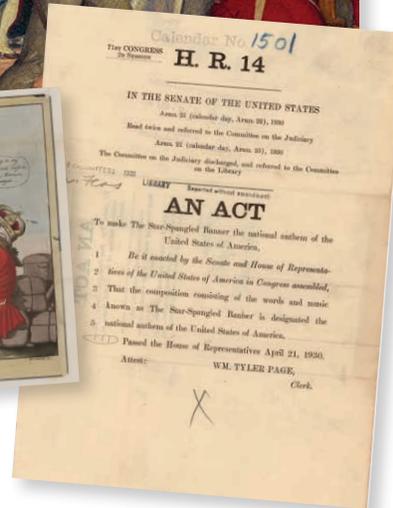


CONGRESS AND THE WAR OF 1812

Historic Treasures in Exhibition Hall



Instrumental to our identity and future national development, the War of 1812 both shaped and was shaped by Congress. International in scope and economic in nature, the war would not only inspire a national anthem, but would define Congress's mission for the era to come and fundamentally change the nation's political parties.

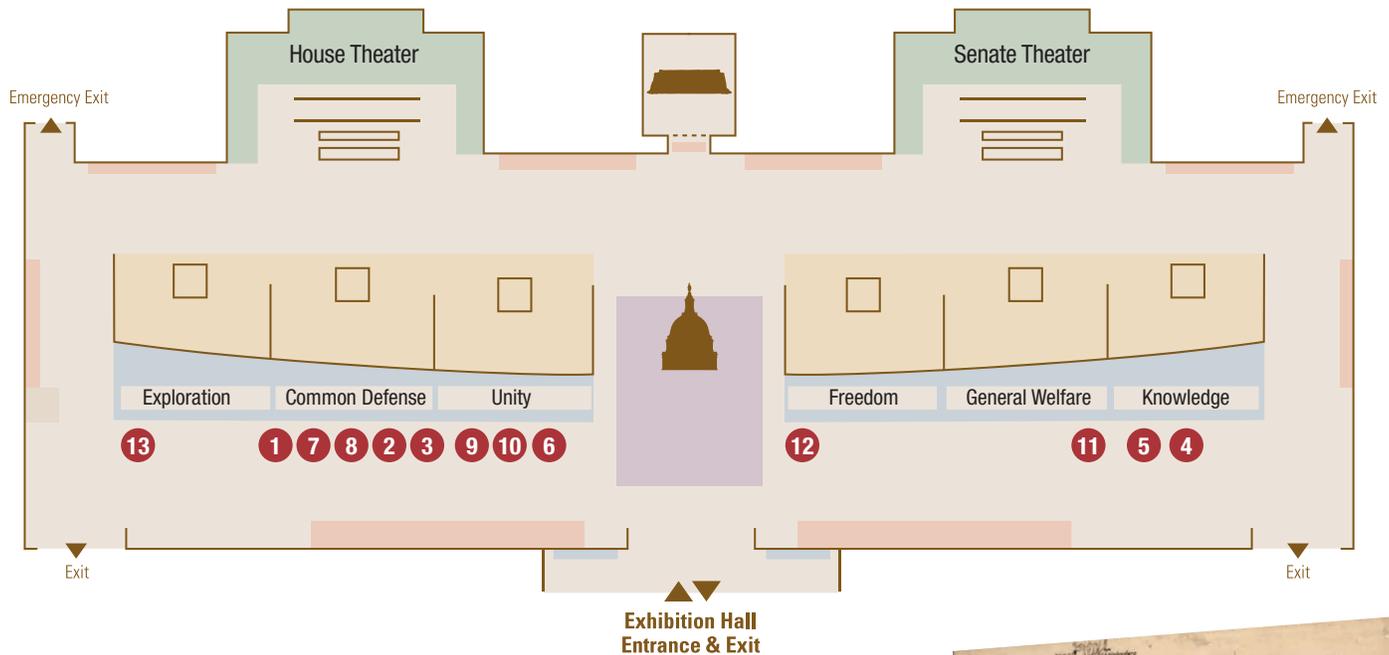


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CONGRESS AND THE WAR OF 1812

