Introduction and Study Guide

This second edition of *Speakers of the House of Representatives 1789-2021* includes information that has never before been gathered into one volume, with detailed biographies of the 55 men and woman who have served as Speaker, as well as a wealth of supportive material that combines for a complete picture of the Speakers and the speakership—the history, the power, and the changes.

With detailed content, thoughtful arrangement, and several user guides, *Speakers of the House of Representatives* is designed for multiple levels of study.

CONTENT

Speaker Biographies

This major portion of the work comprises 55 detailed biographies that average 7 pages long. This section is arranged chronologically, beginning with the first Speaker—Frederick Muhlenberg, who began his term in 1789—and ending with the current Speaker—Nancy Pelosi, who was elected in 2007 as the first female Speaker of the House. Each biography starts off with an image of the Speaker and dates of service, and is thoughtfully categorized into logical subsections that guide the reader through significant events or time spans: *Personal History; Early Years in Congress; The Vote; Acceptance Speech; Legacy as Speaker; After Leaving the Speakership.*

Each biography is strengthened by direct quotations—easily identified in italics—of the Speaker, or influential colleagues of the time. In addition, scattered throughout the biographical section are original graphics—from autographs to personal letters—that not only give the reader an inside look at the Speaker, but also at the times during which he or she served. Biographies also include Further Reading.

Historical Essays

These nine essays provide in-depth information, at an average of 6 pages each, on the office of the speakership. The topics are far reaching, and include the office's early formation in the House of Commons in England, controversial Speaker elections, the role of the Speaker during Presidential Impeachment, and even the difficulty in studying the speakership.

These historical essays are designed to engage the reader, and include facts and figures that will help give a full understanding of why the office of speakership was created, and how it evolved into what some consider the most powerful in modern politics.

Primary Documents

This is a unique collection of 31 documents. Comprising acceptance and resignation speeches, articles both historical and contemporary, and government documents that offer detailed insight into the position and power of the Speaker, these documents are reprinted verbatim and fully sourced. Most include a brief description that gives timing, background and historical significance.

Timeline: 1789–2021

This detailed chronology of the speakership begins in 1789, when the House of Representatives met for the first time in Federal Hall in New York City, and ends with significant events in 2021, including President Biden's announcement to withdraw all remaining U.S. troops in Afghanistan and the vote by the House Republicans to remove Rep. Liz Cheney from the Conference Chair (the third highest leadership post) for criticizing Donald Trump over his efforts to paint the 2020 elections as fraudulent. It includes events—such as the creation of committees, landmark votes, critical arguments, and the passage of laws—as they relate to not only specific Speakers, but to the office of the speakership.

Appendices

These seven Appendices offer a fascinating look at the statistics of the speakership, including: Years Served in Congress before being Elected Speaker; Votes of each Speaker Election; Midterm Election Results; Speakers by State; Congressional Distribution by Congress and Party. Each Appendix also includes a brief description.

Bibliography
This valuable list of more than 300 sources is organized in several categories, including Books, Articles, Unpublished Master's Theses and Dissertations, Official Government Documents.

Subject Index
This detailed subject index helps readers quickly find just what they are looking for, including individuals, places, legislation, publications and areas of significance to the office of the speakership.

Speakers of the House of Representatives 1789–2021 is the only resource of its kind. It offers an unequalled look at the men and woman given the distinct honor to affect life-altering change for all Americans, usually behind the political scenes.

This second edition of *Speakers of the House of Representatives 1789–2021* is also available as an ebook. For more information, visit www.greyhouse.com.

Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg

Served as Speaker:
April 1, 1789–March 4, 1791
December 2, 1793–March 4, 1795

Speaker of the House (1789-91, 1793-95), a Lutheran minister whose move into the political arena led to his serving as the President of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention (1787), which led to his election to a seat in the first Congress. Muhlenberg, the scion of a famed Pennsylvania family, served as the first Speaker in the first Congress, as well as the Speaker in the Third Congress, alternating in the first years of the legislative branch with Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. (Second Congress) and Jonathan Dayton (Fourth Congress). Speculation on the decision of the members of that first Federal Congress, which met in New York City in 1789, for selecting Muhlenberg for the distinguished post vary, but historians believe that his firm and resolute presiding over the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, which ratified the charter, led to his selection as Speaker.

Personal History

Frederick Muhlenberg came from an extremely influential family in early America. According to William Mann, the biographer of Frederick Muhlenberg's father, his ancestors, the von Mühlenbergs, came from Mühlen (Mann says that the town is Mühlberg, but all other sources name it as Mühlen), the mill town ("muhlen" is German for mill) on the Elbe River in Saxony where the family originated about the tenth century in the form of Ziracka, a prince of the Wendish and Sorbic tribes, who converted to Christianity about 950 CE. Frederick's father, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787), born at Einbeck (also spelled Eimbeck in some source) in the Electoral Principality of Hanover, came to America in 1742 and is called the "Father of American Lutheranism" for his aiding and establishing the German wing of the Lutheran Church in this country. The father of 11 children, Henry saw two of his sons become famous in American history: John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (1746-1807), also a minister, sided, against his father's wishes, with the American Revolution in 1776 against the British crown, obtaining a commission with the backing of General George Washington.

In a moment noted by his John Peter's grandson a century later, in 1775 Peter Muhlenberg, in one of his sermons, exclaimed, "There is a time for all things: a time to preach and a time to pray; but there is also a

time to fight, and that time has now come." Allegedly, he threw down his robe, revealing a military uniform—although the story is apocryphal and is perhaps myth. Henry Muhlenberg's other famous son, Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg, was born in the German settlement of Trappe, Pennsylvania, in Montgomery County in the eastern part of that state, on 1 January 1850. His father Henry had married Anna Maria (née Weiser), also a German immigrant, although little is known about her. In 1763, when he was 13, Frederick and his brothers John Peter Gabriel and Gotthilf Henry Ernest (known as Henry) moved to Germany, where they received their education. Frederick attended the Orphan House School of the Franckesche Stiftungen before he completed his education at the University of Halle (now the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg), in Saxony, where, like his father, he studied theology and became a Lutheran minister. Muhlenberg returned to the colonies with his brother Henry in September 1770 and the following month was ordained as a Lutheran minister by the United Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Reading, Pennsylvania. From that period until 1773, he preached in several towns in Pennsylvania; in late 1773, he moved to New York City, where he had been invited to minister to the Swamp Church (also known as Christ Church) in what is now Manhattan. In 1771, Muhlenberg had married Catharine Schaefer, and the two had seven children.

During his time in New York, Muhlenberg became a supporter of the cause of those who opposed the British crown and desired to make the American colonies into a separate nation. In the summer of 1776, when the American Revolution exploded and the British prepared to invade New York City, Muhlenberg and his family left to return to Pennsylvania. He settled in Philadelphia, but when British forces moved into Pennsylvania in 1777 he and his family moved again—this time to New Hanover, Pennsylvania. He continued to preach in various churches in that area, but after three years he was compelled to seek employment to earn a better living. He opened a small goods store in Trappe.

Early Service in the Continental Congress

By the end of the 1770s, as the American nation fought a war for independence, Muhlenberg turned from religion to politics. In 1779, he was nominated—without his approval—by the Pennsylvania Assembly to serve as one of the state's three seats in the Continental Congress. Muhlenberg served on several important committees in the Congress, but because of the dire economic situation in Pennsylvania little could be done; however, he was also optimistic, mixing religion and politics with ease. In a letter to one of his brothers in October 1780, Muhlenberg explained:

> *The coffers are empty, the taxes almost unendurable, the people are in a bad humor, the money discredited, the army magazines exhausted, and the prospect to replenish them poor; the soldiers are badly clad, winter is coming...taking this and other things into account, public service might appear undesirable. However, let us one more take cheer and be steadfast, rely on God, and our own strength, and endure courageously, then we shall after be sure of reaching our goal.*

Tiring of fighting about these issues, when the Continental Congress adjourned Muhlenberg accepted a seat in the Pennsylvania State Assembly and was elected Speaker. During this period, Muhlenberg wrote a series of articles—some in English, but many in German—defending his service in the Continental Congress and the body itself. By now, Muhlenberg was tiring of politics and was considering re-entering the ministry. In another letter to his family, written in either 1780 or 1781, he penned, "It us settled that I go to The Trappe in April, where I expect to recuperate in the solitude and quiet of rural life. For, believe me, I have become faint in body and soul. Take my remark as you please, I assure you I aim at nothing but the welfare of my country. Popularity I do not seek. The fool's praise or censure I do not mind."

But Muhlenberg remained in politics, and, in 1782, he was re-elected to the State Assembly, and again was elected Speaker. He was elected a member of the Board of Censors, which oversaw the finances of Pennsylvania, and, before that session of the Assembly ended, he was elected as President of the board. In his time outside of politics, he became involved in business matters in Philadelphia, and even served as a justice of the peace for several areas of Pennsylvania.

With the end of the revolution against British rule, the fledgling U.S. government was controlled by the Articles of Confederation, a ragtag listing of measures that left the government strong in some areas and weak in others. By 1785, the Articles had become such a hindrance that a national movement to enact a federal Constitution began in the country. Frederick Muhlenberg was one of the first in his state to call for such a document to be composed. A convention held in the summer of 1787 drafted a document that was sent to the states for ratification. Both Frederick and Peter Muhlenberg became important figures in Pennsylvania in the effort to ratify the Constitution. Because the Federalists had a commanding control of the state legislation, when the convention set to debate the Constitution met in November 1787 it elected Frederick A.C. Muhlenberg as its president. With Frederick's and Peter's firm support behind the measure, on 12 December 1787 the document was ratified by a vote of 46 to 23. On 15 December, the convention sent a letter, signed by Frederick Muhlenberg as "President of the Convention of Pennsylvania," to the President of the Continental Congress, announcing that the state of Pennsylvania had ratified the Constitution.

Service in the New Federal Congress

Under the Constitution, Pennsylvania was to send eight members to sit in the new Federal Congress, which would not sit until 1789. Frederick and Peter Muhlenberg were selected as two of the eight by the State Assembly. In 1776 Frederick Muhlenberg had been forced to flee from New York City with his family to avoid British troops; now, 13 years later, he was returning to that capital city to sit in the first Federal Congress of the new nation. The controversy over the selection of New York City as the new national capital was widely debated.

