may be lost on one of its journeys or actually destroyed in a railway accident are so few as to be negligible.

--"Everybody Should See the Bell," *New York Times*, February 17, 1909

*Katherine Ruschenberger purchased a replica of the Liberty Bell called the "Women's Liberty Bell" or "Justice Bell" to promote the women's suffrage movement. The bell's clapper was chained so that it could not be rung. The chain was to be removed when women gained the right to vote. The Justice Bell was rung for the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1919.*

The original Liberty Bell announced the creation of democracy, the Women's Liberty Bell will announce the completion of democracy.



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--Mrs. Katherine Ruschenberger, "Suffrage Liberty Bell," New York Times, March 31, 1915

*Philadelphia officials considered moving the bell to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for safekeeping during WWII.*

But while American morale is of the best, while American patriotism burns bright, it still is good to have within view this evidence of the struggle of America for liberty. It will be an inspirational shrine. It will comfort those who may weaken during the struggle. It will be a constant reminder of the great American heritage of one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

--Editorial, "The Grand Old Bell," Natchez, Mississippi Democrat, December 28, 1941

*Civil rights protestors claimed they chose the Liberty Bell as their symbol because of its association with American freedoms and the struggle for black equality.*

On March 12, 1965, twenty-five civil rights demonstrators entered Independence Hall and began a sit-in around the Liberty Bell. The demonstration was to dramatize the need to send Federal authorities to Selma, Alabama, to protect the rights of African Americans.  
--"The Liberty Bell: A Special History Study," National Park Service, 1986



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### Questions for Reading 1

- 1) Using a dictionary, look up the definition for "symbol." What are some symbols that you are most familiar with?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What did the bell represent in 1876?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What did the bell represent to suffragists?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) Would you have supported the proposal to move the Liberty Bell during World War II? Why or why not? What does the proposal say about the importance of the Liberty Bell as a symbol?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) Why do you think abolitionist groups selected the bell as their symbol? How did later civil rights groups use the bell?



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### Determining the Facts

#### Reading 2: The Crack in the Liberty Bell

Most people are familiar with two aspects of the Liberty Bell: it is an important symbol, and it is cracked. The existing crack adds mystery to the symbolism. How and when did the bell crack? It is difficult to determine from historical documents, although there are many traditional explanations.

#### 1824

The Marquis de Lafayette was only 19 years old in 1777 when he volunteered to fight in the American Revolution. In 1824 he returned to the United States on a triumphal tour around the country. His visit created a resurgence in pride and interest in the American Revolution.

On March 5, a Philadelphia newspaper, the *American Daily Advertiser*, published a poem about the old State House bell. There was no mention of a crack. Six months later, another newspaper ran a story about the bell and quoted its inscription. There was no mention of a crack.

#### 1828

Records of the Philadelphia city councils show that councils discussed the new bell, clock and steeple of the Pennsylvania State House. The new bell was cast by John Wilbank in 1828. None of these discussions indicated that the old bell was unusable.

#### 1829

The publications *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Casket* described the State House: "In the attic story of the basement of the steeple [the brick part of the building's tower] is suspended the great bell." Both quote the inscription; neither mentions a crack.

#### 1831

The city council agreed to let the young men of the city ring "the old State House bell" on the Fourth of July.

#### 1837

A guidebook stated that the old State House bell was not in use, but it did not mention a crack. In the same year, a stylized rendering of the bell appeared in an antislavery publication showing the bell without a crack.

#### 1841

A British traveler reported: "This bell, though no longer used for general purposes, still occupied the place in which it was originally hung, and...used on special occasions such as the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and visits of distinguished visitors...."

According to local reporters, the "old bell" tolled on April 7, upon the death of President William Henry Harrison, the first President to die in office.

#### 1844

The Philadelphia newspaper the *Public Ledger* carried a story about the bell, but did not mention a crack.

#### 1846

Under the heading "The Old Independence Bell," the *Public Ledger* reported: "This venerable relic of the Revolution rang its last clear note on Monday last [February 23]...and now hangs in the great city steeple irreparably cracked and forever dumb. It had been cracked long before,



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but was put in order for that day [Washington's birthday] by having the edges of the fracture filed....It gave out clear notes and loud, and appeared to be in excellent condition until noon when it received a sort of compound fracture in a zigzag direction through one of its sides...."

### **1848**

The *Public Ledger* mentioned in passing that the bell had cracked in the autumn of 1845.

### **1876**

The volunteer curator of Independence Hall, Colonel Frank Etting, announced that he had discovered that the bell had cracked in 1835, while it was tolling for the funeral procession of Chief Justice John Marshall. Although widely accepted, this claim was never documented.

### **1884**

John Wilbank's son claimed that the bell had cracked in 1824, while welcoming Lafayette to Philadelphia.

