

I rise to commemorate the 225th anniversary of the city of Trenton's tenure as the capital of the United States.

Students of American history are familiar with the Compromise of 1790. James Madison and Thomas Jefferson won permanent residence for Congress on the Potomac in exchange for the Federal Government's assumption of State debts from the Revolution--a priority of Alexander Hamilton. What followed was the Residence Act, which established what we now know as the District of Columbia.

What is less understood is the capital's journey through eight other towns, the abandoned proposals and the near-misses before Congress settled here on the Potomac. During the Revolutionary War, Congress moved frequently to avoid British troops--meeting famously in Philadelphia then in Baltimore, York, and Lancaster. Upon ratification of the Articles of Confederation, Congress returned to Independence Hall only to be removed abruptly in the summer of 1783.

That June, approximately 500 mutinous Pennsylvania militiamen demanding back pay from their service during the Revolution, encircled Independence Hall and refused to let Members of Congress leave the building unless their demands were met. Uncertain of their safety and the integrity of Congress, the delegates fled across the Delaware to Princeton, New Jersey.

In Princeton, Congress redoubled its efforts to select a permanent seat of government. To settle regional animosity, Congress agreed on two permanent capitals on the Delaware and Potomac, while designating Annapolis and Trenton as interim capitals.

On November 1, 1784, Congress convened in Trenton. Travel-weary legislators reluctantly trickled into Trenton--then a town of roughly 500 people--and it began official business at the French Arms Tavern on the corner of Warren and State Streets.

When Congress finally reached a quorum on November 29 it considered matters of foreign affairs and finance, appointing ministers to Britain and France and selecting commissioners to the Board of Treasury.

The highlight of Trenton's time as the capital was a visit by the Marquis de Lafayette. During his

visit he petitioned Congress to take official leave to France and addressed a joint session of the New Jersey State Legislature. In honor of Lafayette, one of George Washington's most trusted generals, Congress drafted a letter to the King of France praising Lafayette's service and passed a resolution commending Lafayette for his bravery during the siege of Yorktown.

As the session concluded before Christmas, Congress scrapped the plan for two capitals and took up a resolution to establish a permanent capital in Trenton. Unfortunately for Trenton, debate stalled, and on Christmas Eve Congress agreed to meet in New York City after the New Year.

The rest as they say is history. The bustling, city life of New York was more appealing to Members of Congress than the calm of small-town Trenton. They quickly forgot their plans and continued to meet in New York until 1790.

Still, Congress's brief visit to Trenton offers a fascinating glimpse into the early history of the United States and should remind us that the remarkable Capitol building in which we conduct the people's business should not be taken for granted.

I commend the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, the Trenton Historical Society, and the other organizations that make up Trenton 1784--The Nation's Capital Committee, for their excellent work, schedule event and lectures and preparing exhibits and online resources to bring to life this fascinating yet fleeting moment in American history. Trenton was then and is today a town with great appeal.