In a letter from Thomas Jefferson, possibly to James Madison, and dated 2 November 1793, Jefferson penned:

> *H.R. Lewis, [William] Rawle &c., all concur in the necessity that Congress should meet in Philadelphia, and vote their own adjournment. If it shall then be necessary to change the place, the question will be between New York and Lancaster [Pennsylvania]. The Pennsylvania members are very anxious for the latter, and will attend punctually to support it, as well as to support much for Muhlenburg [sic], and oppose the appointment of [William Loughton] Smith [1758-1812] (S.C.) speaker, which is intended by the Northern members.*

The Vote

The House of Representatives was supposed to meet starting on 4 March 1789; however, because many of the representatives could not get to New York City on time, the body adjourned. Each day a roll was taken, and because so few members had arrived, the session was postponed and delayed until a quorum could be established. Finally, on 1 April, when James Schureman of New Jersey and Thomas Scott of Pennsylvania arrived, establishing a quorum, the House sat in session. Their first order of business: selecting a speaker. The journal of the House for that day notes:

> *Resolved, That this House will proceed to the choice of a Speaker by ballot. The House accordingly proceeded to ballot for a Speaker, and upon examining the ballots, a majority of the votes of the whole House was found in favor of Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, one of the Representatives for the State of Pennsylvania. Whereupon, the said Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg was conducted to the chair, from whence he made his acknowledgements to the House for so distinguished an honor.*

Legacy as Speaker

The first duties of the new Congress were immense: there were no real national laws, and a new President, George Washington, had just been elected. The first duty was to count the electoral votes of the recently held election; Muhlenberg, as Speaker of the House, sat in a joint session with the U.S. Senate to count these tallies. Following that, a series of measures establishing executive departments, enacting revenue measures, creating a military for the nation, and drawing up a judicial system with a U.S. Supreme Court at its apex were all taken up in debate and voted on. In a letter to Richard Witty Peters, 18 June 1789, Muhlenberg complained about the massive growth of the federal government in such a short period:

James Gillespie Blaine

Served as Speaker:
March 4, 1869–March 4, 1875

But for the machinations of the candidacy of the Prohibition Party in New York State and his own political corruption, James G. Blaine would have been the twentieth President of the United States. Instead, he is consigned to disrepute and obscurity despite a life of service to the nation, including tenures in the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, and two tenures as Secretary of State. His service as Speaker of the House, in the 41st to the 43rd Congresses (1869-75), is likewise forgotten. Known as "The Plumed Knight" (named by orator Robert Ingersoll when he nominated Blaine for President in 1876), Blaine was perhaps one the best-known politicians in the United States in the late nineteenth century.

Personal History

He was born in the village of West Brownsville, Pennsylvania, on 31 January 1830, the son of Ephraim Lyon Blaine, a businessman, and his wife Maria (née Gillespie) Blaine. According to Edward Stanwood, one of the early twentieth century's biographers of Blaine, the family originated in Ireland. James Blaine, the great-great-grandfather of James Gillespie Blaine, emigrated from Londonderry, in what is now Northern Ireland, in 1745, and settled first in Donegal, in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, moving to the village of Toboyne, where he built an estate on the banks of the Juniata River. James Blaine's great-grandfather, Ephraim Blaine, the eldest of nine children, was born in Ireland in 1741 and emigrated with his parents as an infant; he later took over his father's holdings and became a major landholder in Pennsylvania before he volunteered for service in the Continental Army during the American Revolution and served, with the rank of colonel, as the Commissary-General of the Continental Army. Ephraim's son, named James Gillespie Blaine, intended to become a politician in Pennsylvania but instead spent time in Europe, afterwards returning to his home state where he became an attorney. James Blaine received what is now called "home schooling," although he was sent to Lancaster, Ohio, at age 11 to live with his cousin, Thomas Ewing, who later served as the Secretary of the Treasury and the first Secretary of the Interior. Blaine received private tutoring from William Lyons, a British teacher who was a relation to Lord Lyons, the British Minister to the United States. Blaine completed his education at Washington

College in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1847 when he was just 17.

Blaine moved to Kentucky, where he became an instructor at the Western Military Institute, a boys' school in Blue Lick Springs, Kentucky. He married, and then returned to Pennsylvania where he studied the law in a move to become an attorney like his grandfather. Blaine's law studies did not go well, and he abandoned them after a period of time. Instead, he returned to teaching, going to work in 1852 at the Pennsylvania Institute for the Blind in Philadelphia. Two years later, for some unknown reason, Blaine quit his position and moved to Maine, a state with which he and his family had no prior relationship. There, he purchased, with a friend, the *Kennebec Journal* newspaper, and he became the editor of the paper. In the nineteenth century, newspapers became "organs" or mouthpieces of political parties, and Blaine turned the *Journal* into a Whig paper. In 1856, however, Blaine left the Whigs as that party dissolved over the issue of slavery, and he joined the new Republican Party, which had been formed two years earlier in opposition to slavery. In fact, in 1856, Blaine served as a delegate to the Republican Party's first national convention, held in Pittsburgh, and was elected as the convention's secretary. Returning to Maine, in 1857 Blaine sold his interest in the *Kennebec Journal* and purchased the *Portland Advertiser*, turning it into a Republican mouthpiece. In 1858, however, he was elected to a seat in the Maine state House of Representatives, and his career in journalism ended. Instead, his career as a politician began. He served in the state House from 1859 to 1862, with the last two years as Speaker of that body.

Early Years in Congress

In 1862, Blaine was elected to a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Taking his place in the Thirty-eighth Congress (1863-65), he supported the establishment of a National Bank system, somewhat along the lines of the Federal Reserve System in place today. Ultimately, Blaine saw service in the House through the Forty-fourth Congress (1875-77) until his resignation on 10 July 1876.

Rep. Schuyler Colfax of Indiana had served as the Speaker of the House in the first and second sessions of the Fortieth Congress (1867-69); however, Rep. Theodore M. Pomeroy had served as Speaker in the single day of the third session of that Congress. Colfax had been elected as Vice President in 1868, leaving the speakership opened up for the first time since 1863.

The Vote

When the Forty-first Congress assembled in Washington on 4 March 1869, Blaine was the candidate of the Republicans, who carried the majority of the 252 seats in the House by a margin of 171 Republicans to 67 Democrats and five so-called "conservatives." The Democrats, badly outnumbered, placed forward the name of Rep. Michael C. Kerr of Indiana as their candidate for the speakership, but the conclusion to the election was inevitable, as Blaine was elected by a vote of 135 to 57. The *House Journal*, not a verbatim account of the activities of the House, merely states that Blaine was declared the duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, was conducted to the Speaker's chair by Reps. Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts and Kerr, and, "after a brief address to the House" which has not survived, was given the oath of office. The House then began its business for that session of Congress.

Legacy as Speaker

Historians speculate as to the reasons for Blaine's rise, in only his third congressional term, to the speakership of the House. One reason put forward may be that Blaine lent strong support to the presidential candidacy of General Ulysses S. Grant in the 1868 election, which was won by Grant with Speaker Colfax as his running mate. During his tenure as Speaker, which lasted until the end of the Forty-third Congress (1873-75), Blaine became perhaps the most contentious occupant of the Speaker's chair at least during the nineteenth century and perhaps just behind that of Speaker Joseph G. Cannon overall. Blaine was, in his first two terms as Speaker, praised by many for his thoroughness in conducting House business and chairing debates. One journalist in Washington wrote in a private correspondence, "His quickness, his thorough knowledge of parliamentary law and of the rules, his firmness, clear voice, and impressive manner, his ready comprehension of subjects and situations, and his dash and brilliancy have been widely recognized, and really [have] made him a great presiding offi-

cer." Although many of the great issues involving the just-concluded Civil War were over, the main controversy was over Reconstruction. In 1871, Blaine broke with his party and called for an investigation into allegations of corruption and bad treatment by so-called "carpetbag" governments in the South against former Confederates. However, Blaine also helped to block legislation allowing these same former Confederates the right to vote again. Mary Parker Follett, one of the historians of the Speakership, called Blaine "a clever manipulator of the rules" of the House. Blaine would also serve as chairman of the Committee on Rules (Forty-third Congress).

When Blaine won re-election in 1872 and a third term as Speaker in the Forty-third Congress (1873-75), he told the House members who bestowed on him this great honor:

> *The vote this moment announced by the Clerk is such an expression of your confidence as calls for my sincerest thanks. To be chosen Speaker of the American House of Representatives is always an honorable distinction; to be chosen a third time enhances the honor more than three-fold; to be chosen by the largest body that ever assembled in the Capitol imposes a burden of responsibility which only your indulgent kindness could embolden me to assume.*

It was during the Forty-third Congress that allegations against Blaine being involved in rampant corruption began to surface. As the nation expanded westward in the years just after the Civil War, the main instrument in such growth and development were the railroads. In comparison with the modern controversy over "earmarks" that legislators slip into bills for pet projects and sops to contributors, in Congress in the mid-nineteenth century the railroads passed "gifts" and other contributions onto representatives and Senators in exchange for continued support for the expansion of railroad activity. Such payments were frowned upon, but were not illegal. In an investigation later conducted by the House Judiciary Committee, it was discovered that when the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad, an entity in which Blaine held bonds, went bankrupt, the receiver of the company, the Union Pacific Railroad, purchased the bonds from Blaine for an estimated $64,000. Blaine then supported legislation that gave the Union Pacific increased power in the construction of railroads in the West. Accused of taking payoffs, Blaine went to the floor of the House on 24 April 1871 and denied the allegations wholly and with vigor. "I never had any business transactions whatever with the Union Pacific Railroad Company, or any of its officers or agents or representatives," he charged.

Evidence then arose showing that Blaine had written letters to Warren Fisher, Jr., of Boston, who sold the bonds to Blaine, thanking him for the sale. The letters were in the possession of Fisher's clerk, James Mulligan. In an action that only could be classified as being from the theater of the absurd, Blaine visited Mulligan in his Washington, D.C. hotel and asked to see the letters before Mulligan could hand them over to Congress. Mulligan complied, and the letters were never seen again. Blaine denied their existence; he even denied that he had visited Mulligan for anything but to get his side of the story. Under pressure from his colleagues over the burgeoning scandal, Blaine again took to the floor, this time with what he said were the now-famous "Mulligan Letters," and read selected portions into the record. No one was allowed to see what Blaine was referring to, and he later stated that these were notes that he destroyed. Although the Judiciary Committee investigation cleared Blaine of wrongdoing, the taint and smell of the scandal destroyed him and his ability to effectively act as Speaker.

In the 1874 mid-term elections, a political tidal wave swept the country, and, led by scandals in the Grant administration and in Congress, the Republicans lost 96 seats in the House, removed from the majority with Blaine losing the speakership. In his closing address to the House on 3 March 1875, the last day of the second session of the Forty-third Congress, Blaine spoke emotionally of his service as Speaker:

> *Gentleman: I close with this hour a six years' service as Speaker of the House of Representatives – a period surpassed in length by but two of my predecessors, and equaled by only two others. The rapid mutations of personal and political fortune in this country have limited the great majority of those who have occupied this chair to shorter terms of service.*

It would be the gravest insensibility to the honors and responsibilities of life not to be deeply touched by so signal a mark of public esteem as that I have thrice received at the hands of my political associates. I desire in this last moment to renew them, one and all, my thanks and my gratitude.

To those from whom I differ in my party relations—the minority of this House—I tender my acknowledgements for the generous courtesy with which they have treated me. By one of those sudden and decisive changes which distinguish popular institutions, and which conspicuously mark a free people, that minority is transformed in the ensuing Congress to the governing power of the House. However it might possibly have been under other circumstances, that event necessarily renders these words my farewell to the Chair.