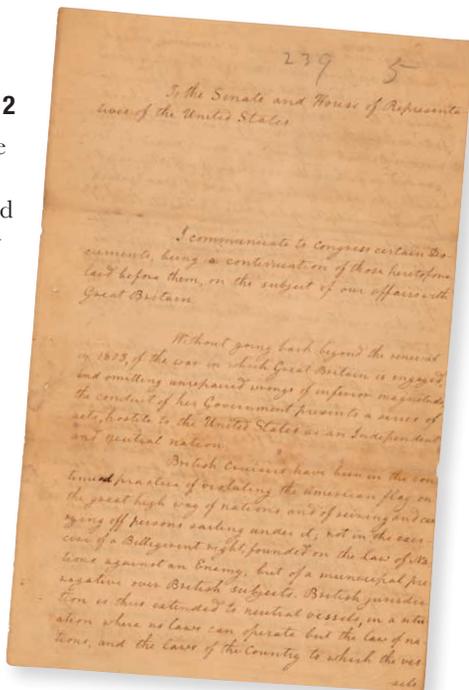
Historic Treasures in Exhibition Hall

Currently on display



1 President James Madison's war message, June 1, 1812

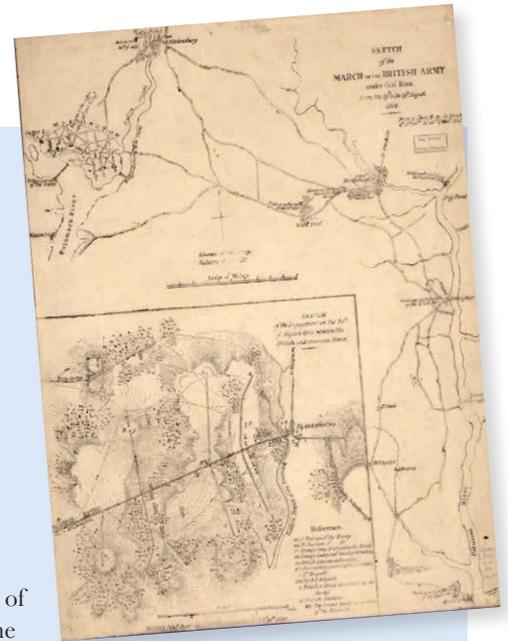
Conflicts between the United States and Great Britain endured after the 1783 Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolutionary War. In this message to Congress, President James Madison detailed British offenses against the United States. Congress responded by using its constitutional power to declare war for the first time, leading the country into a second war with Great Britain.



Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives and Records Administration

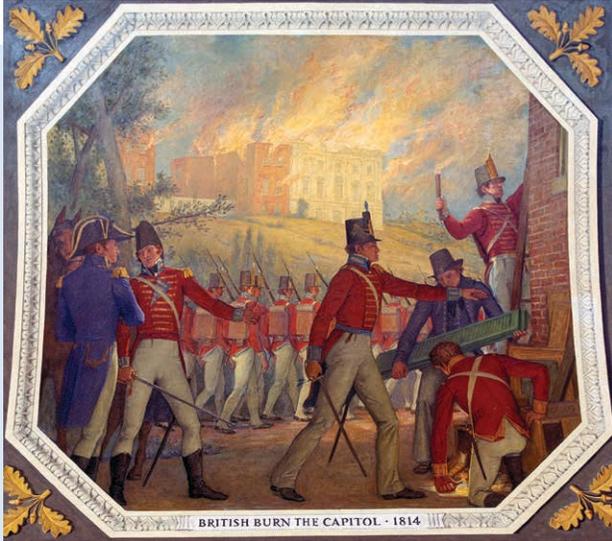
THE BRITISH BURN WASHINGTON

On August 24, 1814, British forces entered Washington, D.C., attacked the Navy Yard, and burned the major federal buildings. The fire destroyed the chambers of the Senate and House of Representatives, the Library of Congress, and the Supreme Court. To determine how the British were able to capture the city, Congress initiated an investigation. The resulting report, however, was inconclusive.