### **1899**

In his book *The Reminiscences of a Very Old Man, 1808-1897*, Philadelphian John Sartain claimed the bell cracked while celebrating passage by the British Parliament of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1828.

### **1903**

A letter to the editor of the *Public Ledger* claimed that the journals of the Philadelphia city councils proved that the bell cracked welcoming Lafayette in 1824. (The journals do not contain such a statement.)

### **1911**

Joseph Rauch wrote to the *New York Times* that, as a boy, he had helped ring the bell on Washington's birthday by pulling a rope attached to the clapper, and this was when the bell cracked.







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### Determining the Facts

#### Reading 3: Going on Tour

The fame of the Liberty Bell spread when it was taken directly to the people in a series of trips to world's fairs and expositions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first request for the Liberty Bell to travel outside Philadelphia was made in November 1884, by the Special Commissioner for the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans, Louisiana. The commissioner thought it was important to have the bell in New Orleans for the opening of the exposition. He wrote to the Philadelphia City Council for permission and argued that sending the Liberty Bell to New Orleans would:

...meet with all the universal approbation and the heartiest greetings of all the people of the South. Our ancestors fought and bled for the time enduring principles which the bell rang out on July 4, 1776, and, although the bell is the property of the City of Philadelphia, yet are we not co-inheritors of its glories? In the name of those mutually earned glories, we ask you to let it come to New Orleans.

In order to get permission to allow the Liberty Bell to travel, the mayor of Philadelphia introduced the request to the Select and Common councils saying:

The consideration of the subject [sending the bell to New Orleans] demands the setting aside of any sectional or partisan views. If the presence of the Old Bell which rang out the birth of a great republic can be the means, by its presence in New Orleans, in restoring or cementing the same patriotic spirit in the entire nation at this time, it will bring credit and renown to this city, and make evident to the people of the South that the city of Brotherly Love, true to her history, is anxious to aid in the restoration of perfect harmony throughout the nation.

Shortly after Philadelphia's mayor talked to the Select and Common councils, he received a letter from the mayor of New Orleans which said:

I am sure that its [the Liberty Bell's] care and safety will be the anxious thought of all our citizens, who, notwithstanding all the reports as to their seditious feelings against the Unity of Our Government are, without fear of contradiction, as affectionate to the traditions of Our Country, the real Republic of the World, and are as true believers in its laws and constitution, in fact, as patriotic Americans, as their more favored brothers of the North.

Citizens of New Orleans signed petitions requesting that the bell be sent to their city. Philadelphia's Committee on City Property recommended sending the bell to New Orleans providing that three policemen accompany the bell and watch over it at all times. Finally, the Philadelphia Common and Select councils voted in favor of sending the bell to New Orleans.



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### Questions for Reading 3

- 1) What conflict was the Exposition Special Commissioner referring to when he talked about fighting and bleeding for the "time enduring principles" of the bell?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What date did the commissioner associate with the Liberty Bell?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Why did the mayor of Philadelphia ask the council to put aside "sectional or partisan views"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What did Philadelphia's mayor hope to accomplish for the United States by sending the Liberty Bell to New Orleans? What did he hope to accomplish for Philadelphia?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) What motivation might someone in New Orleans in 1884 have for doing damage to the Liberty Bell? Why did the mayor of New Orleans think it was necessary to refute the idea that anyone in New Orleans might damage the Liberty Bell?



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### Determining the Facts

Chart 1: Timetable of part of the Liberty Bell's trip home

#### Sunday, November 21, 1915 (Via Illinois Central Railroad)

| Arrival/Departure | City               | Time     |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Arrive            | East St. Louis, IL | 11:20 am |
| Leave             | East St. Louis, IL | 11:40 am |
| Arrive            | Greenville, IL     | 12:40 pm |
| Leave             | Greenville, IL     | 12:45 pm |
| Arrive            | Vandalia, IL       | 1:30 pm  |
| Leave             | Vandalia, IL       | 1:40 pm  |
| Arrive            | Terre Haute, IN    | 4:40 pm  |
| Leave             | Terre Haute, IN    | 5:10 pm  |
| Arrive            | Brazil, IN         | 5:35 pm  |
| Leave             | Brazil, IN         | 5:45 pm  |
| Arrive            | Indianapolis, IN   | 7:30 pm  |

#### Monday, November 22, 1915 (Via Pennsylvania Lines)

| Arrival/Departure | City             | Time     |
|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| Leave             | Indianapolis, IN | 12:30 am |
| Arrive            | Columbus, IN     | 2:30 am  |
| Leave             | Columbus, IN     | 2:40 am  |
| Arrive            | Scottsburg, IN   | 4:00 am  |
| Leave             | Scottsburg, IN   | 4:05 am  |
| Arrive            | Louisville, KY   | 6:00 am  |