The speakership of the American House of Representatives is a post of honor, of dignity, of power, of responsibility. Its duties are at once complex and continuous; they are both onerous and delicate; they are performed in the broad light of day, under the eyes of the whole people, subject at all times to the closest observation, and always attended with the sharpest criticism. I think no other official is held to such an instant and such rigid accountability. Parliamentary rulings in their very nature are peremptory; almost absolute in authority and instantaneous in effect. They cannot always be enforced in such as way as to win applause or secure popularity; but I am sure that no man of any party who is worthy to fill this chair will ever see a dividing line between duty and policy.

Thanking you once more, and thanking you cordially, for the honorable testimonial you have placed on record to my credit, I perform my only remaining duty in declaring that the Forty-third Congress has reached its constitutional limit, and that the House of Representatives stands adjourned for the day.

Ben: Perley Poore, a noted Washington journalist in the nineteenth century, wrote in his memoirs, "When by party changes it had become evident that a Democratic Speaker would succeed him, Mr. Blaine made a near valedictory in adjourning the session, and as he declared the adjournment and dropped his gavel, a scene of tumultuous enthusiasm ensued. The crowed assemblage, floor and galleries, rose and greeted him with repeated salvos of applause, running in waves and side to side, with almost delirious cheering, clapping of hands, and waving of handkerchiefs. Fully five minutes, it seemed, he was detained, bowing and acknowledging with emotion, this tribute to the record he had made and for [a] full half hour afterward there poured toward his standing place, at the clerk's desk, a constant stream of members and citizens anxious to press his hand and express in words the admiration already shown in signs. None who were there can forget the impression made by this scene." Blaine was the candidate of the Republicans for the speakership in the Forty-fourth Congress, but he lost to Michael Kerr of Indiana by a vote of 173 to 106.

After Leaving the Speakership

By the end of his tenure as Speaker, Blaine had become the most popular Republican politician in the nation. Historians and even some contemporary commentators in Blaine's time noted that he had succeeded Henry Clay in the ranks of the politician who rose above party and station to become a probable presidential candidate. Thus, when the Republicans gathered in convention in Cincinnati on 14 June 1876 to nominate a presidential candidate, James Blaine, former Speaker of the House, was the leading aspirant. As the leader of the party faction known as the "Half Breeds," who were critical of the Grant administration, he was opposed by Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York, head of the group known as the "Stalwarts," or those who backed Grant completely and faithfully. Blaine led the party's apparatus, with approximately 300 votes out of 400 needed for the party nomination. Hanging over his head, however, was the charge of political corruption involving the railroads and bribes. This was forgotten, at least by the convention, when Robert G. Ingersoll, the noted nineteenth century orator, took to the podium to nominate Blaine. In his lengthy speech, he called Blaine "the Plumed Knight," a name which stuck to the former Speaker. Blaine led the balloting for President for six ballots

before a dark horse candidate, Governor Rutherford B. Hayes, was nominated.

In June 1876, Secretary of the Treasury Benjamin Bristow resigned, and President Grant named Senator Lot Morrill of Maine as his successor. With a vacancy in the Senate, the Maine legislature elected Blaine to replace Morrill. Blaine resigned his House seat on 10 July 1876 to fill the remaining months of Morrill's term; later in 1876 the Maine legislature elected the former Speaker to a full term beginning in 1877 and lasting until 1883. In the Senate until 5 March 1881, when he resigned, Blaine became a noted statesman, rising to oppose increased Chinese immigration to the United States, supporting increased trade with nations in South America while also backing a protective tariff for American industries hurt by cheap foreign goods.

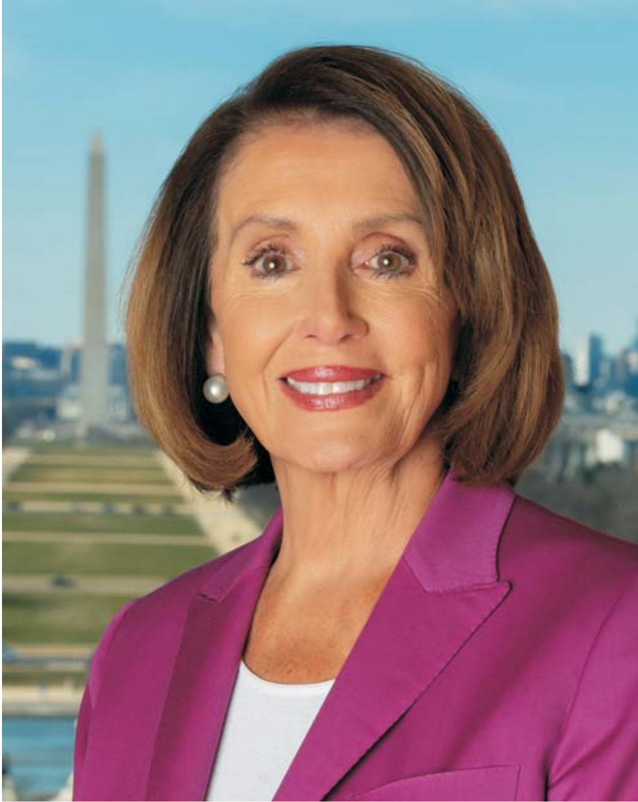
In 1880, Blaine was once again mentioned as a potential candidate for the presidency, but he lost to Rep. James A. Garfield. With Garfield's election, Blaine, still considered the leading statesman of his party, was offered the Secretary of State portfolio in the new administration. Blaine resigned his Senate seat on 5 March 1881 to take this office. As several Secretaries of State had risen to be elected President, Blaine saw this route as the one closest to getting him into the White House.

However, Blaine's tenure at the State Department was short. He clashed with the British over the issue of Canadian fisheries and their product being imported into the United States. Blaine also worked to forestall any attempt by the Europeans to build an isthmian canal across Central America. He used his experience in issues relating to trade in South America to push for increased business dealings with countries in the region.

On 2 July 1881, Blaine was accompanying President Garfield on a trip leaving the train station in Washington, D.C. when the President was approached by a lunatic, Charles Guiteau, who shot Garfield in the back. Garfield's health slowly went downhill until he ultimately succumbed to his wounds on 19 September 1881. Garfield was succeeded by Vice President Chester A. Arthur, and Blaine remained in the cabinet. He spent the remainder of his tenure at State formulating an international peace congress of the nations of Central and South America to meet in Washington. But Blaine soon found himself at odds with the more liberal Arthur over policy issues, and, on 19 December 1881, he resigned. His successor at State, Frederick Frelinghuysen, canceled the peace conference, although the idea remained a viable one, becoming the First Inter-American Conference held in Washington from October 1889 to April 1890.

For several years after leaving government, Blaine wrote articles on numerous national issues and became the elder statesman of the party. A former Speaker, Senator, and Secretary of State, the nomination of his party for President remained beyond his grasp. President Arthur's unpopularity in the party was his chance: at the 1884 Republican National Convention, held in Chicago in June, Blaine was one of three main contenders for the party's presidential nomination along with Senator Benjamin Harrison of Indiana and former Secretary of the Treasury Benjamin Bristow. Blaine was again nominated by Robert Ingersoll, who told the crowd, "The Republicans…want a man who knows that this government should protect every citizen at home and abroad; who knows that any government that will not defend its defenders, and protect its protectors, is a disgrace to the map of the world…the man who has, in full, heaped and rounded measure, all these splendid qualifications, is the present grand and gallant leader of the Republican party—James G. Blaine." Blaine led the balloting over Arthur for three ballots, and on the fourth he won an outright majority. The convention then selected Senator John Alexander Logan of Illinois as the Vice President nominee. The Democrats nominated Governor Grover Cleveland of New York as their presidential nominee.

The 1884 election is considered one of the dirtiest in American history. Charges that Cleveland fathered a child out of wedlock, coupled with the resurrection of the railroad bribery allegations against Blaine, filled the pages of the nation's newspapers. A group of liberal Republicans, styling themselves as reformers who could not support Blaine for President under any circumstances, called themselves "Mugwumps" (allegedly from the Algonquin Indian word *mugguomp*, meaning "war leader") and backed Cleveland—they included Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Henry Adams, the cartoonist Thomas Nast, the



Nancy D'Alesandro Pelosi

Served as Speaker:
January 4, 2007–January 3, 2011;
January 3, 2019 (Incumbent)

On 4 January 2007, when the 110th Congress (2007-09) convened in Washington, D.C., Nancy Pelosi, the first woman to serve as the head of a party in the U.S. House of Representatives, was sworn in as the Speaker of the House, the first woman to hold that high office. With a background in a political family on the East Coast, her rise to become a political leader on the West Coast made her one of the most important female leaders in the Democratic Party in the history of that entity. She was quite vocal about her liberal voting record, opposing the U.S. war in Iraq and supporting government spending over tax cuts, among other things. In 2008, her party added additional seats to their majority, giving her another term as Speaker. Although the House changed hands in 2011, leaving Pelosi as minority leader, the Democrats regained a majority in 2019, at which time Pelosi was sworn in a second time as Speaker.

Personal History

Born Annunciata Patricia D'Alesandro on 26 March 1940 in the Little Italy section of Baltimore, Maryland, she is the daughter of Thomas D'Alesandro Jr. and his wife Annunciata (née Lombardi) D'Alesandro. A family with a lengthy political pedigree, it began when Thomas D'Alesandro Jr. (1903-87), served as a U.S. representative from Baltimore, Maryland (1939-47), then as mayor of that city (1947-59). During this time, he was a close friend—known as "Tommy"—to presidents from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy. He ended his career with an unsuccessful run for the Senate in 1958 and a stint as a member of the Federal Renegotiation Board, appointed by President Kennedy, from 1961-69. Pelosi's mother, Annunciata D'Alesandro, an immigrant from Italy, dropped out of law school to raise her children. Her son, Thomas D'Alesandro, III, also served as the Mayor of Baltimore. Her daughter, Nancy, attended local schools, including the Institute of Notre Dame, a Catholic high school for girls in Baltimore, then graduated from Trinity College (now Trinity Washington University) in Washington, D.C. in 1962. While attending school, she interned as an aide to Senator Daniel Brewster, Democrat of Maryland; one of her coworkers was Steny Hoyer, who would eventually serve under Pelosi as majority leader. While attending Trinity, she met Paul Frank Pelosi, a businessman and an investor, and the two were married in September 1963.

For the next eighteen years, Nancy Pelosi was involved in bringing up her family in her husband's native city, San Francisco, and it did not appear that she would become involved in politics like her father and brother.

