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Charters of Freedom Return to the National Archives Building

Over the years, when visitors came to the National Archives Building in Washington to see the nation's founding documents, they were in awe. Here are the documents, cherished by Americans, upon which the United States of America is built, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

These parchments—known collectively as the Charters of Freedom—have served as the bedrock of democracy for more than two centuries, through civil strife, tragedy, depression, and war.

Now, these documents—which have been off display since July 5, 2001, receiving important conservation treatment and being placed in new encasements—are back home, easier to view and easier to read.



The National Archives Building, Washington, DC

Now, these documents can be seen in a new way—more enriching, more contextual, more meaningful—as part of the new National Archives Experience, a permanent exhibition for which the reopening of the Rotunda, with these Charters of Freedom in place, is the first phase.

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NARA Conservator Separates One Page of the U.S. Constitution from Its 1953 Handmade Paper Backing

President Bush Praises American Democracy, NARA Staff, in Charters of Freedom Unveiling

In a September 16 ceremony attended by leaders of all three branches of government, President George W. Bush declared that "every person in every culture has the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. America owns the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, but the ideals they proclaim belong to all mankind." The occasion for his remarks was the re-installation of our founding documents in the great rotunda of the National Archives building in downtown Washington, DC, after their 2 year removal for restoration and re-encasement. The project was carried out in conjunction with renovation of the building that houses them, including restoration of the enormous murals of the founding fathers that adorn the rotunda. The day also marked the 216th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution.

The President also praised NARA technicians who restored and re-encased the Charters. In a process that involved research, experimentation, and state of the art assistance from the National Institute of Standards and Technology and other leading organizations, NARA conservators opened the 1953 encasements, cleaned and repaired the documents and their texts, and re-housed them. In praising project conservators on a job well done, the President stated that "the work of handling the fragile parchment and preparing it for these new encasements had to be difficult -- and must have been pretty nerve-racking. I don't know how you practice for a job like that. (Laughter.) I do know there's little margin for error."

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Now, when visitors leave the National Archives, they will be able to say they've not only seen the Charters of Freedom, they understand what they mean to the nation and to them as individuals in a democratic society. Now, those visitors will better understand why the Charters of Freedom have been called "America's crown jewels."

The Declaration of Independence Provides Words for the Deed

The Declaration of Independence was drafted by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia during the hot days of June 1776 in Philadelphia while the Second Continental Congress debated a resolution to declare the thirteen colonies free and independent of Great Britain. The resolution was approved July 2, and the delegates immediately began consideration of Jefferson's draft of a declaration.



Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson watched anxiously as the delegates debated, and John Adams of Massachusetts fought valiantly against deleting any of Jefferson's prose. In the end, however, about one-quarter was deleted, including references to slavery, a sensitive issue with some of the delegates. Finally, on July 4, 1776, the Declaration, setting forth the reasons for the break with Britain, was adopted.

After its adoption, the Declaration was engrossed on a single parchment and signed by members of the Continental Congress on August 2, 1776. It then moved with the Congress from city to city. In 1789 it came into the custody of the State Department, and it was evacuated from Washington during the War of 1812.

The text of the Declaration, however, began to fade, and in 1823, the State Department contracted with William J. Stone to engrave a facsimile. It is Stone's engraving, also in the holdings of the Archives, that today shows what the Declaration actually looked like. (See "The Stone Engraving") The Declaration itself, however, was on permanent exhibit for decades, continuing to fade and deteriorate. In 1921 it was transferred to the Library of Congress and remained there until 1952, when it was turned over to the National Archives.

A Second Attempt at a Constitution Sparks Debates over Power, Rights

The Constitution represented the young nation's second attempt at a document that would spell out how the country would be governed. Many of the leaders of the day argued that the original constitution, the Articles of Confederation, did not give enough authority to the central government, so a convention was called in 1787 to write a new Constitution.

The new Constitution, however, did not come easily. Debate ensued over how strong the central government ought to be and how members of each house of the Congress ought to be elected; in the end, the House of Representatives was based on population, and the Senate would have equal representation from all states.

Although it has been amended twenty-seven times, the Constitution, spelling out the powers granted to the federal government and those reserved for the state, remains in effect—216 years after its adoption.

