

ACCOUNT OF THE GRAND FEDERAL PROCESSION
Performed at Philadelphia on Friday the July 4th 1788
By Frances Hopkinson



On Friday the 4th of July 1788, the citizens of Philadelphia celebrated the declaration of *Independence* made by the Thirteen United States of America on the 4th of July 1776, and the establishment of the *constitution*, or frame of government proposed by the late general convention of the states, and now solemnly adopted and ratified by ten of those states.

The rising sun was saluted with a full peal from Christ church steeple, and a discharge of cannon from the ship, *Rising Sun*,...superbly decorated with the flags of nations in alliance with America.

Ten vessels ... were dressed and arranged the whole length of the harbor; each bearing a broad white flag at the mast-head, inscribed with the names of [each state and date of ratification] in broad gold letters ...

About half after nine o'clock, the grand procession began to move; ...

1. Twelve axe-men, dressed in white frocks, with black girdles round their waists...
2. The first city troop of light dragoons....
3. *Independence* – John Nixon, Esq. on horseback bearing the staff and cap of liberty...

[Ed. Note: paragraphs numbered 4-23 have been deleted for brevity; they describe other people and groups representing military, political and diplomatic events of the Revolutionary war through the drafting and ratification of the *Constitution*]

24. The NEW ROOF, or GRAND FEDERAL EDIFICE; on a carriage drawn by ten white horses. This building was in the form of a dome supported by 13 Corinthian columns, raised on pedestals proper to that order; the freize decorated with 13 stars. Ten of the columns complete, but three left unfinished.... On the top of the dome was a handsome cupola surmounted by a figure of plenty bearing a cornucopia...

This elegant building was begun and finished in the short space of four days, by Messrs. William Williams and Co. The grand edifice was followed by architects and house carpenters, in number 450, carrying insignia of the trade... [followed by] saw-makers and file-cutters...

29. The manufacturing society, [on a carriage 30 feet in length and 18 feet wide and 13 feet high] ...was placed the carding machine worked by two persons and carding cotton at the rate of fifty pounds weight per day; next a spinning machine of eighty spindles worked by a woman ...

32. The Federal Ship *Union*... followed by pilots, boat builders, sail makers, ship carpenters, ship joiners, rope makers and ship chandlers, merchants and traders...

33. Cordwainers. A carriage drawn by four horses representing a cordwainers shop, in which were six men actually at work; the shop hung round with shoes, boots, &c. ... 300 cordwainers followed six-abreast, each wearing a white leather apron...

35. Cabinet and Chair-Makers. Mr. Jonathan Gostelow, carrying the scale and dividers; Mr. Jedidiah Snowden with the rules of architecture; four of the oldest masters; Mr. James Lee, attended by three masters bearing the standard, or cabinet maker's arms, elegantly painted and gilt, on a blue field, ornamented with thirteen stars; ten radiant and three unfinished; below the arms, two hands united -- Motto -- "*By unity we support society*" ... The workshop 17 feet long... on a carriage drawn by four horses... The shop followed by journeymen and apprentices six-abreast.... 100 [men] in train.

36. Brickmakers. Carrying a large flag of green silk, on which was represented a brickyard, hands at work, a kiln burning... Ten master brickmakers ... followed by one hundred workmen in frocks and trousers, with tools &c.
[Ed. Note: paragraphs 37-40 describe House, Ship and Sign Painters; Porters; Clock and Watch Makers; Fringe and Ribband Weavers]

41. Bricklayers. Headed by Messrs. Nicholas Hicks, William Johnson, and Jacob Grass, with their aprons and trowels; a flag with the following device; the federal city rising in a forest, workmen building it, and the sun illuminating it -- Motto -- "*Both buildings and rulers are the works of our hands.*" ... ten master bricklayers, wearing aprons, and carrying trowels, plum-rules, &c. followed by 55 of the trade.
[Ed. Note: paragraphs 42-47 describe Taylors; Instrument Makers, Turners, Windsor-Chair Makers and Spinning-Wheel-Makers; Carvers and Gilders; Coopers; Plane Makers; Whip and Cane Makers]