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|        |                |          |
|--------|----------------|----------|
| Leave  | Louisville, KY | 10:00 am |
| Arrive | Anchorage, KY  | 10:30 am |
| Leave  | Anchorage, KY  | 10:35 am |
| Arrive | La Grange, KY  | 10:50 am |
| Leave  | La Grange, KY  | 10:55 am |
| Arrive | Cincinnati, OH | 1:30 pm  |
| Leave  | Cincinnati, OH | 4:30 pm  |
| Arrive | Hamilton, OH   | 5:15 pm  |
| Leave  | Hamilton, OH   | 5:30 pm  |
| Arrive | Middletown, OH | 5:36 pm  |
| Leave  | Middletown, OH | 6:01 pm  |
| Arrive | Dayton, OH     | 6:30 pm  |
| Leave  | Dayton, OH     | 7:00 pm  |
| Arrive | Xenia, OH      | 7:27 pm  |
| Leave  | Xenia, OH      | 7:37 pm  |
| Arrive | Columbus, OH   | 9:11 pm  |
| Leave  | Columbus, OH   | 11:21 pm |

The Liberty Bell's last trip was to the Pan Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. Chart 1 shows two days of stops made by the Liberty Bell during the trip back to Philadelphia.





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### Visual Evidence

Photo 1: Gen. John J. Pershing at the Liberty Bell, September 12, 1919



*(Independence National Historical Park)*

Gen. John J. Pershing, leader of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe during World War I, made a celebratory visit to the Liberty Bell in September 1919, 10 months after the war ended.







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### Visual Evidence

#### Photo 2: Crowds view the Liberty Bell in Scranton, Pennsylvania, November 25, 1915



*(Independence National Historical Park)*



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**Photo 3: The Liberty Bell on tour to St. Louis for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904**



*(Independence National Historical Park)*





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### Visual Evidence

Photo 4: The Liberty Bell passing through Plainfield, Connecticut, June 1903



*(Photo by Lewis S. Mills, Independence National Historical Park)*





## *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*

Photo 5: Park Ranger and children at the Liberty Bell Pavilion, 1995



*(Photo by Michael J. Boorse, Independence National Historical Park)*

Both photos show people responsible for protecting the Liberty Bell.



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## *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*

### Questions for Photos 4 & 5

1) Compare the two photos. What are some similarities and differences?

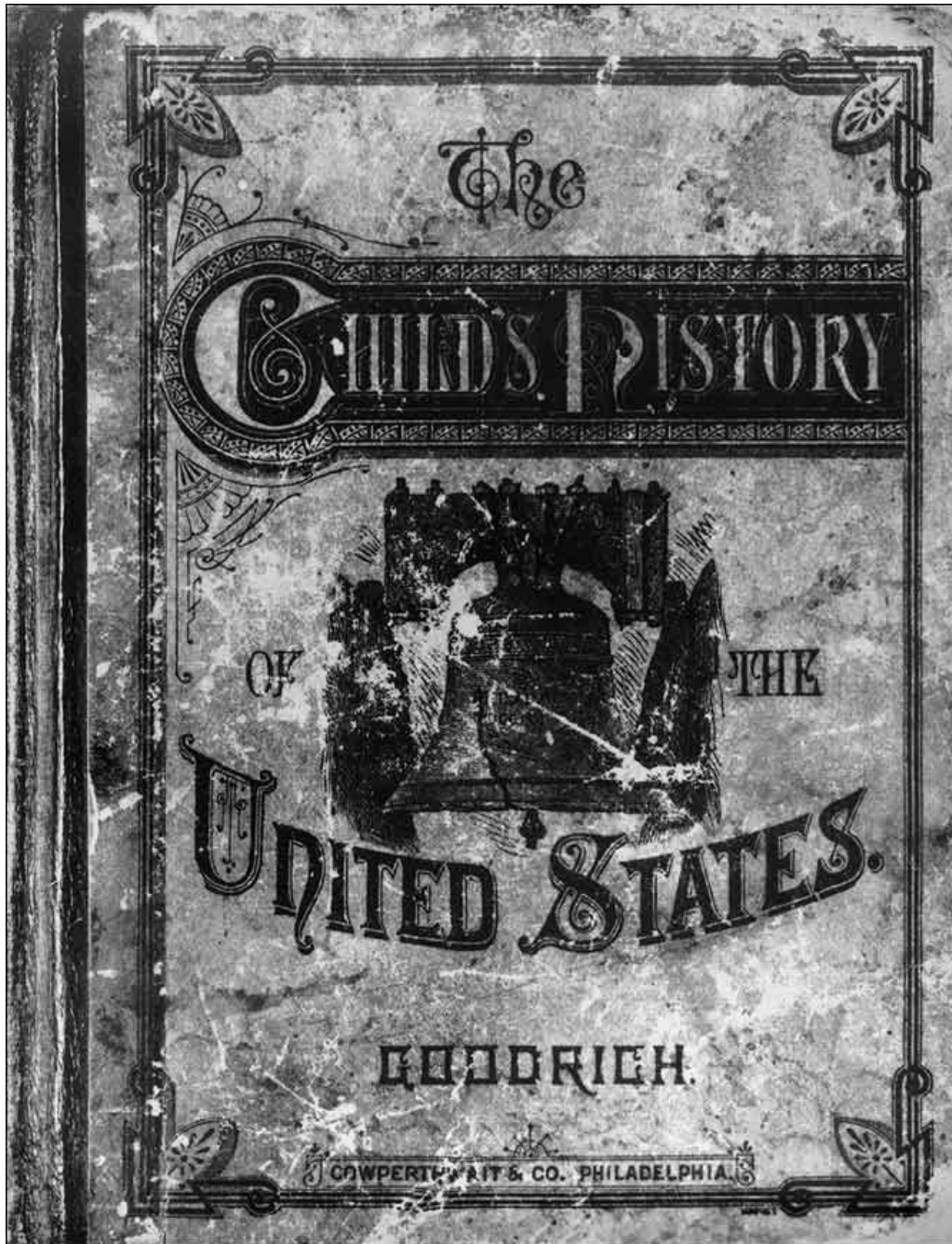
2) Describe the setting in Photo 5. Do you think the Liberty Bell Pavilion is an appropriate location for the bell? Why or why not?