In 1977, Pelosi was elected as the party chairwoman for Northern California for the California state Democratic Party. She became a close friend and ally of Rep. Philip Burton, Democrat of California, who was a powerhouse congressman from San Francisco. In 1981, upon Burton's urging, Pelosi ran for and was elected as the chairman of the California state Democratic Party, where she served until 1983. That same year, Burton died, and his widow Sala Burton was named to his vacant seat. Pelosi, at this time, served as Finance chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, which assists Democrats in getting elected to the U.S. Senate, from 1985-86. She also used her influence to get the Democrats to hold their 1984 presidential nominating convention in San Francisco.

In late 1986, Sala Burton became ill with cancer, and decided not to run for reelection to her congressional seat in 1988. She stated quite clearly that she wanted Pelosi to run for the open seat. Events, however, soon intervened; on 1 February 1987, just after being sworn in to her third term in Congress, Sala Burton succumbed to her cancer, leaving the seat open. In a special election, held on 7 April 1987, Pelosi defeated San Francisco Supervisor Harry Britt in the Democratic primary, then Republican Harriet Ross in the general election on 2 June 1987.

Early Years in Congress

She took her seat in the 100th Congress on 9 June 1987. She would serve on the House Committee on Appropriations and the House Committee on Intelligence, becoming the ranking Democrat on the latter committee just before her election as Speaker in 2007. She also served on the House Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, as well as the Committee on Government Operations. She was the sponsor of legislation such as increasing government funds for AIDS research and subsidizing housing for low- and moderate-income people.

In 1994, the Democrats lost their majority, and from the start of the 104th Congress (1995-97) until the 110th (2007-09), Nancy Pelosi was situated in the minority. Nevertheless, she continued an upward climb into the party's leadership. In 2001, when Minority Whip David E. Bonior of Michigan stepped down from his seat, Pelosi was elected in his place, the first woman to hold the whip position, which is the second highest in the minority and third highest in the majority. Working with Minority Leader Richard Gephardt of Missouri, she opposed the tax cuts of President George W. Bush, and voted against U.S. participation in the war in Iraq. She also took a strong stand against Social Security reform, as that government program faced a future of potential bankruptcy. In 2002, Gephardt resigned his minority leader position to run for president in 2004, and Pelosi was elected in his place, making her the first woman to ever lead a party in the U.S. House of Representatives. Her service would last until the end of the 109th Congress (2005-07). As minority leader, Pelosi disagreed with many in her party that President Bush's policies warranted an impeachment inquiry, although she strongly rebuked the President and Republicans for allegedly "lying" about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq before the war started. In early 2006, as polls showed that the Democrats could pick up enough seats to win back the majority, Pelosi told colleagues that any impeachment inquiry was "off the table."

First Female Speaker-Acceptance Speech

In the 2006 midterm elections, Democrats picked up thirty-one seats to turn a 232-202 (with one independent) minority in the 109th Congress into a 233-202 majority in the 110th. On 4 January 2007, Pelosi was sworn in as the first female Speaker of the House. She told the members of the House:

> *This is an historic moment, for Congress, and for the women of this country. It is a moment for which we have waited more than 200 years. Never losing faith, we waited through the many years of struggle to achieve our rights. But women weren't just waiting; women were working. Never losing faith, we worked to redeem the promise of America, that all men and women are created equal...For our daughters and granddaughters, today we have broken the marble ceiling. To our daughters and our granddaughters, the sky is the limit.*

First Period as Speaker

Many blamed the war in Iraq for President Bush's unpopularity and the resurgence of the Democrats. When the President suggested in early January 2007 that he would increase the number of American troops in that country in a "surge" to win the war, Pelosi, along with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Democrat of Nevada, sent a letter to the President asking him not to send additional forces to Iraq. "[T]here is no purely military solution in Iraq," they wrote:

> *There is only a political solution. Adding more combat troops will only endanger more Americans and stretch our military to the breaking point for no strategic gain...Rather than deploy additional forces to Iraq, we believe the way forward is to begin the phased redeployment of our forces in the next four to six months, while shifting the principal mission of our forces there from combat to training, logistics, force protection and counter-terror.*

Bush refused to listen to Pelosi or Reid, and dispatched an additional 30,000 troops to Iraq. Pelosi and Reid attempted to cut off funding for the troops, but this move backfired and support for the war rose as Iraq stabilized and the number of troop deaths fell to some of their lowest levels. On 12 December 2007, she blasted Republicans for opposing her party's attempts to cut off funding for the troops in Iraq. "They like this war. They want this war to continue," she told reporters at her weekly news conference in the Capitol. "We thought that they shared the view of so many people in our country that we needed a new direction in Iraq. But the Republicans have made it very clear that this is not just George Bush's war. This is the war of the Republicans in Congress." When asked if she believed that Republicans "like war," she backed off. "I shouldn't say they like the war," she said. "They support the war, the course of action that the president is on." She called the conflict in Iraq "a catastrophic mistake." House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio dismissed Pelosi's remarks. "Republicans have stood on principle to protect current and future generations of Americans, whether it polled well or not. The success our troops are having in Iraq today is proof positive that our stance was the right one."

Pelosi involved herself in American foreign relations and affairs, and was roundly criticized for it. In May 2007, when Colombian President Álvaro Uribe visited the United States, Pelosi publicly lambasted him for not cracking down hard enough on "paramilitary groups" that she felt were intimidating labor organizations. In 2008, to punish Colombia, she refused to hold hearings or schedule a vote on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

Despite her sense that any impeachment inquiry of the Bush administration would backfire in the faces of the Democrats, Pelosi decided to allow hearings to go forward. Responding to the introduction of an article of impeachment by Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, she said:

> *This is a Judiciary Committee matter, and I believe we will see some attention being paid to it by the Judiciary Committee. Not necessarily taking up the Articles of Impeachment because that would have to be approved on the floor, but to have some hearings on the subject. My expectation is that there will be some review of that in the Committee.*

As the war in Iraq changed for the better, Pelosi and the Democrats were seen more and more as the party involved in the status quo rather than as reformers. Polls across the country in the middle of 2008 showed that the Democrats' unpopularity rose to 85 to 90 percent, endangering their majority. In October 2007, Pelosi admitted that the Democrats were unpopular, but she blamed the Bush administration for all of her party's problems. "I know that Congress has low approval ratings," Pelosi said at her weekly news conference. "I don't approve of Congress, because we haven't done anything that—we haven't been effective in ending the war in Iraq. And if you asked me in a phone call, as ardent a Democrat as I am, I would disapprove of Congress as well." In the 2008 election, however, Democrats picked up twenty-one seats to make their majority in 111th Congress (2009-11) 257 seats to 178 for the GOP. On 6 January 2009, Pelosi was sworn in for a second two-year term as Speaker of the House.

In 2008, after Republicans brought procedural matters before the House and Pelosi was unable to stop the counts, the Speaker decided, in the 111th Congress to change House rules that disallowed any

such motions by the minority. In the first change of these rules since 1822, the right of the minority to make a motion to recommit would be taken away, a rule that the Republicans strengthened when they took the majority in 1995. Outraged, Republicans announced that they would call procedural motions every half hour if Pelosi went through with her plans to change the rules. Pelosi also turned on Democrats who she felt were not 100 percent behind her plans for the House. When she disagreed with Rep. John Dingell of Michigan or Rep. Jane Harman of California, she stripped both of them of their committee assignments; Dingell was replaced as the chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce by Rep. Henry Waxman of California, a Pelosi ally.

Second Period as Speaker

Democrats gained eight seats in the 2012 elections but remained short of majority control; Pelosi stayed on as Minority Leader. In the 2014 midterm elections, the Democrats lost thirteen seats, although they gained some back in 2016 and won control of the House in 2018, capturing forty seats. Some members of Pelosi's caucus, especially those recently elected, wanted to see a new leadership team formed. However, Pelosi won over most of her opponents and became Speaker again on 3 January 2019. She promised to step down from the leadership by the end of 2022, noting, "Over the summer, I made it clear that I see myself as a bridge to the next generation of leaders, a recognition of my continuing responsibility to mentor and advance new Members into positions of power and responsibility in the House Democratic Caucus."

With the Trump administration having committed, according to the Democrats, a variety of offenses since it took over the White House in early 2017, one of the top items on their agenda was consideration of impeachment of the president. They argued that Trump was corrupt, incompetent, and authoritarian. For her part, Pelosi was hesitant to act before receiving the report expected from Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel appointed in 2017 to investigate Russia's actions regarding the 2016 election and whether the Trump campaign had colluded with the Russians. Pelosi feared voter backlash if the Democrats weren't cautious and deliberate in their approach to the matter. When it was released in spring 2019, Mueller's report concluded that the investigators could not *prove* collusion, although there was an exchange of data and campaign information involving Russian agents. The report did cite ten instances of possible obstruction of justice related to the president's efforts to derail the investigation; but Mueller left it to Congress to decide whether these amounted to impeachable offenses. With that, many House Democrats wished to pursue impeachment on the basis of the obstruction charges. Although she was a strong critic of President Trump, Pelosi continued to resist impeachment for political reasons. She was persuaded to go along only after a whistleblower came forward to report that Trump was then attempting to coerce Ukraine to interfere in the 2020 election on his behalf. This, and one charge of obstruction, turned out to be at the center of the two articles of impeachment passed by the House on 18 December, 2019. With the Senate in Republican control, however (albeit by only one seat), it seemed unlikely that conviction and removal would occur. Indeed, on 5 February 2020, the Senate voted to acquit Trump along nearly straight party lines.

Earlier in 2019, Pelosi refused to offer the venue of the House chambers to President Trump for his delivery of the annual State of the Union Address, because at that time Trump had forced a month-long government shutdown over Congress's refusal to fund his much-touted wall between Mexico and the United States to control immigration. (He subsequently signed a stop-gap measure and delivered his speech in the House.) A year later, following Trump's 2020 address, Pelosi publicly tore up her official copy of it, saying, that she was only responding in kind to Trump's speech: "We saw the president of the United States shred the truth right in front of us. My friends, we just have to declare it."

Throughout the course of 2019, Trump had tarred Democrats with the label of "do nothing" politicians blinded by their passion for impeachment. In fact, the House had passed nearly 400 bills that year, only to see the Republican-run Senate ignore virtually all of them. One bill that did become law was the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), an updated version of the 1994 North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—and a

favorite of Trump's. Before accepting it, Pelosi and House Democrats forced a reworking of the agreement to ensure that labor-related considerations were properly addressed.

Following these developments, the overwhelming focus of attention became the COVID-19 pandemic. Disease and death rates were rising precipitously and the markets were beginning to crash. Pelosi negotiated with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on a number of relief bills. The result was funding made available for the public health system and for vaccine development, free COVID-19 testing, and paid sick leave. Pelosi also pushed for a bill to reduce health-care costs within the existing Affordable Care Act, which Republicans adamantly opposed. Pelosi nevertheless saw promotion of the measure as politically advantageous for Democrats going into the 2020 elections.

