

THE OLD SENATE CHAMBER

In this room sat the Senate of Maryland from 1779 until it moved to the present Senate Chamber in 1904.

Here met, from November 26, to June 3, 1784, "the United States in Congress assembled". During this period, on December 23, 1783, Washington appeared before the Congress to resign his commission as "General and Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United Colonies"; and three weeks later, on January 14, 1784 Congress here ratified the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain.

Here, on April 28, 1788, the Maryland Convention ratified the Constitution of the United States.

In this room, on December 17, 1824, Lafayette was enthusiastically welcomed on his return to the United States. The Mayor of Annapolis addressed him as follows; "General! You have lately seen the place where the sword of the Revolutionary War was drawn. You now stand in that very chamber, and on that very spot, where the father of his country returned it to the scabbard."

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The gallery and the other woodwork of this room, completed by 1779, were removed in 1876 when extensive structural repairs were made. In spite of protests against this dismantling of the Old Senate Chamber, there was no successful attempt at restoration until 1906. The room was then restored but remained unfurnished and somewhat incomplete until December 1940.

The present furnishing is based on the earliest authentic pieces that could be found, namely on surviving examples of the chairs and desks ordered by the Senate in December 1796, for which John Shaw, the Annapolis cabinet-maker, was paid £ 217 18s 6d in November 1797.

On the platform stand once again the original chair and desk of the President; the desk, although considerably restored, still retains the label of John Shaw dated 1797. The chairs and desks of the Senators are reproductions or originals now in the possession of descendants of persons who obtained them when the Chamber was refurnished about 1838. The Windsor chairs under the gallery were copied from one formerly in the State House and now in the rooms of the Maryland Historical Society.

The fabric used in the present restoration for the curtains, cushions and chair coverings was especially woven for this purpose, reproducing an 18th century piece of red moreen. The selection of this material is based on an early 19th century estimate for "new covering with crimson moreen and brass nails;" the first reference, as yet found, to upholstery in the State House.

The painting by Charles Wilson Peale, over the fireplace, represents Gen. Washington attended by his aide-de-camp, Gen. Lafayette and Col. Tilghman. Over the doors are portraits of William Smallwood, Governor 1785-1788, and of John Hoskins Stone, Governor 1794-1797, when the original furniture was ordered.