

Creating the Constitution

One American's Story

On May 15, 1787, Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph arrived in Philadelphia. The young nation faced conflict, as Shays's Rebellion had shown. Now delegates from throughout the states were coming to Philadelphia to discuss reforming the government.

Early in the convention Randolph spoke.

PRIMARY SOURCE

“Let us not be afraid to view with a steady eye the [dangers] with which we are surrounded. . . . Are we not on the eve of [a civil] war, which is only to be prevented by the hopes from this convention?”

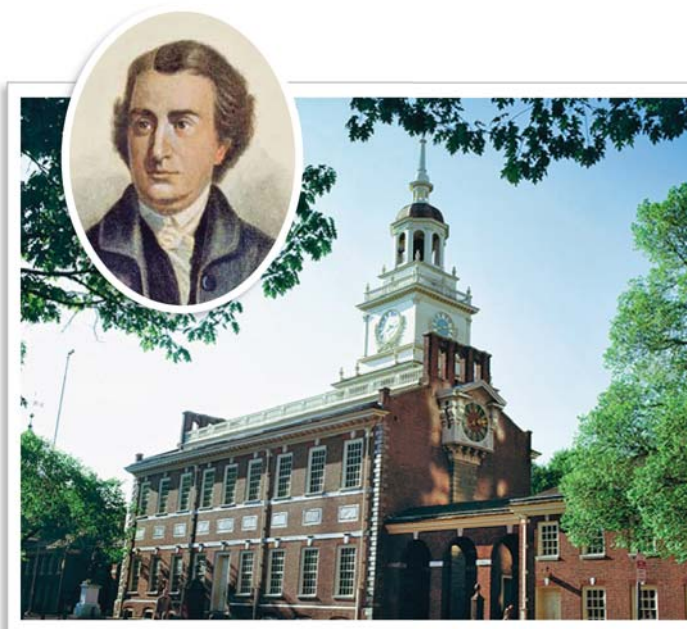
—Edmund Randolph, quoted in *Edmund Randolph: A Biography*

At first, many Americans doubted that the national government needed strengthening. But fear of rebellion and lawlessness had changed people's minds. For over four months, Congress debated how best to keep the United States from falling apart.

The Call for a Constitutional Convention

KEY QUESTION Why was there a call for a Constitutional Convention?

In September 1786, delegates from five states met in Annapolis, Maryland, to discuss ways to promote trade among the states. At the time, most states charged high taxes on goods imported from other states. The Annapolis delegates believed that creating national trade laws would help the economies of all the states. However, making such changes required amending the Articles of Confederation, because the national government had been granted no



The Pennsylvania State House is where (inset) Edmund Randolph attended the Constitutional Convention.