In the election of 3 November 2020, Democrat Joe Biden secured a victory over incumbent Donald Trump, although Trump refused to accept his loss and insisted that the election had been "rigged." A runoff election for both Senate seats in Georgia, due to close counts, delivered the Senate to the Democrats (only by virtue of Vice President Kamala Harris's ability to break a 50-50 tie on floor votes), and they retained their majority in the House, albeit reduced to a four-seat advantage. Trump continued to repeat his unfounded claims regarding electoral fraud and rallied his base around the message of "Stop the Steal."

On 6 January 2021, a scheduled joint session of Congress convened to officially endorse the final Electoral College tallies. That same day, thousands of Trump supporters gathered in Washington, D.C., to hear Trump call on them to "fight like hell" to "stop the steal." After the speaking event, hundreds of them stormed the U.S. Capitol in the hope of reversing the election outcome. Legislators, including Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence, were forced to take refuge in the building's basement for several hours before they could resume the electoral tally. Democrats and a few Republicans called on Trump to resign. Many pressed Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment, by which a president deemed incapable of carrying out his duties may be removed. Pence declined to do so, and therefore the House impeached Trump for a second time on 13 January 2021, charging him with incitement to insurrection. Pelosi called Trump "a very dangerous person who should not continue in office." This time, ten House Republicans joined the Democrats in a 232-197 vote to impeach. The Senate trial, however, was postponed by Republican Leader Mitch McConnell until after the inauguration of Joe Biden and the vacating of the presidency by Trump. At the end of the trial (9-13 February), fifty-seven senators voted to convict and forty-three to acquit, a margin that fell short of the two-thirds "supermajority" needed to find the president guilty and be removed.

With the new Biden administration in place, Pelosi worked with the President to begin addressing a wide range of issues, from tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and its severe economic consequences to launching a massive infrastructure program and reforming the tax system to benefit ordinary income earners instead of corporations. Other topics on the table were the environment (including climate change), immigration, electoral and ethical reform, and criminal justice reform. In summer 2021, Pelosi began forming a House committee to investigate the 6 January attack on the Capitol. When Republicans refused to participate, she commented, "It's my responsibility as speaker of the House, to make sure we get to the truth on this, and we will not let their antics stand in the way of that."

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Historical Essays

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The Speaker of the House of Commons in England: Formation of the Office

The Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives owes its existence to the office that exists in the British Parliament. Although the two offices are now quite different, with differing powers and other distinctions, when the U.S. House was begun after independence it was based on the office that had already existed for half a millennium in England.

In his 1843 two-volume composition on the early history of the British House of Commons, Charles Townsend began by starting with a discussion of the speakership of that body. "The first speakers of the House of Commons were chosen from belted knights and commoners of distinction, the choice being made by the House, but in accordance with the previous nomination of the king," he wrote. Almost from the start of its formation, the Speaker has had duties laid out before him in a methodical fashion. James Alexander Manning, the British historian who documented the lives of the Speakers of the Commons in his noted 1851 work, laid out in the preface of the "duties of [the] Speaker of the House of Commons." He explained, "This great officer must have anciently, as at present, the organ or mouth-piece of the Commons, although in modern times he is more occupied in presiding over the deliberations of the House, than in delivering speeches on their behalf." Manning then went into a lengthy conversation on the role of the Speaker, some of which, to the American ear, seems quite different than anything the original, or even modern, Speaker of the House has as part of their responsibilities. He explained:

> *Amongst the duties of the Speaker, are the following: To read to the Sovereign petitions or addresses from the Commons, and to deliver, in the royal presence, whether at the Palace [of Westminster] or in the House of Lords, such speeches as are usually made on behalf of the Commons; to manage in the name of the House, where counsel, witnesses, or prisoners, are at the bar; to reprimand persons who have incurred the displeasure of the House; to issues warrants of committal or release for breaches of privilege; to communicate in writing with any parties, when so instructed by the House; to exercise vigilance in reference to private bills, especially with a view to protect property in general, or the rights of individuals, from undue encroachment or injury; to express the thanks or approbation of the Commons to distinguished personages; to control and regulate the subordinate officers of the House; to entertain the members at dinner, in due succession, and at stated periods; to adjourn the House at four o'clock, if forty members be not present; [and] to appoint tellers on divisions [in the number of members who wish to vote on a particular bill or action].*

In essence, the Speaker of the British House of Commons is a nonpartisan officer, not chosen or selected for their party affiliation but their demeanor and character, as well as their ability to handle the above-mentioned duties, while at the same time, being the face and voice of the Commons itself.

Early History of the Speakership (1258-1366)
The true history of the speakership of the House of Commons in England begins in the mists of history: what is known is that in 1258, Peter de Montfort was named as the head of the Parliamentary session that met that year in Oxford and has become known as "The Mad Parliament." But de Montfort's rise to become a "speaker" for the House of Commons was short-lived, and while he is considered the first "speaker," the office did not continue after him and it remained unused for more than a century afterwards. In his 1914 work on the history of the men who had served up until that time as Speaker of the House of Commons, historian Michael MacDonagh explained that the office's origins began in the Parliament of 1376, known to history as "The Good Parliament" for its numerous reforms of royal and other abuses. At the time that this body assembled, King Edward I was dying; his son, also named Edward (but nicknamed "The Black Prince") was the Prince of Wales and heir to the English throne, was also dying from an unknown disease. Another son of Edward I, John of Gaunt,

the Duke of Lancaster, appeared to take the throne of England in the name of his family. Despite the fact that Richard, the son of Edward the Black Prince, was next in line to the throne, John of Gaunt's machinations to seize power left him in bad standing with the parliamentarians who assembled at Westminster on 28 April 1376 for the first session of the House of Commons.

With many members missing—they did not show up, or had been delayed on the many roads leading into London—the House adjourned until the following day. When that time came, with many more members in attendance, John of Gaunt presided over the session. Immediate action was needed for the passage of increased funds for supplies for English troops fighting the war in France, a conflict that had been underway for nearly 40 years, and would continue for 77 additional years—a struggle known as The Hundred Years' War. After hearing the arguments for the increased supplies, the Commons members moved to the Chapter House down the street at Westminster Abbey. Built in 1250 by Masons, the structure was used by Benedictine monks for their religious meetings. Here, the members argued over their opposition to the additional supplies as well as the thought of having John of Gaunt as the royal standard. The members then elected Sir Peter de la Mere, a knight of the shire for Herefordshire who was also a bitter opponent of John of Gaunt, as their official spokesman to air the Commons' grievances before the sovereign. In a sense, the "Speaker" was created out of necessity rather than a ploy to elevate one Commoner over another, or to grab power.

When the Commons assembled again the following day, John of Gaunt was sitting again in the place of the King. According to historian MacDonagh, de la Mere then stood up and:

> *Stated the demands of the Commons in a vigorous and independent speech. They were grievously oppressed by taxation. This, however, they would take in good part, nor grieve at it, if the money were properly spent, but it was evident that neither the King nor the Realm has any profit thereby. They therefore insisted upon an inquiry into expenditure, and removal from office or from the Court of certain close advisors of the King, to whose misdemeanours they attributed the existing public abuses.*

From this demand, it was discovered numerous aides and others were involved in gross thievery: Lord Latimer, a close friend of John of Gaunt, lost his chance to rise to the office of Chamberlain, the official title of the man in charge of running and administering the affairs of the royal household; Richard Lions (also Lyons), a banker who lent money to the King at usurious rates, was arrested and sent to the Tower of London; Alice Perrers, the mistress of King Edward I, who had taken untold riches and purchased jewels and land, was also arrested and eventually banished from the royal household. Latimer was impeached—one of the first uses of that legal penalty to be used by the lower house of Parliament—tried before the House of Commons in 1376, and found guilty; however, King Edward III later pardoned Latimer, and in 1377 he was named a member of Richard II's royal council, a move that outraged members of Parliament. Despite the lax sentences for these criminals, the standard had been set: one man would "speak" for the concerns of the House of Commons, and the King would have to listen to this "speaker." Thus, in the fire of the times, was born the office of the speakership. William Cobbett, the chronicler of the Parliament at Westminster whose multivolume series has documented the actions and speeches in the Commons much the same way that *The Congressional Globe* and *The Congressional Record* would one day cover in the United States Congress, discussed de la Mere's selection, although he moved quickly to de la Mere's first speech as Speaker rather than on his selection.

The "office" of the Speaker, if one could say that such an office did exist, did not have the trappings of one with official duties, and as such its position did not remain for long. In the next Parliament, known as the "Bad Parliament" of 1377, John of Gaunt dissolved the Commons and the House of Lords and imprisoned Sir Peter de la Mere, installing in his place Sir Thomas Hungerford, John of Gaunt's personal steward, to be a more compliant

"Speaker." This new Parliament undid many of the reforms of the previous Parliament and even instituted new taxes, including a poll tax. De la Mere was imprisoned without trial at Nottingham Castle, and, ironically, it was through the maneuverings of Alice Perrers that de la Mere was released. In exchange, the "Bad Parliament" reversed Perrers' conviction and sentence.

De la Mere and other knights who presided as the official spokesmen—not so much as a Speaker as we consider the holder of the office today in the United Kingdom, but more as an official presenter of the Commons' arguments—of the lower house of Parliament were known in those early periods as the Prolocutor (defined as "1. a chairperson of the lower house of convocation in a province of the Church of England, or 2. a spokesman [archaic]," from the Latin *prolocut*, "to speak out.") In the intervening years, for the next century, several unidentified men held the title of Prolocutor instead of Speaker.

The Reigns of Richard II to Henry VII (1367-1624)

It was not until the reign of Richard II (1367-1400; reigned 1377-1400) that the "Speaker" of the Parliament became an identified office. Thomas Curson Hansard, later to become the publisher of the official speeches and transcripts of the House of Commons, wrote a comprehensive history of that deliberative body, which was published in 24 volumes in 1762. He explained, "The Speaker in the time of Richard II was a minion of the King...and greatly the occasion of the misfortunes of those times." James Alexander Manning, whose mid-nineteenth century work documented the lives of the Speakers of the House of Commons, wrote on the first man considered as a real "Speaker:"

> *Sir Thomas Hungerford, one of the Knights of the Shire for Wilts, styled in the Parliament rolls [as] Monsieur Thomas de Hungerford, chevalier, qui avoid les paroles pur les communes d'Angleterre en cet Parliament...is the first speaker of the House of Commons on record, although little doubt can be entertained that all previous Parliaments, from the earliest period of their being called together, must have chosen one among their body for the purposes of regulating the order of their proceedings, the presentation of their petitions to the King, which, if assented to, were the only laws they had the power of proposing at that early stage of legislative authority, and generally to act as the organ or mouth-piece of the whole.*

Hansard's history of the English Parliament states that Hungerford was selected as the Speaker in the first Parliament of Richard II, the so-called "Bad Parliament" (as opposed to the "Good Parliament," which came right before it), held at Westminster 15 days after Michaelmas, or St. Michael's Mass, in 1377.

