

The Importance of Setting

At the close of the 18th century, Philadelphia was the bustling capital of the United States, with George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in residence. Murphy has carefully researched this historical event and infuses his nonfiction account with rich details of time and place.

In 1681, King Charles II of England gave William Penn the title to Pennsylvania. Penn arrived at the site to establish the city of Philadelphia the following year. He planned a rectangular grid pattern on 1,200 acres between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. At this time, the plan consisted of a 22- by 8-block grid pattern, a building and housing layout, and potential for the city to grow. His plan also provided an innovative urban planning design of four public squares (now parks) and a town square (now City Hall). Penn's plan would influence the future growth of Philadelphia and help establish the urban planning pattern for most later cities in America.

During the next few years, Philadelphia flourished, swelling to 7,000 residents in the early 1700s. A trading and manufacturing center, Philadelphia became a key port and major city before the American Revolution.

By 1774, Philadelphia had become the military, economic, and political center of the colonies. The First Continental Congress convened at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia in 1774. The Second Continental Congress met at Philadelphia the following year. Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia. The city served as the seat of national government from 1776 to 1800 (except for a brief period in 1789 and 1790) until Washington, D.C., became the capital in 1800.

Carpenters' and Independence Halls

Map of Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia, PA used courtesy of the National Park Service. It can be found at: www.nps.gov/carto.



Dr. Jesse Lazear builds on Finlay's work. When Lazear dies from the disease -- having been bitten by an infected mosquito-- his boss, Dr. Walter Reed, is convinced that the mosquito is indeed the vector. The actual source of the virus -- tree-dwelling monkeys in African and American rain forests--is not identified until 1929.

Using this knowledge, workers eliminate mosquitoes during the building of the Panama Canal, saving countless lives. Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* points out the dangers of using DDT and other insecticides. Now we have "super bugs" that are resistant to our pesticides. This opens the way for even worse plagues of insect-carried illnesses. A vaccine for yellow fever is not developed until 1937. There still is no cure for yellow fever.

Timeline of Philadelphia History

Oct. 25, 1701	William Penn grants a charter to the city of Philadelphia.	1775	The Second Continental Congress convened at Carpenters' Hall. Benjamin Franklin elected the first Postmaster General of the United Colonies.
1718	Adam Ramage makes the first American-made printing press.	July 4, 1776	The Declaration of Independence adopted.
Dec. 22, 1719	The <i>American Weekly Mercury</i> , a newspaper, begins publication in Philadelphia.	July 8, 1776	The Declaration of Independence read to the people.
Oct. 1723	Benjamin Franklin arrives in Philadelphia, where he works as a printer.	Sept. 26, 1777	The British enter Philadelphia.
July 1, 1731	Philadelphia Library founded.	Oct. 15, 1777	Battle of Germantown.
Sept. 22, 1734	The first English immigrants to Philadelphia arrive on the ship <i>St. Andrew</i> .	Oct. 22, 1777	Battle of Red Bank.
1744	The Philadelphia Contributionship, the first fire insurance company in America, is founded in Philadelphia.	June 18, 1778	The British evacuate Philadelphia.
April 15, 1745	The first theatrical performance is given in Philadelphia.	1782	First Hebrew Synagogue built in Philadelphia.
Sept. 5, 1773	Provincial Congress meets at Carpenters' Hall.	Jan. 14, 1784	Congress ratifies the peace treaty with England.
1774	The First Continental Congress convened at Carpenters' Hall.	March 11, 1789	The Legislature incorporates the city of Philadelphia.
		April 17, 1790	Benjamin Franklin dies.
		April 2, 1792	United States Mint established in Philadelphia.
		1793	First Universalist Church built in Philadelphia.
		April 18, 1794	District of Southwark incorporated.
		1795	The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike, the first turnpike in the U.S., opens.
		1797	Yellow Fever plague in Philadelphia. 1,292 people die.
		1798	Yellow Fever plague continues to rage in Philadelphia. 3,637 dead.
		Dec. 26, 1799	National funeral procession for George Washington, who had died at Mount Vernon on December 14.