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### Visual Evidence

Photo 6: C.A. Goodrich's *The Child's History of the United States*, Cowperthwaite & Co., Philadelphia, 1878



*(Independence National Historical Park)*



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### Questions for Photo 6

- 1) Why do you think the Liberty Bell was chosen to illustrate the cover of this book? What does this reveal about the importance of the Liberty Bell in American history?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) In what condition is the bell depicted? Does the crack appear to be an important feature of the drawing? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Where does the book's publication date fit into the Liberty Bell's chronology outlined in Reading 1? Does this provide any information on why the bell may have been chosen for the book's cover?



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### Putting It All Together

Symbols such as the Liberty Bell are difficult to analyze because their significance is intangible. The historical record may not reveal the reason for the veneration of an object. Beliefs may change as new information is revealed or reinterpreted. If a symbol remains relevant or captures the imagination, it may endure. At the completion of these activities, have students draw generalizations about historical research and the process by which something becomes a symbol.

### Activity 1: Why Is the Crack in the Liberty Bell So Important?

Ask students to form small groups and look up three references to the Liberty Bell in textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, or specialized works on American culture. Have them copy the citation, recording the name of the reference and the date of publication. Have them search for answers to the following questions:

1. Does the reference describe the crack in the bell? Does it provide an explanation for the crack?
2. Is the information worded in a way that might caution the reader about the reliability of the information? If so, what is the cautionary phrase?
3. Does the information in the reference book agree with the information you discovered as you worked with this lesson?
4. Will this experience change your approach to using reference books in the future?

Next, have students write a position paper or engage in a debate on the question: "The crack in the Liberty Bell is a necessary component to its importance as a symbol to Americans and people from other nations." These questions will help students focus on the topic:

1. Is the crack really important to the history of the Liberty Bell?
2. Why do you think the crack intrigues people?
3. Do you think the Liberty Bell would have become such a universal symbol without the crack?
4. Why do you think people search for meaning where there may not be any?



## *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*

### **Activity 2: What Do Symbols Tell Us about Ourselves?**

Have students work in pairs and interview each other to learn their responses to the following questions

1. First-time visitors to the Liberty Bell often comment that they thought the bell was bigger than it is. Why might they have that impression? Does this say anything about the power of symbols?
2. If given a choice, do you think people prefer legends or the truth? Why?
3. Why do you think it generally takes at least a generation before people seem to appreciate an event or try to heal wounds suffered by the country? Can you think of any modern examples of this phenomenon? What do these examples tell you about how we view our history?

When all interviews are complete, go through each of the questions and keep a tally of similar responses on the chalk board. Then ask the students to try to think of events that have occurred in their lifetimes that might one day become symbolized as important events in American history. Ask them to discuss or debate the reliability of accounts by people alive at the time of certain events.