48. Blacksmiths; White Smiths and Nailors. A machine drawn by nine horses representing a Smith's manufactory. The Smiths arms highly ornamented -- Motto -- "*By hammer in hand, all arts do stand.*" ... Mr. Mingler and assistant completed a set of plough-irons out of old swords, worked a sword into a sickle, turned several horseshoes ... Messrs. Andrew Feffinger and Benjamin Brummel forged, finished and sold a number of spikes, nails and broad tacks.

[Ed. Note: paragraphs 49-76 describe Coachmakers; Potters; Hatters; Wheelwrights; Tin-Plate Workers; Skinners, Breech-Makers and Glovers; Tallow Chandlers; Victuallers; Printers, Book-Binders and Stationers; Saddlers; Stone-Cutters; Bread and Biscuit-Bakers; Gun Smiths; Copper Smiths; Gold-Smiths, Silver-Smiths and Jewellers; Distillers; Tobacconists; Brass Founders; Stocking Manufacturers; Tanners and Curriers; Upholsterers; Sugar Refiners; Brewers; Peruke-Makers and Barber Surgeons; Engravers; Plasterers; Brush-Makers; Stay-Makers. Paragraphs 77-87 describe corps of light infantry; city and state officials - including city clerk and treasurer, Pennsylvania legislators, justices, sheriff; musicians band of watchmen; members of the College of Physicians; and university students]

88. This grand procession began to move... about half past nine... and the front arrived at Union Green, in front of Bush Hill, about half past twelve. The length of the line was about one mile and one half, the distanced marched, about three miles...

It should not be omitted in this account, that the several trades furnished the devices, mottos, machines, and decorations themselves, and at the expence of their respective companies. And that nearly the whole of the work exhibited on that day, was completed between Monday morning and the Thursday evening following. ...

It is impossible to be precise in numbers on such an occasion; but averaging several opinions there were about 5,000 in the line of procession, and about 17,000 on Union Green.

Text excerpted by Nikki Mandell, Professor of History-emerita, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

From: Francis Hopkinson, "*An Account of the Grand Federal Procession: Performed a Philadelphia on Friday the 4th of July 1788,*" in *The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings of Francis Hopkinson, Esq* Printed by T. Dobson, 1792

<https://archive.org/stream/AnAccountOfTheGrandFederalProcession.PerformedAtPhiladelphiaOnFriday/4th-of-July-1788#page/n0/mode/2up> [Accessed 1/22/2016]



GUIDE TO TEACHING LABOR'S STORY

Incorporate the experiences of working men, women and children into your existing curriculum with professionally selected & resourced documents

DOCUMENT 3.1

Historical Era

**REVOLUTION &
THE NEW NATION
(1754-1820s)**

Document Title:

ACCOUNT OF THE GRAND FEDERAL PROCESSION

Document Type: **Published Description of a Parade**

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

This document is an excerpt from a longer pamphlet describing the "Grand Federal Procession" of 1788, which celebrated the very recent ratification of the U.S. *Constitution*.

Document Selection and Teaching Guide by:

Nikki Mandell, Professor of History-emerita, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

SOURCING THE SOURCE

The author, Francis Hopkinson, was a fervent and active patriot. He was a delegate to and signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and signer of the new *United States Constitution*. He was the Procession's main organizer.

Hopkinson wrote this descriptive account four days after the parade.

Intended Audience: According to the author's preamble to his parade description, he wrote this account both for publication and to be sure that a full and accurate account was preserved for posterity.

