

States had been at war throughout its entire brief existence. Then, after eight years, it attained peace. This happened in the beautiful Old Senate Chamber, which stands today—I am happy to say—as it was on that tremendous occasion 181 years ago, January 14, 1784.

Here our war for independence—the American Revolution—came to its official end, and our country embarked on the course from which it has never swerved—the course of democracy and peace. The actual event was a simple one. It consisted merely in the ratification by the Continental Congress of the final treaty of peace between our new nation and the old mother country—England. It did not take long. Thomas Jefferson, who was chairman of the ratification committee, read the treaty and the Congress voted to accept. That was all. Perhaps an hour was consumed. But, when that brief formal transaction was over, the United States was a full member of the family of nations. It had ceased to be a group of rebelling colonies. Its national independence was established before the world. So it was in Maryland's Old Senate Chamber that our country became a power. History tells us the rest. The United States has been a power for democracy and peace ever since.

And what today is so important? The desire of the free world is for democracy and peace. Plans for human progress of every kind depend on democracy and peace. And the world well knows what nation, above all others, stands for these principles. Our own country. Looked at in the light of these truths, our beautiful Old Senate Chamber is now passing into a new era in its long history. Today it does not have just the national meaning that we are accustomed to give it. Associated, as it is, with the birth of the greatest democratic and pacific power of the world, it now is coming to symbolize the spirit of our American government. Within its walls was done the first work toward establishing a government that would serve the normal peacetime needs of a free people—and has gone on to serving the normal peacetime needs of all free peoples. Within its walls was drawn up the first American treaty establishing commercial relations with friendly powers. Within its walls, Thomas Jefferson proposed that the vast lands of the American West should not be seized by the wealthy and privileged, but should be kept for the benefit of homesteaders, of the common man. Within its walls also that great Virginia gentleman proposed that, after the year 1800, there should be no extension of slave territory. And it was in the Old Senate Chamber too that Jefferson was appointed our diplomatic representative before the courts of Europe, an appointment that can be said to foreshadow our present State Department. Our