The Constitution was sent to the State Department along with the Declaration, but it was never exhibited until, like the Declaration, it was transferred to the Library of Congress in 1921. There, the Declaration and pages of the Constitution were put on display. In 1952, along with the Declaration, the Constitution was transferred to the Archives.

Specific Rights of Individuals Spelled Out in First Amendments

Although the delegates to the Constitutional Convention approved the Constitution in 1787, many of them were concerned that it failed to state clearly and specifically the rights of individuals. Proponents of the new Constitution, chiefly James Madison of Virginia, sometimes known as the "father of the Constitution," promised to rectify this with amendments.



James Madison

When the first Congress under the new Constitution convened in 1789, Madison, a member of the House, proposed twelve amendments, which Congress approved and sent to the states for ratification. Of the twelve, only ten were ratified then by the required three-quarters of states. They went into effect in 1791 and are now known as the Bill of Rights. One of the other two, dealing with the pay of members of Congress, was

finally ratified in 1992 and is now the twenty-seventh amendment. Little is known of the whereabouts of the Bill of Rights between 1789 and 1938. It was kept with other signed original laws and resolutions and probably moved with the government during the nation's early years. In 1938 the State Department turned it over to the National Archives.

The Charters of Freedom Come Together at Last

On December 13, 1952, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were brought from the Library of Congress to the National Archives under armed guard and with much ceremony. The long-awaited event was the result of a quiet agreement between Librarian of Congress Luther Evans and Archivist of the United States Wayne Grover.

Two days later, December 15, the Declaration, the Bill of Rights, and pages 1 and 4 of the Constitution were formally enshrined in the Rotunda of the National Archives Building. From time to time over the years, pages 2 and 3 of the Constitution were also displayed. The documents remained in the Rotunda until July 5, 2001, when it was closed for building-wide renovation.

While the Charters were away for conservation work and re-encasement (see "A New Era Begins for the Charters of Freedom"), the Rotunda was remodeled and new display platforms were constructed so that these treasured documents are displayed at a height and angle so that children and individuals in wheelchairs can easily read them.

With the reopening of the Rotunda, the four pages of the Constitution occupy the center cases, with the Declaration of Independence to their left and the Bill of Rights to their right. In seven cases to the left of the Declaration is a rotating group of original milestone documents that chronicle the creation of the Charters of Freedom in the 1770s and 1780s. To the right of the Bill of Rights are seven cases that show the evolving interpretation and development of the Charters of Freedom at home and abroad since they were adopted.









Rotunda Mural - Signing of the Declaration of Independence

Above the Charters, the famous murals by Barry Faulkner have also been removed, cleaned, and restored. Although they don't depict actual historical events, they help convey the importance of the Charters of Freedom by showing a presentation of the draft of the Declaration to John Hancock by Jefferson in 1776 and a presentation of the Constitution to George Washington by Madison in 1787.

The National Archives Experience

The reopening of the Rotunda and the return of the Charters in September 2003 serves as the first phase of the new National

Archives Experience. Over the next year, the other phases will be complete, as part of a comprehensive renovation of the National Archives Building (see "A Top-to-Bottom Renovation"). The other phases of the National Archives Experience are:

-  The Public Vaults, exhibition spaces around the Rotunda that give visitors the feeling of going "inside the stacks" of the National Archives.
-  A Special Exhibition Gallery that will be devoted to changing document-based exhibits.
-  A new 294-seat theater that will show documentary films from contemporary directors and highlights of the National Archives' 300,000 reels of archival footage and serve as a forum for public debates.
-  A Learning Center that will use primary sources as tools for education for students and their parents and teachers.
-  A new museum shop that will allow visitors to take home a piece of the National Archives Experience.
-  An improved web site to recreate the excitement of visiting the National Archives Experience and to connect to the records in the holdings of the National Archives.

In addition to the elements of the National Archives Experience, the renovation involves upgrading or replacing many of the building's systems, from top to bottom. It also is creating a new Research Center on the first floor that consolidates many of the agency's research services and adds some new features. (See "NARA's New Research Center").

Each of the Charters of Freedom has its own history, but they all represent the revolutionary spirit of freedom and independence that was present when the Founding Fathers sought to establish an independent, democratic nation strong enough to resist foreign control while maintaining a free and open society.