2 Sketch of the March of the British Army under Gen'l. Ross from the 19th to the 29th August 1814, map by D. Evans, 1814

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress



3 *British Burn the Capitol, 1814*, oil on canvas by Allyn Cox, 1973–1974
Architect of the Capitol

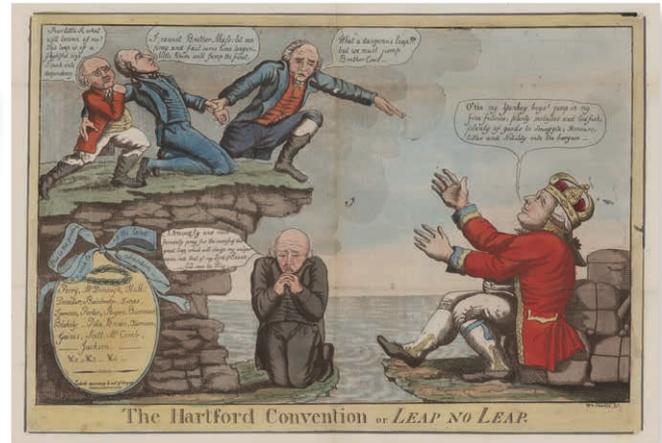
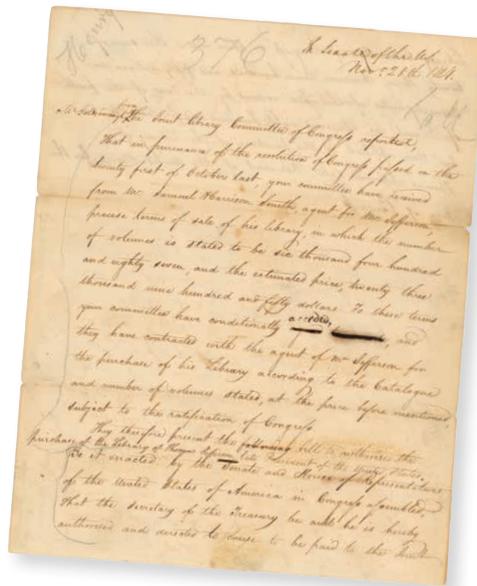
4 *The U.S. Capitol after Burning by the British*, ink and watercolor on paper by George Munger, ca. 1814
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress



5 *Report from the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress regarding the purchase of Thomas Jefferson's library, November 28, 1814*

When British troops burned the U.S. Capitol in August 1814, they destroyed the Library of Congress, which was housed in the building. To help replace the damaged and lost books, former President Thomas Jefferson offered to sell Congress his personal library. After debating the offer, Congress purchased Jefferson's library in 1815.

Records of the Joint Committees of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration



6 *The Hartford Convention or Leap No Leap*, etching by William Charles, ca. 1814

New England's Federalist Party opposed the War of 1812 because of its disastrous impact on the region's economy. Meeting in Hartford, Connecticut, in December 1814, party delegates secretly debated—and rejected—secession; instead, they drafted constitutional amendments strengthening state controls over commerce and militias.