UNDERSTANDING THE SOURCE

Historical Context:

Discontent with the Articles of Confederation led the Congress to authorize a constitutional convention to draft revisions to the *Articles of Confederation*. The Constitutional Convention met in secret sessions through the summer of 1787 in Carpenters Hall. Convention delegates representing twelve of the thirteen states drew up a new framework for government, the *Constitution of the United States* (signed by Convention delegates on September 17, 1787). In order for the new government defined by the *Constitution* to be established, nine of the states would have to ratify (vote approval of) the *Constitution*. Discussion, and often heated debate over the merits and disadvantages of the Constitution raged throughout each state. On June 21, 1788 the ninth state, New Hampshire, ratified the Constitution, thus formally creating the new United States.

Hopkinson and others began planning the Grand Federal Procession in late June 1787, when only eight states had ratified and it was not clear if or when other states might ratify. Thus, the Procession can be thought of as a public relations strategy by the pro-*Constitution* Federalists to promote ratification in wavering states. The Procession might also be thought of as a purposeful strategy to legitimize the controversial *Constitution* by linking it to the widely popular achievement of Independence. By choosing July 4 as the parade date the organizers were making a not-so-subtle connection between the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*; they were asserting that the Constitution was the legitimate government framework for realizing the goals of independence (ignoring what many considered to be a kind of coup or counter-revolution against the existing Confederation of states established by the *Articles of Confederation*).

Crafts- and trades-men and women played a central role in debates leading up to and in the fight for independence, in debates over the new form of government, and even in the 1787 drafting of the *Constitution*. They were among the most dedicated supporters of boycotts against British goods (non-importation), led public protests against increasingly restrictive British laws and demanded that local elites allow more equal political participation in colonial governments (adding the issue of “who will rule at home” to colonial elites’ concerns about “home rule”). When war came, they not only fought in, but also manufactured and transported the materiel needed to fight the war for independence. In 1787 Philadelphia’s carpenters provided the building, Carpenters’ Hall, in which delegates drafted and signed the new *Constitution*. Thus, crafts- and trades-men and women rightfully understood that they were as central to the creation the new nation as any other group of former colonials.

□ **Meaning and Significance of the Document**

The pamphlet’s description of the Procession, written by the event’s main organizer a few days later, reveals that the city’s organized crafts- and trades-men comprised the overwhelming majority of the Procession’s participants, and that they proudly and prominently asserted their centrality to the new nation through their artisanal status and skills. Crafts- and trades-men comprised over half of the 80 groups named in the procession, and given the sizes of their delegations they made up an overwhelming majority of the marchers celebrating independence and the new constitution.

In addition to their sheer numbers, a close reading of the *Account of the Grand Federal Procession* provides important insight into how the crafts- and trades-men of Philadelphia defined their contributions to and place in the new nation. Some points of note:

- Floats: Each craft or trade showcased both its product and its skills (actually making its product on massive horse-drawn floats/mini-manufactories as the parade proceeded down the city streets); Eg: paragraphs 29 & 48.
- Mottos: Each group also carried a banner with the symbols of its craft or trade, and a motto. Many mottos directly connected the craft to the new nation. Eg: the Bricklayers: “*Both buildings and rulers are the works of our hands*”; the Printers, Bookbinders and Stationers: “*We protect, and are supported by liberty*”; the House, Ship and Sign Painters: “*Virtue alone is true nobility*” (which should be understood as a validation of the new *Constitution*’s rejection of caste, particularly evident in the provision that there could be no titles of nobility in the United States).

Speaking on the occasion of the bicentennial of the Procession, the Librarian of the Library Company of Philadelphia, John C. Van Horne, drew attention to the importance of workingmen’s participation in the Procession and in the fabric of the new government. The ideas expressed by Van Horne reflect what historian Sean Wilentz refers to as “artisan republicanism.”