The first years of the speakership showed that the men who held sway over the affairs of the Parliament were not "independent" politicians. In 1381, Sir Richard Waldegrave opposed taking the speakership because he did not want to become an agent of the King in the House. Nonetheless, he did serve, as did Sir John Bussy, elected in 1394. Bussy presided over—but had little to do with—a petition by the whole House condemning the spending profligacy of King Richard II on his personal residence. Angered beyond reason at this challenge to his authority, even if it did come from the people's representatives in the House of Commons, the King himself went to the House and demanded from Bussy the name of the man who had authored the petition; Bussy named Sir Thomas Haxey, who was arrested, tried for treason, and sentenced to death, although the sentence was never carried out. (In fact, in 1399, after he deposed Richard, King Henry IV asked Parliament to reinstate Haxey's possessions and reverse the treason verdict as "against the law and custom which has been before in Parliament.") Ironically, after war broke out between Richard II and Henry IV in 1399 for control of the English crown, and Richard II surrendered at Bristol, Bussy was found hiding with Richard. William Shakespeare wrote that Harry Hereford, known as Bolingbroke, said that Bussy was "a caterpillar of this commonwealth I have sworn to weed and pluck away." Hereford had Bussy quickly tried on treason and beheaded in Bristol. At the same time, however, Henry IV realized the limits of the speaker-

The Office of the Speaker from Frederick Muhlenberg to David Henderson (1789-1903)

The speakership of the U.S. House of Representatives can be easily categorized as having many eras, but for the sake of this essay and the next we will break down the history of that office into two epochs: first, from the first Speaker, Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg, to the 34th, David Bremner Henderson, and, in the next essay, from the 35th, Joseph Gurney Cannon, to the 52nd, Nancy Pelosi. (Pelosi was followed by two other Speakers but returned to the office in 2019.) We make the split between Henderson and Cannon not in a chronological fashion because of the dates when one speakership ended and another began, in 1903, but because Henderson represented the "old" speakership of the mere moderator, while Cannon embodied the "new" speakership which dominated not just the office of the Speaker, but became a party leader, a spokesman for the party in which the Speaker was a member, and a consolidator of patronage on committees and in other venues in the House. Cannon, even a century after he first became Speaker, is considered the founder of that modern speakership. In that vein, we will end here with Cannon's immediate predecessor and begin the next essay with him.

Frederick Muhlenberg to Joseph Varnum (1789-1811)

Thus, we start at the beginning of that first epoch. When the First Congress assembled in the old city hall in New York on 4 March 1789, 59 members of the House of Representatives were set to appear to represent those states in the Union at the time. Because of travel and other delays, only 13 representatives had appeared, forcing an adjournment. North Carolina and Rhode Island had not even ratified the U.S. Constitution, so their members could not yet take their seats. It was not until 1 April, nearly a month into that first heady session of that first Congress, that a quorum was seated, and Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania was elected as Speaker. The last member, Benjamin Bourn, the only representative from Rhode Island, did not take his seat until 17 December 1790. In summing up Muhlenberg's work in that first Congress, William Henry Smith explained in 1928, "Mr. Muhlenberg presided over the three sessions of that Congress with great dignity, taking but little part in the open debates, but wielding a wide influence as to the shaping of legislation."

He was replaced in the Second Congress (1791-93) by Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut, for no other reason, as many historians agree, than the members of the House did not want one man to serve in that office too long in a ploy to gather too much control for himself. However, as other historians note, Muhlenberg was not as loyal to the administration of President George Washington as he had been upon his election as Speaker, and it is believed that the President pushed to have a more trustworthy and faithful man sitting in the Speaker's chair to push the administration's program in the House. When the Third Congress (1793-95) convened, however, a two-party system—or, at least, the earliest semblance of one—was forming into Federalist and anti-Federalist factions; those in the latter camp helped elect Muhlenberg as Speaker for a second time, defeating the Federalist nominee (and candidate of the Washington administration) Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts. Little has been written of Muhlenberg's second stint as Speaker, although, as historian Smith noted above, it can be assumed that he conducted himself in much the same way; however, now it may be further assumed that he was now firmly in the opposition to the President rather than one who promoted his program.

The Fourth Congress (1795-97) saw a small majority for those in the anti-Federalist camp, but the Federalists were able to elect their own man, Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey. It is noted that this is the first and last time in House history that a member of the minority party—combined with some votes from the majority—was elected Speaker. Historian Richard Hildreth, in his *History of the United States*, wrote:

All of the Federalists voted for Dayton, as the only person at all connected with their part who had the slightest chance of success; while Dayton's personal influence, his former zeal for the sequestration of British debts, and the belief that he would hardly sustain a treaty, one of the articles of which seemed leveled at his motion on that subject, secured him the votes of many opponents of the administration.

Dayton's speakership—again, of which little is known because of a combination of the rules of the time and the dearth of contemporary sources—must have been successful, because, even though in the Fifth Congress (1797-99), William Loughton Smith (1758-1812) of South Carolina became the leader of the Federalists in the House, the party re-elected Dayton as the Speaker. Nevertheless, more modern historians find much to be desired in Dayton's speakership. Asher C. Hinds, whose manual of House rules is known as *Hind's Precedents*, stated in 1909, "Dayton...conducted himself so violently in partisan debate on the floor that he was called to order by the temporary occupant of the chair."

Dayton's successors, from Theodore Sedgwick (served 1799-1801) to Joseph Varnum (served 1807-11), were cut in the mold of what the founding fathers probably wanted the Speaker to be: a mere moderator of debate and nothing more. But with the election of Nathaniel Macon in 1801, a change occurred. Macon was the first Speaker to be elected to three successive Congresses, doing away forever with the concept of not letting on man try to acquire so much power in the Speaker's chair. Macon was also the first Southerner to sit as Speaker. Most importantly, however, he was not a "Speaker" in the mold of his predecessors, but was an extension of the administration of President Thomas Jefferson, although DeAlva Stanwood Alexander, in his 1916 work on the *History and Procedure in the House*, wrote that "The choice of Speaker Macon...rendered the House completely subservient to the Chief Executive. Even the appointment of chairmen of important committees, especially those which act as organs of communication with the President, were consented to, if not...suggested by, the Administration." Henry Adams, in his massive multivolume *History of the United States*, wrote of Macon that the North Carolinian was "a typical homespun planter, honest and simple, erring more often in his grammar and spelling than in his moral principles, but knowing little of the world beyond the borders of Carolina. No man in history has left a better name than Macon, but the name was all he left." Macon did oversee the controversial 1800 election, split between Jefferson and Aaron Burr (and which left Jefferson as President and Burr as Vice President), and he pushed for a Constitutional amendment to allow for the President and Vice President to be elected on one ticket rather than as individuals. When Macon saw that the amendment would fail because of one vote, he stepped down from the Speaker's chair and, in a rare move, voted aye on the matter and helped it pass. For the first time, a Speaker had voted on legislation on the House floor. By the end of his three-term tenure, Macon was extremely unpopular, and he was easily defeated for a fourth term in the Tenth Congress (1807-09) by Joseph B. Varnum of Massachusetts. Varnum, a Federalist, was an interregnum between the strong speakerships of Macon and Henry Clay.

Henry Clay to John W. Davis (1811-1847)

Clay, who was elected As Speaker on his first day in the House on 4 November 1811, took the reins of the Twelfth Congress (1811-13) and, through five terms as Speaker, broken up by his resignation in 1814 and the speakership of Langdon Cheves, made the Speaker one of the most powerful offices in the government, almost a secondary President. Clay was elected in the midst of a national crisis over the threat of war with Great Britain; he was a member among other House members known as "The War Hawks" who wanted war and were prepared to vote for it in the Congress. Clay as Speaker, at least by the "old rules" of the House, was not supposed to inject himself into the debate over the war, but he was changing the office and he became not just a moderator, as previous Speakers had been, but an actual participant.

In 1847, when Robert C. Winthrop was elected Speaker, Clay, then a U.S. Senator, wrote to him with advice on how to conduct himself: "Decide promptly and never give the reasons for your deci-

sions. The House will sustain your decisions, but there will always be men to cavil and quarrel over your reasons." Mary Parker Follett, one of the preeminent historians of the Speakers and the speakership, wrote in 1902:

> *Clay's success in ruling the House was not due simply to the fact that he realized the parliamentary power of his office, but even more to his quickness in so using his position as to influence the mind of the House. Thus the duty of stating the question from the confusion of debate was one particularly suited to Clay's gifts. His ability as a parliamentarian is justly summed up in Mr. Winthrop's criticism when he says: "He was no painstaking student of parliamentary law, but more frequently found the rules of governance in his own instinctive sense of what was practicable and proper in 'Hatsell's Precedents,' or 'Jefferson's Manual.'"*

Clay would later run three times for President—in 1824, 1832, and 1844, all unsuccessfully—but he became a giant in the U.S. Senate for his role in brokering the Compromise of 1850, which headed off the Civil War for another decade.

In between Clay's tenure was, as mentioned, Langdon Cheves, but even he appears to be more in the mold of the early Speakers than Clay. After Clay returned from serving as a delegate to the peace talks between the United States and England and once again served as Speaker, a number of men held that office without much impact on the office. John W. Taylor of New York, Philip P. Barbour of Virginia, Andrew Stevenson of Virginia (who served four terms as Speaker before being named as the U.S. Minister to Great Britain), John Bell of Tennessee, James K. Polk of Tennessee, Robert Mercer Taliaferro Hunter of Virginia, John White of Kentucky, John W. Jones of Virginia, and John W. Davis of Indiana were all highly forgettable during their respective tenures as Speaker. The constant thread running through their service is that they tamped down active opposition to slavery, although in 1844 former Speaker Polk, who had left Congress after he was elected Governor of Tennessee, was elected President, the only Speaker to advance to the White House. John Quincy Adams, who served in the U.S. House after his presidential term had ended, wrote of Davis, from a state where slavery was outlawed, "The Speaker, a pro-slavery Republican from the free State of Indiana, buckled close to the slave-mongers."