## *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*

### **Activity 3: Symbols in the Local Community**

Hold a class discussion in which students list reasons why people use symbols. Ask students to look for and list several patriotic symbols found in their communities or found in advertisements in their local newspaper. Ask them to evaluate each symbol and draw conclusions about the use of symbols in general and the use of patriotic symbols for commercial purposes. Have students share their lists of symbols found locally, and then hold a classroom discussion using the following questions as a guide: Why might a patriotic symbol encourage someone to purchase a product? Do you think Americans are using more or fewer symbols than they did several years ago? How can you account for the change? Are there certain events or world situations that have caused Americans to create patriotic symbols? Do symbols always retain their original meanings? Have patriotic symbols been replaced by other types of symbols? Are there events or "atmospheres" that promote or result in a greater use of symbols in society? Why?



## *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*

### References and Endnotes

#### Reading 1

Compiled from David Kimball, *Venerable Relic: The Story of the Liberty Bell* (Philadelphia: Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1989); and John C. Paige with David A. Kimball, "The Liberty Bell: A Special History Study," National Park Service, Denver, unpublished manuscript, 1986.

#### Reading 2

Compiled from David A. Kimball, *Venerable Relic: The Story of the Liberty Bell* (Philadelphia: Eastern National Park Association, 1989); John C. Paige with David A. Kimball, "The Liberty Bell: A Special History Study," National Park Service, Denver, unpublished manuscript, 1986; and files at Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia.

#### Reading 3

Compiled from John C. Paige with David A. Kimball, "The Liberty Bell: A Special Study," National Park Service, Denver, unpublished manuscript, 1986.

#### Chart 1

From John C. Paige with David A. Kimball, "The Liberty Bell: A Special History Study," National Park Service, Denver, unpublished manuscript, 1986.





## *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*

### **Additional Resources**

By looking at *The Liberty Bell: From Obscurity to Icon*, students can more easily analyze the historical and cultural influences that shaped the symbolic meaning of the Liberty Bell. Those interested in learning more will find that the Internet offers a variety of materials.

### **Independence National Historical Park**

Independence National Historical Park is a unit of the National Park System. The [park's web page](#) provides details on the park and visitation information. Independence NHP, located in Philadelphia, is comprised of historical buildings related to the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Featured on the site is detailed information about each of the historic sites, including the Liberty Bell, as well as a history of what happened here during the making of a new nation.

### **The National Park Service**

The National Park Service's [Historical Themes in America](#) features the Liberty Bell and Independence National Historical Park under Government: Constitution.

### **National Register of Historic Places: We Shall Overcome**

To learn more about the Civil Rights Movement visit [We Shall Overcome](#). This travel itinerary provides a detailed history of the movement and the national historic sites associated with civil rights.

### **Historic Places of America's Diverse Culture**

The National Register of Historic Places online itinerary [Places Reflecting America's Diverse Cultures](#) highlights the historic places and stories of America's diverse cultural heritage. This itinerary seeks to share the contributions various peoples have made in creating American culture and history.

### **Library of Congress**

Search the [digital collections](#) in the Library of Congress web page for further demonstrations of how the Liberty Bell was used as a symbol.

### **The Liberty Bell Homepage**

Created by USHISTORY.ORG, the [Liberty Bell Homepage](#) tells you everything you wanted to know about the Liberty Bell. Included on the site is a history of the bell, information about the crack, an essay on the bell as an American icon, and much more.













1776

LIBERTY BELL

PENNSYLVANIA

HERRING-HALL-M...