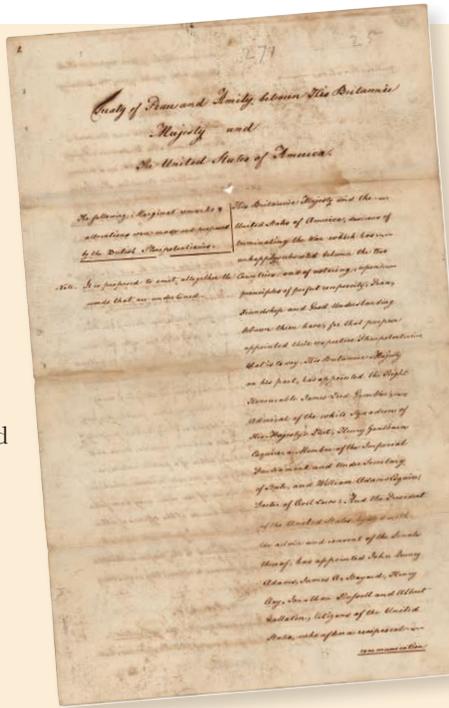
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

THE TREATY OF GHENT

Delegates from Great Britain and the United States signed a treaty to end the War of 1812 on December 24, 1814, in Ghent, Belgium. Though it didn't address all the causes of the conflict, the Treaty of Ghent initiated a lasting peace between the United States and Great Britain.

7 Project of a Treaty of Peace (Treaty of Ghent), November 10, 1814

Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives and Records Administration



8 The Signing of the Treaty of Ghent, Christmas Eve, 1814, oil on canvas by Sir Amédée Forestier, 1914

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the Sulgrave Institution of the U.S. and Great Britain



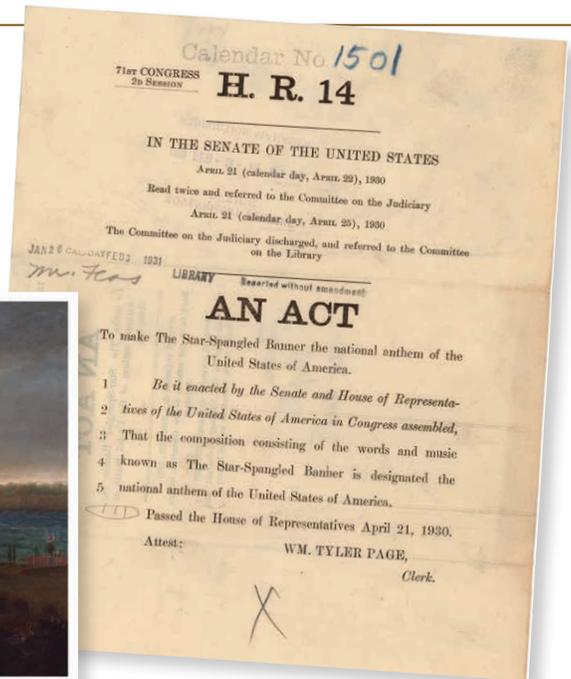
THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

"The Star-Spangled Banner," is a song based on a poem by Francis Scott Key. He was inspired by the sight of the American flag during the British attack on Fort McHenry in the War of 1812. The patriotic song became popular during the nineteenth century, and Congress officially designated it as the national anthem in 1931.



9 Bombardment of Fort McHenry, oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, ca. 1828-1830

Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society, Acquisition No. 1901.2.3



10 H.R. 14, An Act to make The Star-Spangled Banner the national anthem of the United States of America, April 21, 1930

Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives and Records Administration

Legislative Highlights



11 *A Monthly Check to You for the Rest of Your Life... Beginning When You Are 65*, U.S. Social Security Board poster, lithograph print, 1935

Congress passed the Social Security Act to provide for the elderly, the unemployed, dependent children, and the disabled through taxes on workers and employers. The legislation, created during the Great Depression, addressed the concerns of popular grassroots movements that advocated for federal old-age pensions and relief for those without jobs.

