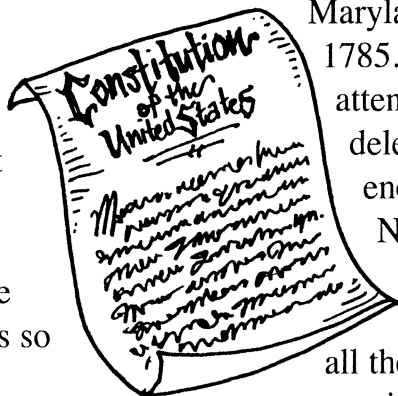


Fulfillment of the Promise Introduction

1 787 was the beginning of an exciting American experiment. It was the year of the drafting and signing of the United States Constitution. On September 17, 1787, thirty-nine men signed their names to this great document. And now, more than two hundred years later, you might be asking yourself, "What's so important about the Constitution?"



There are many good reasons to learn about it. On the whole, we Americans do not know enough about our heritage, form of government, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the laws governing our nation, namely The Constitution of the United States. If adults and children discover more about our wonderful country and how its laws really work, we can then help safeguard the valuable freedoms which our founders, with the blessing of Heaven, have designed and built for us. This is the way we can secure a better and safer future.

Our Founding Fathers believed in us,

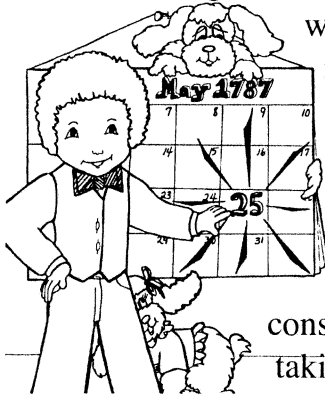
their posterity, and this country, which is evident in their actions. Following the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War, they saw an erosion happening among the states. Because of this, a convention was held at Annapolis, Maryland on September 11-14, 1785. Nine states were invited to attend. Only five of the states' delegates arrived, which was not enough to form a quorum.

Nevertheless, they held private discussions ending with a resolution that was sent to all the states and congress requesting a convention be held, "*... to devise such further Provision as shall appear to them necessary to render the Constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union.*"

Congress was hesitant to agree to any such convention. It was only after more civil unrest and commercial disputes between states that they agreed to endorse the Constitutional Convention.

However, enthusiasm for the convention was slow in coming. It wasn't until they learned George Washington favored the convention that they received full support from 12 of the 13 colonies.

On May 14, 1787, delegates began to arrive in Philadelphia and to exchange ideas and opinions in preparation for the convention. The convention began on May 25, 1787,



which included more exchanging of ideas, much discussion, many debates and considerable vote taking.

It was a hot, humid summer. Some said it was the hottest they had ever remembered. To make it worse, the windows were kept shut to ensure privacy at the convention, enabling open discussions. Fifty-five delegates came individually paying for their own expenses and believing it would be just a few weeks.

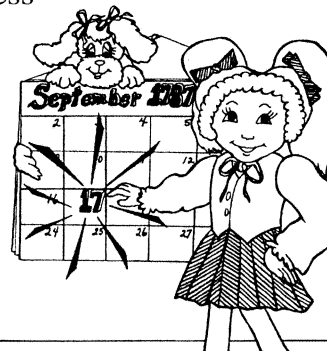
Benjamin Franklin and George Washington had health issues making it physically challenging to attend. Even under difficult circumstances, these patriots and statesmen continued in their quest to design a plan and subsequent laws that could perpetuate continued freedom for generations to come.

George Mason, a delegate to the convention, wrote home to his son and said: *"The revolt from Great*

Britain, and the Formation of New Government at that time, were nothing compared with the great business now before us. There was then a certain degree of Enthusiasm, which inspired and supported the Mind; but to view thro the calm sedate medium of Reason, the Influence which the Establishment now proposed may have upon the Happiness or Misery of Millions yet unborn, is an Object of Understanding."

After the constitution was signed on September 17, 1787, it was then sent to the Congress

meeting in New York; and on the 28th day of September, it was



forwarded to the states for

ratification [approval]. Later that same year on December 7, Delaware became the first state to ratify. Only nine months after the Constitution was signed, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify, thus putting it into effect for the nine states that had ratified it. *In less than one year there was something new under the sun—the United States Constitution.*

All in all, it took five years for the writing and ratification of the

Constitution, the setting up of the government according to the new laws it contained, and creating a Bill of Rights which consisted of our first ten amendments.

One of the most amazing aspects of this story is, though these 39 signers came from different backgrounds, their basic beliefs were much the same. Yes, they had heated arguments about how things were to be done, but rarely argued about their final goal—freedom.

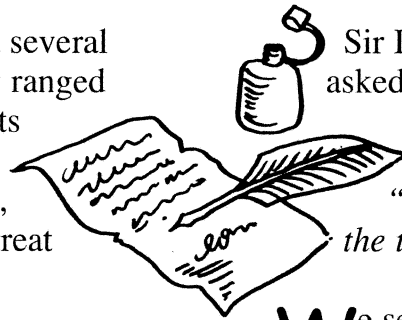
These delegates attended several different churches. They ranged from farmers to presidents of universities. Their money, or lack of money, ranged from poverty to great wealth.

Then how do we explain the remarkable oneness in their basic beliefs? We know most of them seriously read books and understood governmental systems. Their discussions at the Convention reflected a tremendous knowledge of religious, political, historical, economic, and philosophical understanding.

George Washington, in writing about the Constitution said, *"The structure has been erected by architects of consummate skill and fidelity; its foundations are solid; its order and*

its defenses are impregnable from without." But he also gave a warning: *"It may, nevertheless, perish in an hour by the folly, or corruption, or negligence of its only keepers, THE PEOPLE."*

We, at America's Family Foundation, salute the many people involved in the formulation and acceptance of the United States Constitution. We give special thanks and honor to the men who signed their names to this document.



Sir Isaac Newton was once asked how he happened to discover the law of gravity. He responded, *"By thinking about it all of the time."*

We second this statement. We encourage families, communities and schools to learn together about the gifts of freedom given to us through the Constitution. The American Revolution gave us freedom, but the Constitution gave us the means to keep it. The more we learn, sustain, think and abide by the wisdom and provisions of the original intent of the Founding Fathers and the Constitution, the longer our freedoms will last.