Robert C. Winthrop to William Pennington (1847-1863)

Robert C. Winthrop, the scion of a famed Massachusetts family, won the Whig nomination for Speaker in the Thirtieth Congress (1847-49) by defeating Rep. Samuel F. Vinton of Ohio, who was widely expected to get the party nod and, in a Congress with a mere six seat majority for the Whigs, win the speakership. Although some historians speculate that Vinton lost because he was not sufficiently against slavery—he had voted against the Wilmot Proviso—it actually came about because Vinton, at 55 years old, went to Winthrop and told him, "I cannot be Speaker. It is too hard work for me; I am too old for it. You must be Speaker." Vinton was given the chairmanship of the Committee on Ways and Means as a concession. In the election for Speaker, some abolitionist Whigs felt that even Winthrop had not been against the war with Mexico, and voted against him; Winthrop won on the third ballot by defeating Democrat Linn Boyd. One of these members who went against Winthrop, Joshua Giddings of Indiana, wrote to Horace Greeley, the famed Whig newspaper editor who later founded the *New York Tribune*, prior to Winthrop's election:

> *The Whig party has never ceased to condemn the war. Their disgust for it was never stronger than at present, and it is gaining strength every day. With these circumstances surrounding them, the Whig members of Congress will assemble. The first duty that will devolve upon them will be the election of a Speaker. That officer exerts more influence over the destinies of the nation than any other member of the government except the President. He arranges the committees to suit his own views. If a Whig in favor of prosecuting the war be elected Speaker, he will so arrange the committees as to secure reports approving of the continuance of our conquests in Mexico. If he be opposed to the war*

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John Rutledge Writes of the Election of Theodore Sedgwick as Speaker, 1799

The following letter was penned by John Rutledge, Jr. (1766-1819), Federalist representative from South Carolina, who was a chief contender for Speaker of the House of Representatives in the Sixth Congress (1799-1801), but lost on the second ballot to Theodore Sedgwick, Federalist of Massachusetts. Written to "The Right Reverend Bishop Smith" of Charleston, South Carolina (referring to Robert Smith, who was Rutledge's father-in-law), the letter discussed the backroom party politics that gave the Speaker's chair to Sedgwick and denied it to Rutledge. Dated 3 December 1799, just days after Sedgwick's election, it was mailed to Bishop Smith on 5 December. The text, with all of its typographical and spelling errors, is hereby reproduced exactly as it was written by Rutledge.

Philadelphia
3 December, 1799

My dear Sir

Both houses of Congress met yesterday—Mr Sedgwick is our Speaker, and we are to receive the Presidents speech this day at noon. The election of a Speaker puzzled and perplexed the federal part of the House more than any of the difficulties it has heretofore had to struggle with. The southern and middle States Delegates thought, that as the government was very much in eastern hands, and as there had been one Speaker from New England[1], and two from the middle States[2], it would be wise and proper to elect a southern gentleman to the chair, and they nominated me. The eastern Delegates acquiesced in the policy of the measure, but said they were pledged to support the election of Mr Sedgwick by a variety of considerations which they mentioned, and which are too lengthy to enumerate to you at present. The opposition, finding a division among us, hoped it would enable them to elect a Mr Macon[3] and laid their plans accordingly. The friends of government had three meetings on this subject without coming to any determination—the eastern men were very tenacious of Mr Sedgwick, and the southern of myself—but as all the delegates from the east were present, and not two thirds of the southern representation, I found I could not obtain the election without having two more votes than my friends could calculate upon, and rather than hazard having Mr Macon Speaker, I requested General Marshall, who called on me in his way to the fourth meeting of our party, (and which took place but an hour before the meeting of Congress) to say—that if our eastern friends had not the same view he and others had of the political expediency of taking a Speaker from the representation of the southern section of the union, and persisted in their wishes and endeavours to have Mr Sedgwick elected, it was my desire (as far as it was a question about myself) that my friends should unite his, and have him elected handsomely. To mention, at the same time, that several of the opposition members despairing of being able to elect Mr Macon, and (on account of his irritating habits) disliking Mr Sedgwick more than myself, had signified their desire of voting for me under the idea that with the southern suffrages and theirs I should be elected by a great majority, but that I had resisted this proposition, because in my opinion a station of honor could not be honorable to me unless honorably obtained, and that I would not accept public favors *unless proferred by my friends*. This communication, as you will readily believed, delighted the Yankeys—it dispelled at once all their difficulties—they were loud in my praises, and offered to pledge themselves to place me in the Chair when Sedgwick should leave it—but General Marshall insisted that nothing of the sort might be understood, for Mr. Rutledge and his friends would not have it supposed he had *made a bargain* for the chair. This arrangement was concluded so late in the day that the two Georgia Delegates, who came into the House after it was formed, did not get notified of it, voted for me, which presented Sedgwicks being elected at the first ballot. We have nothing very late from Europe, and I can not yet tell you what kind of a session we shall

Source: John Rutledge, Jr., to Bishop Robert Smith, 3 December 1799, Box 1, Folder 8, *The John Rutledge Papers,* Collection #948, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

have—our prospects are much brightened by the new Members we have among us—some of them are men of talents and most of them governmental—Finding in the eastern States a great confusion of ideas respecting the Pinckney family—that some people supposed the essays published under the signature of the "So Carolina Planter" were written by General Pinckney, and that many believed him to be the brother of Charles, I though it expedient to give the publ[ic] some biographical sketches of that family and did so in the Newport gazette—they will be republished here this evening I expect, and you shall receive a copy of them by this or the succeeding post. I have not yet seen Mr Stoddert[4] but will tomorrow, and speak to him about John Smiths going to Sea. Pray give my love to the Boys—good God my dear friend how lucky, truly lucky, they were in not going with Hamilton[5]! They had a very narrow escape from a dreadful sort of passage, and you from a great deal of anxiety and uneasiness it would have occasioned you. I request you will remember me to all our friends and believe me to be

Your affectionate Son
and sincere friend
J. Rutledge Junior

Footnotes:

[1] Rutledge refers to Speaker Jonathan Trumbull, who served as Speaker in the Second Congress (1791-93).

[2] This refers to Frederick A.C. Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania, who served as Speaker in the First (1789-91) and Third (1793-95) Congresses, and Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey, who served as Speaker in the Fourth (1795-97) and Fifth (1797-99) Congresses.

[3] Referring to Nathaniel Macon, Democratic-Republican (later moving to become a Jacksonian, then returning to become a Democratic-Republican) of North Carolina, who would serve as Speaker from the Seventh (1801-03) through the Ninth (1805-07) Congresses.

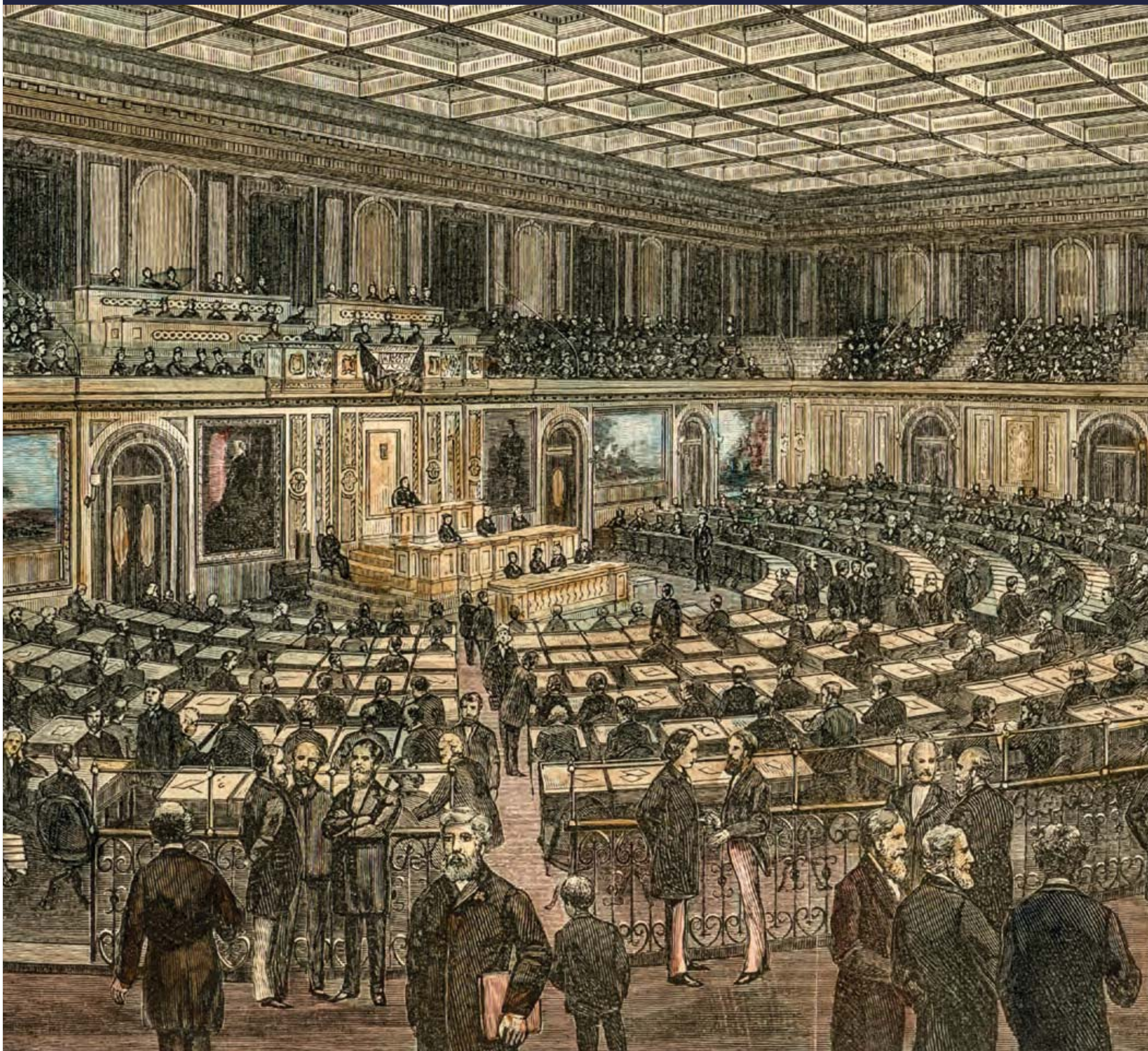
[4] Referring to Benjamin Stoddert, who served as the first Secretary of the Navy, 1798-1801.

[5] Alexander Hamilton (1755-1801), the first Secretary of the Treasury (1789-95).

THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

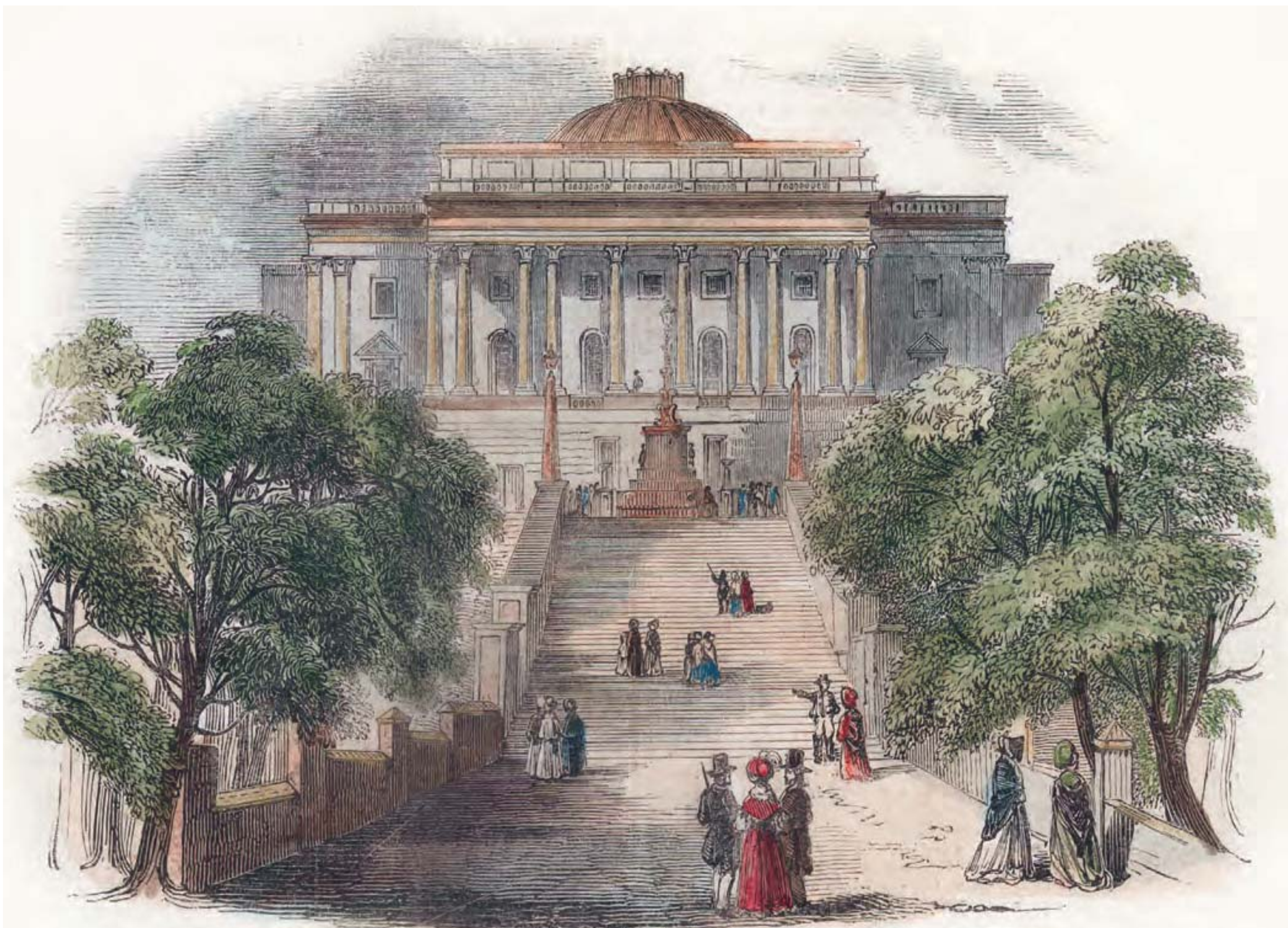
A Guide to Its History, Spaces, and Traditions

United States House of Representatives



HISTORY, ART & ARCHIVES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The following pages (566-585) are excerpted from *The People's House: A Guide to Its History, Spaces and Traditions*, Office of the Historian and Office of the Clerk, United States House of Representatives, November 2018.



This 1842 hand-colored wood engraving of the Capitol depicts the building as it appeared during John Quincy Adams's House career. Instead of the grand white dome of today, the Capitol was topped by a low wood and copper dome designed by Architect of the Capitol Charles Bulfinch.

Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives

HOUSE GEOGRAPHY

When Congress relocated from its temporary quarters in Philadelphia to the permanent seat of government along the Potomac River in November 1800, very little of the Capitol building had been constructed. In fact, the House, Senate, Supreme Court, and the Library of Congress all occupied a small section of the north wing immediately off the modern Rotunda. Engineers relied mostly on local materials, such as the stone quarried downriver from the capital. An untold number of slaves did the physically demanding work of building the Capitol. They cut the sandstone, measured and framed the timber, and erected the seat of America's government brick by brick.

As the nation expanded during the 19th century, Congress and the Capitol grew in tandem alongside it. By the late 1850s, Congress opened the modern House and Senate wings after outgrowing its initial space. During the Civil War, Philip Reid, an enslaved African American, devised a way to cast the bronze Statue of Freedom in sections in order to set it atop the grand new Capitol Dome, completing that iconic symbol of democratic government.

As the federal government grew in size and complexity during the 20th century, the Capitol campus expanded rapidly. The first House office building opened in 1908, a second in 1933, and a third in 1965. As Congress's workload became more intricate, the House added professional staff versed in diverse policies. Today, in addition to the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn House Office Buildings, committee and support staff occupy two additional buildings, Ford and O'Neill, at the base of Capitol Hill.

The East Front of the Capitol was extended in the 1950s, and the West Front underwent major renovations during the 1980s. In 2008 the Capitol Visitor Center, built under the East Front Plaza, opened as a central gathering place for the thousands of constituents and visitors who come to the Capitol every day.

Old Hall of the House

From 1800 to 1807, the House met in what is now the office suite of the Senate Majority Leader, an uncomfortably tight space for the growing number of Members.

In 1807 the House first occupied its own chamber, the location of the present-day National Statuary Hall. But less than a decade later, in August 1814, British forces sacked Washington, DC, and torched a number of federal buildings, including the Capitol and the White House. For five years, while architects rebuilt the House and Senate chambers, Congress met initially at Blodgett's Hotel, near today's Gallery Place-Chinatown Metro stop, and then in what came to be called the "Old Brick Capitol"—a hastily built structure to the east of the Capitol, where the Supreme Court building exists today.

The rebuilt Hall of the House—designed by Architect of the Capitol Benjamin Henry Latrobe and constructed by his successor, Charles Bulfinch, between 1815 and 1819—is an early example of Greek revival architecture in America. Modeled after an ancient amphitheater, the new legislative chamber featured a coffered wooden ceiling topped by a windowed cupola.

In the chamber, Members sat at desks arranged in tiered, semi-circular rows facing the Speaker's rostrum, a wooden structure along the southern wall. Above the rostrum hung a red draped *baldacchino*—a ceremonial canopy signifying the authority of the person stationed beneath it.

The amphitheater shape worked well to project sound from the rostrum, but when Members seated throughout the room addressed the House, their voices echoed from all parts of the chamber. Attempts to baffle the sound with red draperies failed, and for one Congress the House even reversed its floor plan, moving the Speaker's rostrum to the rounded end of the room.

In 1849 a visitor in the galleries during the all-night debate at the end of Abraham Lincoln's only term in Congress described a scene that was not unusual for the era: "Imagine 230 tom cats fastened in a room, from which escape is impossible, with tin cans tied to their tails—raging and screaming, and fighting, and flying . . . and you will have some idea of the last jubilee in the House."

The House Chamber occasionally resembled a frontier saloon more than a temple of representative government. Many Members chewed tobacco with gusto and availed themselves of the numerous spittoons throughout the chamber. A later House investigation said the spittoons made for "a most disgusting spectacle that would not be tolerated in a barroom of a mining camp."

When not jostling to address the House, Members often seemed oblivious to the constant din. They held private conversations, wrote letters back home, read newspapers, or even napped. By some antebellum accounts, there were as many as a dozen alcohol vendors in the Capitol pouring drinks when the House was in session.

For many years, Members wore hats on the floor—mirroring a practice in the British House of Commons that symbolized the legislature's independence from the Crown. The House argued about hat wearing for 15 years, eventually banning it in 1837 because the forest of hats had grown so thick and tall that it had become hard to see, let alone hear, what was going on.

The growing animosity and heated debate over the expansion of slavery exacerbated what was already a combustible environment in the 1830s and 1840s. Shoving matches and floor fights were not uncommon. Sometimes these conflicts turned more violent as Members challenged one another to duels over matters of personal honor.

Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room

The historic space known today as the Lindy Boggs Room (H-235), just off the Old Hall, is one of the oldest parts of the Capitol.

From 1819 to the eve of the Civil War, the space served as the Speaker's Office. In late February 1848 it also briefly served as a makeshift infirmary after John Quincy Adams suffered a stroke and collapsed on the House Floor. Members eventually carried him into the Speaker's Office and placed him on a small sofa. Adams fell into a coma and died there a few days later on February 23, 1848.

Since 1962 room H-235 has served as a retiring space for women Members. In 1991 the room was named in honor of Representative Lindy Claiborne Boggs of Louisiana.

Image courtesy of the Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives

Timeline: 1789–2021

4 March 1789: The US House of Representatives meets for the first time in Federal Hall in New York City. With many members unable to reach the city in time, the session adjourns until there is a quorum.

1 April 1789: The US House is able to attain its first quorum. Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania is elected as the first Speaker of the House.

4 May 1789: In a speech on the floor of the House, Rep. James Madison of Virginia says that he will introduce a resolution on 25 May to create additional rights that are not listed in the US Constitution, but that date comes and goes with no word from Madison.

18 May 1789: The US House enacts its first legislation, the Oath of Office Bill. The oath, utilized to this day in the House with some minor changes, reads, "I, ____, a Representative of the United States in the Congress thereof, do solemnly swear in the presence of Almighty God, that I will support the Constitution of the United States. So help me God." President George Washington signed it into law on 1 June 1789.

8 June 1789: After a month of work, Rep. James Madison of Virginia proposes the first of several amendments to the US Constitution. He tells the US House, "It appears to me that this House is bound by every native of prudence, not to let the first session pass over without proposing to the State Legislatures some things to be incorporated into the constitution, that will render it as acceptable to the whole people of the United States, as it has been found acceptable." Eventually, twelve amendments would be submitted to the States in September 1789, with 10 being ratified (as the Bill of Rights); the final amendment comes into operation on 15 December 1791.

15 June 1789: James Madison writes to Edmund Randolph on the ongoing debate to add a Bill of Rights to the US Constitution. "The inclosed paper contains the proposition made on Monday last on the subject of amendments," he explained. "It is limited to points which are important in the eyes of many and can be objectionable in those of none. The structure & stamina of the Govt. are as little touched as possible. Nothing of a controvertible nature can be expected to make its way thro' the caprice & discord of opinions which would encounter it in Congs. when 2/3 must concur in each House, & in the State Legislatures 3/4 of which will be requisite to its final success. The article which 1 fear most for is that which respects the representation. The small States betray already a coolness towards it. And I am not sure that another local policy may not mingle its poison in the healing experiment."

9 July 1790: The House enacts the Permanent Seat of Government Act, 32 to 29, which makes the new District of Columbia in Virginia as the new location of the federal government. After years of sitting in temporary quarters first in New York City and then Philadelphia, the government would have its own home in the District of Columbia, defined in the legislation as "not exceeding ten miles square…be located as hereafter directed on the river Potomac, at some place between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and Connogochegue." President George Washington signs the legislation into law on 16 July.

24 July 1789: The House establishes the Committee on Ways & Means with the jurisdiction over all budgetary, finance, and taxation matters. The oldest standing committee in the House, it was created on this date as a select committee, becoming a standing committee in the Fourth Congress (1795-97).

17 September 1789: The House votes to establish the US Supreme Court under the Judiciary Act of 1789. Following the dictates of the US Constitution, which, in Article III, Section 1, states that "the judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court," the legislation calls for five associate justices and 1 Chief Justice, as well as instituting 13 judicial districts across the country. Whereas today the justices of the Supreme Court sit in Washington to hear cases, the early justices had

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