And the words of the Charters are as alive as they were when Jefferson, Adams, Washington, Franklin, Madison, and the others lifted them into legend, giving them a sacred meaning for all Americans and a beacon hope for the world.

Now, those words can be read, repeated, and remembered as part of a special time spent with history—the National Archives Experience.

(Reprinted from *Prologue*.)

Going On-line for Archival Resources

NARA's Access to Archival Databases Brings Historic Data to the Desktop

In February of this year, NARA launched a new research application tool, *Access to Archival Databases (AAD)*. NARA expects that AAD, the first publicly accessible application produced under the auspices of NARA's Electronic Records Archives, will be a major boon for researchers and NARA staff alike. AAD is designed as a method for searching,

viewing, and retrieving information from particular Federal Government databases or other highly structured electronic records directly through the Internet. The records in AAD are open and available to any researcher with Internet access.

At this time, AAD includes more than 400 database files in more than 30 records series created by more than 20 Federal agencies. These databases collectively contain more than 50 million unique records, such as casualties from the Vietnam and Korean conflicts, indexes to NASA photographs, insider securities trading transactions, contracts between the private sector and the military, records of people immigrating to America during the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, and records of Japanese Americans interned during World War II. Databases added recently include records of duty locations for Naval Group China [Naval Intelligence] personnel (1942-1945), and files from the Federal Assistance Award Data System (1981-2001).

AAD's potential value as a research tool is obvious, and should only increase over time as more government records are made available online to researchers and the general public. AAD is an important step in NARA's ongoing efforts to preserve and make accessible electronic records produced by the Federal Government. The application also moves NARA closer to fulfilling the promise made in its Strategic Plan that "essential evidence will be easy to access regardless of where it is or where users are for as long as needed."

Information on AAD can be found at <http://www.archives.gov/aad/index.html>.

Regional Archives

It's Been a Busy Year

Each year brings an influx of researchers into Regional Archives in San Bruno and Laguna Niguel. There are genealogists and history buffs, graduate students, professors, and attorneys. There are media sleuths, Federal investigators, and public interest interns. And some visitors urgently try to document their citizenship or eligibility for benefits.

Rescue Me! Old Documents Can Be a Lifeline for Archives Customers

A woman orphaned when she was a young child had been seeking basic information about her parents for three years. Archives staff were able to locate her father's naturalization file, which contained his basic personal information. A Texas man sought to establish veteran's benefits for his father in law, a World War II merchant seaman who came under enemy fire in 1945. We found his ship's declassified secret log which documents his combat experience.

American Indian recognition, rights, and entitlements are always hot topics in Regional Archives, and the past fiscal year has been especially active. We provided research assistance to tribal councils, historians, and numerous

individual enrollees and families of nearly 40 California and Nevada tribal groups.

The Social Security Administration and other Federal agencies verify citizenship status of individuals by requesting information from our naturalization records. These requests help prove that individuals' eligibility to benefits. They are also used for clearances for Federal employment.

Assistance to research groups

Our two Regional Archives assisted the NARA Interagency Working Group with a collaborative project to microfilm the records of the post-World War II prosecution and imprisonment of Tomoya Kawakita, the last US citizen convicted of treason. San Bruno staff also assisted the International Archeological Research Institute

Tracking Down Bad Guys and Other Federal Topics

FBI, DOD, and Department of Homeland Security investigators use Federal court and prison records for information on convicted felons. The information is used in criminal prosecutions, to bar firearms sales to individuals, and other purposes. Amazingly, there were several instances this year in which San Bruno staff furnished copies of Alcatraz inmate case files to law enforcement officers pursuing criminal investigations. Alcatraz has been closed since 1963!

Navy researchers spent over five weeks in San Bruno researching Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory and San Francisco Naval Shipyard records site for a Superfund cleanup project. San Bruno also provided copies of historic Oakland harbor maps and drawings for a Army Corps of Engineers dredging project.

Lassen National Park rangers spent several weeks in San Bruno researching timber and vegetation surveys from the 1920s. These records are today a vital tool for forest planning, management, and fire suppression.