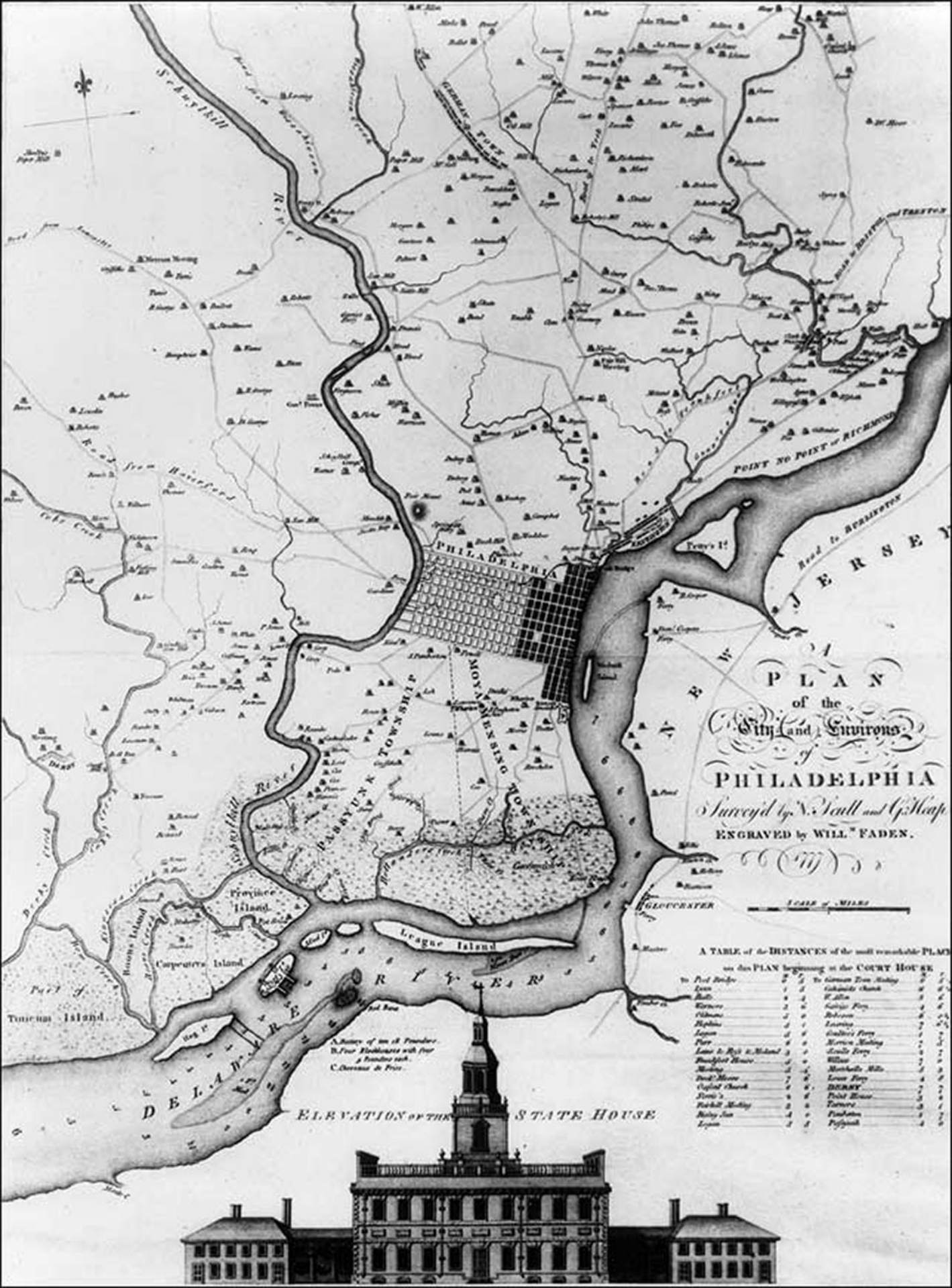


The  
CHILD'S HISTORY



GOODRICH.

COWPERTHWAIT & CO. PHILADELPHIA.



PLAN  
 of the  
 City and Environs  
 of  
**PHILADELPHIA**  
*Surveyed by W. Sault and G. Hall*  
 ENGRAVED by WILL. FADEN.

SCALE OF MILES

A TABLE of the DISTANCES of the most remarkable PLACES on this PLAN beginning at the COURT HOUSE

| To Port Bridge         | To    | To               | To    |
|------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Leves                  | 1 1/2 | Carroll's Church | 1 1/2 |
| Black                  | 1 1/2 | St. John's       | 1 1/2 |
| Widow                  | 1 1/2 | Calvary Ferry    | 1 1/2 |
| Albion                 | 1 1/2 | Bellevue         | 1 1/2 |
| Alphons                | 1 1/2 | Levitts          | 1 1/2 |
| Lyon                   | 1 1/2 | Gallop's Ferry   | 1 1/2 |
| Fair                   | 1 1/2 | Warren's Wharf   | 1 1/2 |
| Lower to Riv. & Island | 1 1/2 | Levitts Ferry    | 1 1/2 |
| Wharves                | 1 1/2 | Wills            | 1 1/2 |
| Wharf                  | 1 1/2 | North's Mill     | 1 1/2 |
| Dead Horse             | 1 1/2 | Lower Ferry      | 1 1/2 |
| Capitol Church         | 1 1/2 | DELAWARE         | 1 1/2 |
| Ston's                 | 1 1/2 | Field House      | 1 1/2 |
| North's Wharf          | 1 1/2 | Trinity          | 1 1/2 |
| Rocky Run              | 1 1/2 | Franklin         | 1 1/2 |
| Lyon                   | 1 1/2 | Plymouth         | 1 1/2 |

Names of an old Founder.  
 of Four Fleets with four  
 a Founder each.  
 C. Overton & Price.

ELEVATION OF THE STATE HOUSE





PENNSYLVANIA

Schuylkill R.