Most obviously, the presence of so many artisans and tradesmen among the various dignitaries testifies vividly to the democratic spirit of the Revolution and the republican system instituted by the Constitution. The great physician Dr. Benjamin Rush described this well in a letter written immediately after the Procession. "It was very remarkable, that every countenance wore an air of dignity as well as pleasure. Every tradesman's boy in the procession seemed to consider himself as a principal in the business. Rank for a while forgot all its claims, and Agriculture, Commerce and Manufactures, together with the learned and mechanical professions, seemed to acknowledge, by their harmony and respect for each other, that they were all necessary to each other, and all useful in cultivated society. These circumstances distinguished this Procession from the processions in Europe, which are commonly instituted in honor of single persons. The military alone partake of the splendor of such exhibitions. Farmers and Tradesmen are either deemed unworthy of such connections, or are introduced like horses or buildings, only to add to the strength or length of the procession. Such is the difference between the effects of a republican and monarchical government upon the minds of men!"

[source: “Talk Delivered to the Quarterly Meeting of The Carpenters’ Company, July 20, 1987” by John C. Van Horne. <http://www.ushistory.org/carpentershall/history/procession.htm> Accessed 1/22/2016]

It must also be noted, that this Procession represented one segment of public opinion – those in support of ratifying the *Constitution* (federalists). Those who did not support ratification (anti-federalists) would not have joined the

Procession. And, given the hierarchy of the organized crafts and trades, it is possible that less-than-enthusiastic apprentices and journeymen may have found it politically wise to heed their master's invitation to join the Procession.

The Philadelphia Procession was the grandest of all, but many other cities hosted parades in honor of their own state's ratification and later the final ratification of the Constitution. In 1832 a Philadelphia newspaper, the *National Gazette*, reprinted a portion of the *Account of the Grand Federal Procession* on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of George Washington's birthday. The paper choose to excerpt the descriptions of the craft and trade delegations

GLOSSARY

Apprentice: beginners or learners of a specific craft or trade, legally bound to serve a master craftsman. Those who passed their apprenticeship would become journeymen. At this time, apprenticeships typically lasted four to seven years, during which time apprentices were paid in the form of room and board in the masters' workshop or lodgings (not wages).

Craftsmen and Tradesmen: those who earn their livelihood directly through production of commodities (craftsmen) or through transporting, buying or selling of commodities (tradesmen).

Esq.: esquire. At the time, this was an honorific, indicating the status of a gentleman, particularly an educated professional man (eg. a lawyer, judge, physician, wealthy merchant).

Guild: association of workmen skilled in the same craft or trade. American guilds in the late 18th century were descendants of the medieval guilds. At the time of this procession, the republican spirit and commercial opportunities were breaking down the ability of guilds to monopolize entry into their crafts and to dictate the contractual relations of apprentices, journeymen and masters.

Journeyman: a laborer who had completed his apprenticeship, practicing his craft under the supervision of a master as he further developed his skills and saved money to open his own shop as a master. Journeymen received cash wages for their work. At this time, many journeymen also traveled, plying their craft in various places to improve their skills and experience.

Master: independent artisan, also known at the time as "mechanics." Masters were not only highly skilled at their craft or trade, but also teachers to the apprentices and journeymen in their employ, and businessmen engaged in buying and selling raw materials and finished goods.

Messrs.: plural form of Mister or Mr. At the time, this was an honorific, indicating that the man was independent (not a slave or servant) and was respected in the community.

Procession: parade. It was very common in 18th and 19th century parades for crafts and trades to march in their artisanal groups dressed in the regalia of their craft with banners, as described in this document.

Standard: flag. A standard is a particular type of flag, decorated with emblems, colors, and/or words that symbolize and identify a specific group, such as the crafts and trades in this document.

QUESTIONS -- DISCUSSION POINTS

Document-Specific

- What specific words or phrases in the first three paragraphs are evidence that the planners supported or opposed ratification of the *Constitution*?
- Paragraph 24 describes a building (the "grand federal edifice") constructed for one of the parade floats by architects, carpenters and other artisans in the building trades. What specific features of the "grand federal edifice" had political symbolism? (identify as many as you can) And, what was the political symbolism of each feature?
- Select two other groups of trades or craftsmen (paragraphs 25-76). Identify and describe at least three specific features of each group's appearance (for example: clothing, items on display, banners, activities or work done as they marched, group size). Use this evidence to infer – What message did each of these groups want to convey about their (a) craft or trade? (b) values or beliefs? (c) role in the community? (d) connection to the new nation?