Books and Documentaries Based on Our Records

A groundbreaking work in American immigration history: *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era*, by Dr. Erica Lee (University of Minnesota). It is based on records of the Angel Island immigration station. *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*, a three-part national PBS program hosted by Bill Moyers, showcased extensive research done in San Bruno archives and featured NARA staff interviews. San Bruno hosted a Korean Broadcasting System film crew shooting a documentary about the 100th anniversary of Korean immigration to the U.S.

Also notable is Michael Esslinger's *Alcatraz: A Definitive History of the Penitentiary Years*, based on the prison's inmate case files. Laguna Niguel records were used to produce a film on the landmark *Mendez v. Westminster* school desegregation case, in which Mexican-American parents sued several Orange County school districts to allow their children to attend the schools nearest their homes rather than segregated schools intended for Mexican-American students.



San Bruno Event Highlights Employee Diversity

On August 27, NARA employees in San Bruno staged their fifth annual Diversity Day. There was music, dancing, singing, swinging, costumes, ethnic attire, ethnic food, real-time barbecue, and a roasted pig. There was live jazz, rap songs, rock and roll songs, folk songs, dances from the Philippines and American Samoa, and American swing dancing. Joining the festivities were representatives of Congressman Tom Lantos and U.S. Archivist John Carlin and many friends and relatives of NARA employees. A good time was had by all.



NARA Singers Belt Out "This Land is Our Land"

Laguna Niguel Open House and Tour a Hit with Federal Workers

NARA facility Open House events are very popular with our Federal customers. People especially enjoy tours of the stack areas where we invite them to take a look at some of our old records, perhaps hearing a brief talk on a document's history or context from one of our professional archivists.

Our Laguna Niguel staff hosted a successful Open House on Wednesday, September 10. We hosted 24 individuals -16 Federal agency employees, seven staffers from Congressional field offices, and one Federal Executive Board staff member. After refreshments, there were tours of the Regional Archives, the Records Center, and the Records Management Program office. Tours were followed by separate discussion sessions for Agency and Congressional staff. We received a lot of positive feedback from our guests. They told us they learned a lot

Come to Our House! Open House

1000 Commodore Drive, San Bruno
Wed., Oct. 22, 9:00-11:30

RSVP by Oct 15 to

Ed Hughes (650) 876-9004 ed.hughes@nara.gov

The NARA Records Center is

Looking for a
Few Good Student Employees

\$10.65 Per Hour
Archives Aid

Part Time, 16-32 hours per week,
minimum shift - 4 hours per day

☛ **How to Apply:**

Mail resume and a Student Status
Verification Letter to NARA-Pacific
Region, 1000 Commodore Drive, San
Bruno, CA 94066 (Attn: Admin.
Officer) or fax to 650-876-0920.

Must Have High School Diploma
US Citizenship Required

Records Management

Assistance to Agencies Takes New Direction

The NARA Pacific Region records management staff is currently taking the lead on two projects that are pioneering NARA's new strategic direction in records management. Readers of this publication are familiar with NARA's efforts over the past few years to redesign Federal records management. Our new strategy was recently published and is available at

http://www.archives.gov/records_management/initiatives/strategic_directions.html.

Basically, this document states that NARA will work in partnership with agencies to make records management serve their business needs, rather than burdening them with requirements or rote conformance with traditional models. We will schedule records in ways that fit an electronic environment at a levels of aggregation that serve business needs, for example, by providing for retention periods that allow agencies flexibility, or by scheduling records by functions that apply to more than one agency.

Our Laguna Niguel staff is leading a nationwide project to assist the National Aeronautics and Space Administration develop flexible schedules for program and project records, records that document NASA's core functions - space missions, basic science, and research and development. Our San Bruno staff is leading another national project to help the US Forest Service manage its wildland fire records more effectively. The goal is to develop tools and standards that will apply to all Federal natural resource agencies that manage wildland fire.