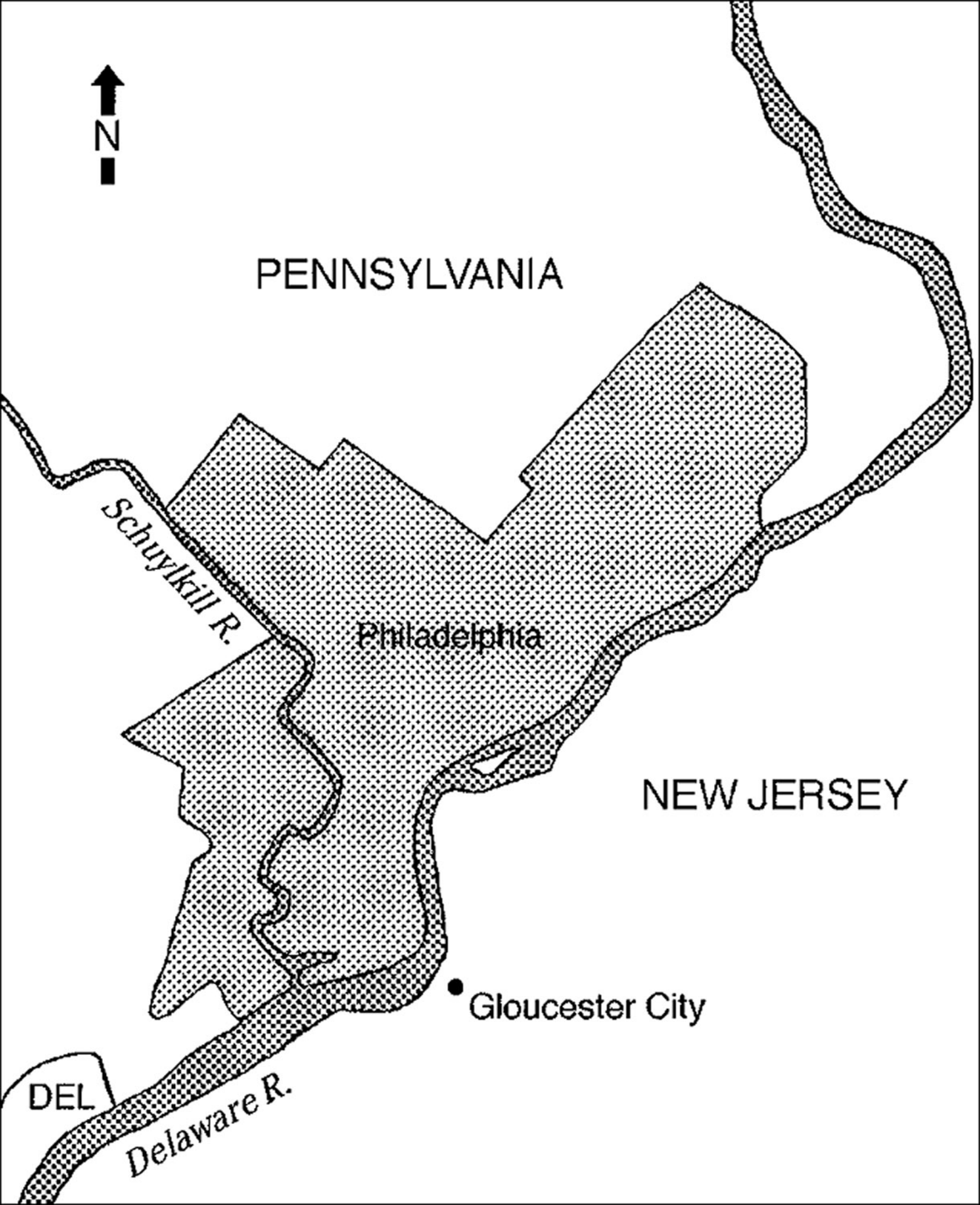
Philadelphia

NEW JERSEY

● Gloucester City

DEL

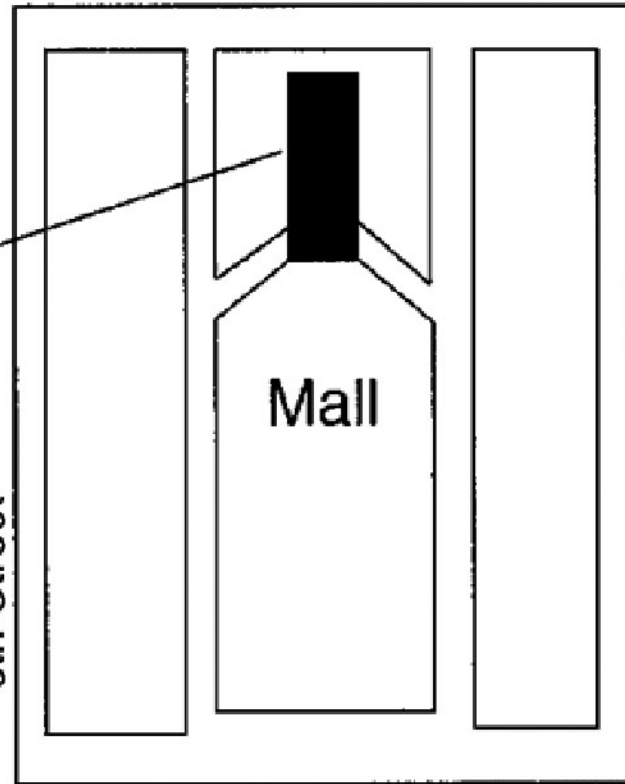
Delaware R.



