

ington. But this was not actually the case. Two years after Yorktown, a mighty British force, under General Sir Guy Carleton, still occupied New York. For two years, the American states were living under the terms of an armistice. There had been no legal peace treaty signed. Washington had expressed fear that hostilities might commence all over again and, to quote the General, "prolong the calamities of it." In September, 1783, the British signed the Treaty of Paris, but it was not effective until ratified by the Continental Congress. Until this was done, the United States of America had no international status as a sovereign, free and independent nation.

At that period, there was no capital city of the United States. Wherever the Continental Congress met, that was the capital. Several cities had this honor, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, Lancaster and Princeton. In those trying times, the Continental Congress had its share of difficulties. Humiliated by mutinous soldiers in Philadelphia, it had moved to Princeton, New Jersey, but was outraged by the inadequate provision for its accommodations and determined that all future sessions would be held only where arrangements befitting the dignity of Congress would be assured.

Maryland invited the Congress to meet here and offered this fine State House, then only four years old, as a permanent capitol. The General Assembly offered to appropriate 30,000 pounds to build a home for each of the delegations of the 13 states. Congress agreed to come to Annapolis, but only on a temporary basis. By November, 1783, Congressmen began arriving in Annapolis. Many grave problems faced that lawmaking body. It was a Congress without funds—without much public confidence—without a quorum. In fact, as the year 1783 drew to a close, only seven of the thirteen states had sent legal delegations to Annapolis. And to transact major business, such as the ratification of a treaty, nine states had to be represented by two members each. All Congress could do was meet, talk and adjourn.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the representatives from Virginia, foresaw grave complications. The Treaty of Paris specified that it had to be ratified and returned to England within six months. The six months would expire in March, 1784. And in those days, the crossing of the ocean would probably require two months. So, there they were at the end of December, and nothing could be done because of the absence of delegates from two states. Jefferson kept urging the need for action. Again and again, he sent letters to the delinquent states. One Congressman, Richard Beresford from South Carolina, lay ill in a hotel in Philadelphia. Jefferson declared that if one more state arrived, making