Announcing Fiscal Year 2004 Records Management Workshop Schedule

Laguna Niguel Workshops

Contact Debi Wayne @ 949-360-2622
or deborah.wayne@nara.gov

Basic Records Operations

January 13-14, 2004, Tucson, AZ
February 3-4, 2004, Las Vegas, NV
February 18-19, 2004, Phoenix, AZ
April 27-28, 2004, Flagstaff, AZ
August 17-18, 2004, San Diego, CA
August 31-Sept 1, 2004, Laguna Niguel, CA

E-mail as a Record

January 15, 2004, Tucson, AZ
February 5, 2004, Las Vegas, NV
February 20, 2004, Phoenix, AZ
April 29, 2004, Flagstaff, AZ
August 19, 2004, San Diego, CA
September 2, 2004, Laguna Niguel, CA

Advanced Records Operations

March 9, 2004, Tucson, AZ
March 30, 2004, Laguna Niguel, CA
May 25, 2004, Las Vegas, NV
June 8, 2004, Las Vegas, NV

Risk Management and Cost/Benefit Analysis

March 10-11, 2004, Tucson, AZ
June 9-10, 2004, Phoenix, AZ

Electronic Records Forum

September 16, 2004, Phoenix, AZ

Managing Electronic Records

March 31-April 1, 2004, Laguna Niguel, CA
May 26-27, 2004, Las Vegas, NV
September 14-15, 2004, Sedona, AZ

Digital Imaging

Date and location to be announced

Disaster Preparedness and Response

Date and location to be announced

Records Transfer and Reference

December 11, 2003, Laguna Niguel
January 15, 2004, Tucson, AZ
February 5, 2004, Las Vegas, NV
February 20, 2004, Phoenix, AZ
March 11, 2004, San Diego, CA
April 29, 2004, Flagstaff, AZ
August 19, 2004, San Diego, CA
September 2, 2004, Laguna Niguel

San Bruno Workshops

For all workshops except Records Transfer and Reference,
please contact: Ed Hughes (650) 876-9004
ed.hughes@nara.gov

Open Houses

October 22, 2003, San Bruno, CA
April 7, 2004, San Bruno, CA

Basic Records Operations

January 6, 2004, San Francisco, CA
March 18, 2004, Sacramento, CA
May 4, 2004, Reno, NV
September 2, 2004, San Bruno, CA

Advanced Records Operations

February 4-5, 2004, San Francisco, CA

Disaster Preparedness and Response

May 5-6, 2004, Reno, NV

Electronic Records Issues

April 22, 2004, San Francisco, CA

Information Technology for Federal Managers

June 17, 2004, San Francisco, CA

Records Transfer and Reference (half day)

Contact Patti Bailey (650) 876-9006
patricia.bailey@nara.gov
November 19, 2003, San Bruno, CA
January 7, San Bruno, CA
March 11, 2004, San Bruno, CA
May 13, 2004, San Bruno, CA
July 27, 2004, San Bruno, CA
September 3, 2004, San Bruno, CA

Remember!

Open House

1000 Commodore Drive, San Bruno
Wed., Oct. 22, 9:00-11:30

RSVP by October 15 to
Ed Hughes (650) 876-9004
ed.hughes@nara.gov

The People's Vote

100 Documents
that Shaped
America

At a special ceremony attended by President George W. Bush at the National Archives building in Washington, Archivist of the United States John Carlin officially launched *The People's Vote: 100 Documents That Shaped America*. It's a national educational challenge, to engage Americans in discussion and debate about which documents in American history have been the most influential—which ones changed the course of history, shaped the United States, and defined Americans as a people.

The People's Vote invites Americans of all ages and educational backgrounds to vote for their "Top 10" from the list of 100 milestone documents chosen by historians and the National Archives, or to write in and promote favorites not on

the list. A "People's vote" website, paper ballots and a voting kiosk are available for participants to cast their votes. Information on each of the 100 documents, and on how to vote, is available (1) online at www.usnews.com/vote, (2) in the September 22 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, and (3) at National Archives Regional offices in San Bruno and Laguna Niguel.

More information on "The People's Vote" is available locally at National Archives Pacific Region offices (San Francisco telephone 650-876-9009, Laguna Niguel telephone 949-360-2641). Contact information, directions and a summary account of public research services are also available on-line at http://www.archives.gov/facilities/research_centers.html#CA

The deadline for submitting votes is December 1, 2003. The Archivist of the United States will announce the results of *The People's Vote* and unveil the Top Ten winners—the documents that received the most votes—in a ceremony at the National Archives on December 15, 2003, also marking the 212th Anniversary of the Bill of Rights.



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