Independence Hall witnessed the adoption and signing of two of the most important political documents in human history: the United States Declaration of Independence (1776) and Constitution (1787). Marking the transition of the country from colonial status to independence and self-government, these two instruments were devised to serve national ends. Nevertheless, they enunciate enduring as well as universal principles and eloquently express mankind's yearnings for personal freedom, justice under law, and public service. They transcend the particular circumstances of their creation and any deficiencies in their scope or application to become part of the political and philosophical heritage of the world. These documents have enlightened and inspired political thinkers in many parts of the globe. They also have contributed to international dialogue on the nature and role of government. Leaders of many nations, of diverse political orientations, when forming or perfecting their own governments, have adapted the concepts, phrasing, or spirit of the documents to their own circumstances, needs, and national goals. This influence has overcome barriers of time, culture, language, and ideology.

Independence Hall is a two-story red brick structure with attic and basement. Construction began about 1732 and continued through the 1740s. The main block measures 105 feet by 60 feet. It has an attic foundation and a gabled shingle roof. There are nine window openings along the front, or Chestnut Street side, the first floor center one of which accommodates the main door.

The bell tower, attached to the Hall at the center rear (north), dominates that facade. The structure’s brick lower stages date to the 1760s. The wooden steeple, which rises to a height of 167 feet 8 inches, was designed by William Strickland and was erected in 1843 to replace one that had been taken down earlier.

The bell tower’s lower stages illustrate the striking reuse of brick for decorative effect that characterized 19th-century Philadelphia buildings of note: molded brick and carved form pilasters and other wall features. At every level is one or more detail of interest, such as the Ionic columns and entablature of the rear facade of the first to the lintels’ carved wooden faces of the fourth. The steeple with its varying clock and bell pulleys and its carved weathervane, its octagonal bell cupola, its carved urns, and its corner pilasters with their Corinthian capitals are the features that have made Independence Hall so easily recognized structure.