Market Street

Liberty Bell Pavilion

6th Street

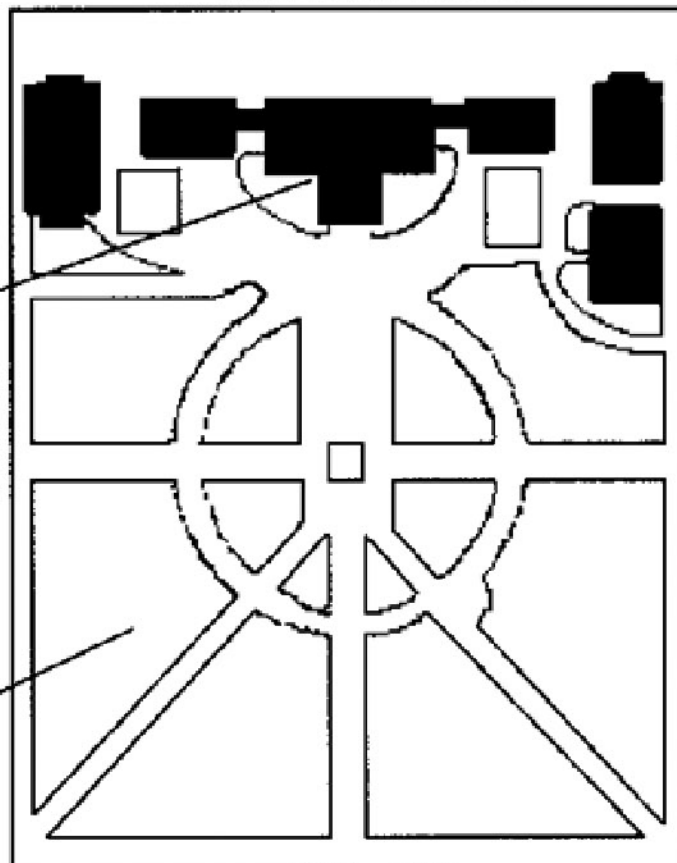


5th Street

Second Bank of the United States

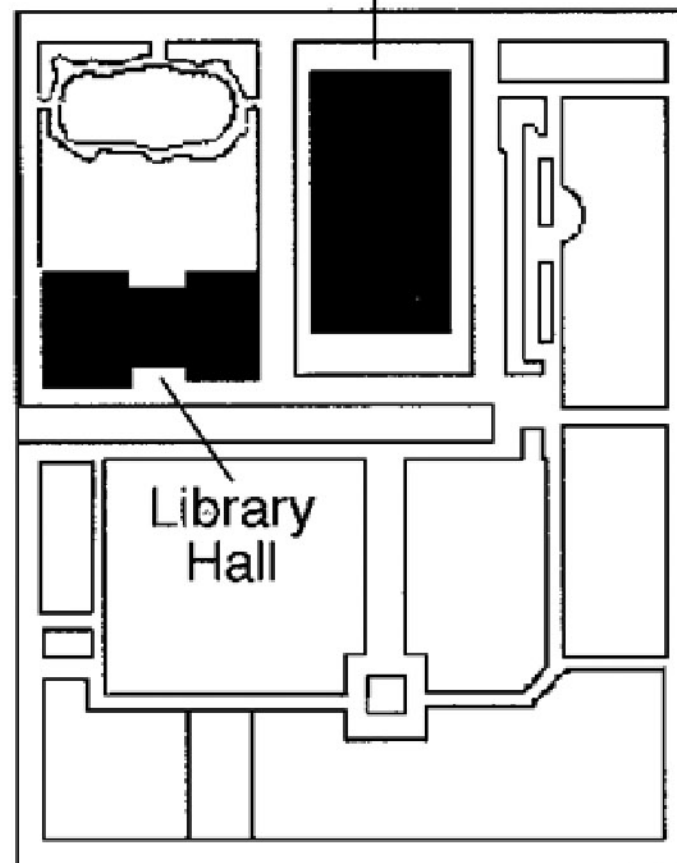
Chestnut Street

Independence Hall



Independence Square

Walnut Street



Library Hall