- First, describe how the Procession was organized – What kinds of groups participated? In what order did these groups march? Then, look for a pattern or broader categories that procession organizers might have used to decide where to place each group in the parade. Finally, use this evidence to infer – What message did the Procession organizers want to convey to those who participated in the parade? To those who watched the parade?

Historical Era

- Why would an event promoting ratification of the *Constitution* have been planned for the fourth of July? and, planned at a time when only eight of the required nine states had ratified the *Constitution*?
- Why would working people want to parade in support of the proposed *Constitution* which, if ratified, would replace the *Articles of Confederation* as a new form of government?
- In what ways does the central role of craftsmen and tradesmen in this parade either match and/or add new information to your textbook's (or other sources') explanation about who founded the United States?

Labor and Working-Class History

- In what ways did working people (craftsmen, tradesmen, forced labor) participate in and affect the founding of the United States?
- How have working people used the ideas and language of the Revolution and Independence to assert or defend their status, privileges or rights?

CITATION & FAIR USE

Text excerpted from: Francis Hopkinson, "An Account of the Grand Federal Procession: Performed a Philadelphia on Friday the 4th of July 1788," in *The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings of Francis Hopkinson, Esq* Printed by T. Dobson, 1792.

<https://archive.org/stream/AnAccountOfTheGrandFederalProcession.PerformedAtPhiladelphiaOnFriday/4th-of-July-1788#page/n0/mode/2up> [Accessed 1/22/2016; This is an open access archive; no copyright restrictions.]

Image copied from University of Pennsylvania Library blog, July 3, 2013

<https://uniqueatpenn.wordpress.com/2013/07/03/july-4-1788-come-for-the-beer-stay-for-the-bibliography/> [Accessed 1/22/2016]

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Carpenter's Hall History Resources: <http://www.ushistory.org/carpentershall/history/index.htm>

Colonial Era Trades at "Colonial Williamsburg Trades": <http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/trades/tradehdr.cfm>

Fourth of July Celebrations Database: <http://gurukul.american.edu/heintze/fourth.htm>

Glossary of American History: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/references/glossaries/glossary_af.cfm

Hopkinson, Francis. *An Account of the Grand Federal Procession: Performed a Philadelphia on Friday the 4th of July 1788*

Full version

<https://archive.org/stream/AnAccountOfTheGrandFederalProcession.PerformedAtPhiladelphiaOnFriday/4th-of-July-1788#page/n0/mode/2up> [Accessed 1/22/2016]

Excerpt reprinted in: *National Gazette and Literary Register*, Philadelphia, PA, 2/28/1832: pg 4. [Accessed: America's Historical Newspapers database, January 22, 2016]

Murray, R. Emmett. *The Lexicon of Labor: More than 500 Key Terms, Biographical Sketches, and Historical Insights Concerning Labor in America*. New York: New Press, 1998.

Waldstreicher, David. *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

CURRICULAR & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONNECTIONS

Curricular Connections:

NCCHS US Era 3 [Standard 1](#): The causes of the American Revolution, **the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement**, and the reasons for the American victory.

This document provides a window for examining the ideas and values that craftsmen and tradesmen connected to independence and the proposed Constitution, particularly through the ways they proudly displayed their skills, products, and their guild mottos.

NCCHS US Era 3 [Standard 2](#): The **impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society**.

This document provides insight into the ways in which people of different economic groups participated in the political debates about the kind of government they wanted once independence was won.

Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1](#) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2](#) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4](#) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5](#) Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8](#) Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9](#) Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.