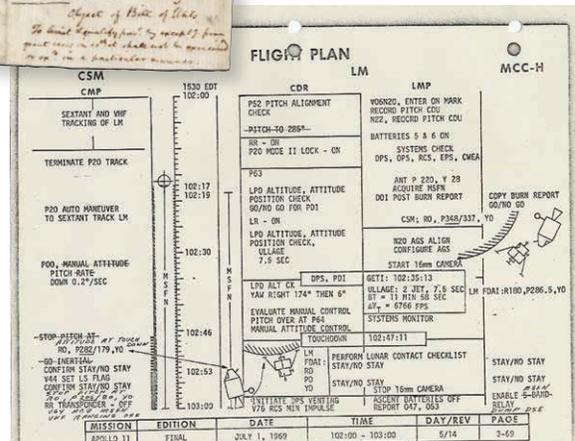
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress



12 James Madison's notes for his speech introducing the Bill of Rights, June 8, 1789

Initially skeptical of the need for a bill of rights, Representative James Madison of Virginia became its leading proponent. His notes outlined objections to the proposed amendments and arguments for their adoption. Madison believed guaranteeing individual rights would guard against potential abuse of federal power and unify the nation in support of the new Constitution.

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress



13 Apollo 11 flight plan, July 16–24, 1969

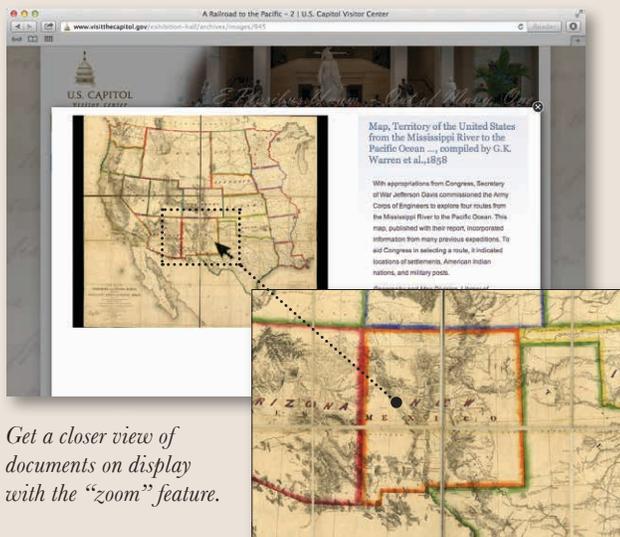
To reach the moon, Congress funded a series of space missions called the Apollo Program. The crew of Apollo 11—Michael Collins, Neil Armstrong, and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin Jr.—followed this minute-by-minute timetable to make the first manned moon landing on July 20, 1969.

Records of National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Archives and Records Administration



Exhibition Hall Online

Explore the Capitol Visitor Center's online exhibition. Find out more about the fascinating artifacts and documents in Exhibition Hall that tell the story of the history of Congress and the building of the Capitol at www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibit.



Get a closer view of documents on display with the "zoom" feature.



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

A More Perfect Union

"Congress and the War of 1812" is the theme of the documents currently on display in the exhibit **A More Perfect Union**.

This section of Exhibition Hall illustrates the role of Congress in defining and helping to realize national goals and aspirations. Treasured documents from the National Archives and the Library of Congress trace the journey toward "a more perfect union" through the actions of Congress.



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

Documents are arranged in six thematic sections—**Exploration, Common Defense, Unity, Freedom, General Welfare and Knowledge**.



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

LOCATION & HOURS

The Capitol Visitor Center, the public entrance to the U.S. Capitol, is located below the East Plaza of the Capitol between Constitution and Independence Avenues.

Hours: The Capitol Visitor Center is open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. It is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Inauguration Day.

Official Business: Visitors with official business appointments may enter the Capitol Visitor Center as early as 7:15 a.m.

Accessibility: Listening devices with audio description of the U.S. Capitol tour orientation film and Exhibition Hall are available at the Information Desks. Visitors may request wheelchairs at the North Coat Check located on the Upper Level or from Capitol Visitor Center staff. All restrooms are accessible.

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On the Cover: (clockwise) British Burn the Capitol, 1814 (detail), oil on canvas by Allyn Cox, 1973–1974; H.R. 14, An Act to make The Star-Spangled Banner the national anthem of the United States of America, April 21, 1930; and The Hartford Convention or Leap No Leap, etching by William Charles, ca. 1814



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