

Fig. 6. Trumbull's suggestion for how to hang his four Revolutionary War paintings in the Rotunda appeared in a letter he wrote to Latrobe on 25 September 1817.

objected to Latrobe's Rotunda, they were ignorant of the "earliest idea of the Capitol as projected by Major [Peter Charles] L'Enfant, drawn by Dr. [William] Thornton, and adopted by General Washington."<sup>7</sup>

Mangin and McComb's much-admired two-story vestibule rotunda for the New York City Hall (1803-1812) was Trumbull's architectural starting point for his Capitol redesign (fig. 7). Much of his six-page letter to Bulfinch described how he fundamentally rethought Latrobe's rotunda and crypt in order to provide ideal conditions for the approach and display of his four Revolutionary War paintings. The letter is also key to understanding that Busby's etchings actually reflected Trumbull's thinking, not an alternative design by Bulfinch for completing the Capitol as Brown and subsequent scholars supposed.<sup>8</sup>

Trumbull's response to Bulfinch contained three explanatory drawings, each described in detail in his text. "Referring to plan No. 1, I propose then to enclose the basement story of the two porticos, in the same style of piers and arches, as in the wings, and to enter, under each portico." Trumbull eliminated Latrobe's staircase and his colonnades on either side of the Portico, that is, returned to Thornton's original design. Busby's version of the East Front etching visually depicted Trumbull's

written description. Deleting so many exterior columns and arches, not to mention the staircase raised on massive arches, would be a great saving in public money. Trumbull knew that Latrobe's grand but expensive architectural gestures were a critical issue with Monroe and several Members of Congress. Bulfinch intended to avoid undue expenses. Trumbull believed he was providing an economical solution to complete the center building, but it was also one that would leave his architectural mark on the Capitol. History has determined that Latrobe was a greater architect than Bulfinch; Trumbull may well have felt the same as he pushed the Bostonian to adopt a spatially exciting center building closer to Latrobe's aesthetic ethos than Bulfinch's attachment to elegantly decorated surfaces.<sup>9</sup>

Trumbull proposed entering the Rotunda at ground level via "a hall forty feet by twenty, with apartments for doorkeepers adjoining—to open a passage through the center of the building." (fig. 8) Committee rooms for both houses and a central furnace to heat all of the center building were also shown. Trumbull went on to describe the outer ring as the support for the "Vestibule's" (Rotunda's) wall, the double inner rings as the supports for the double circular staircases connecting the two floors. Busby's plan of the main floor





*Fig. 7. The two-story vestibule rotunda in New York's City Hall (1812) influenced Trumbull's plan for the Capitol's center building.*



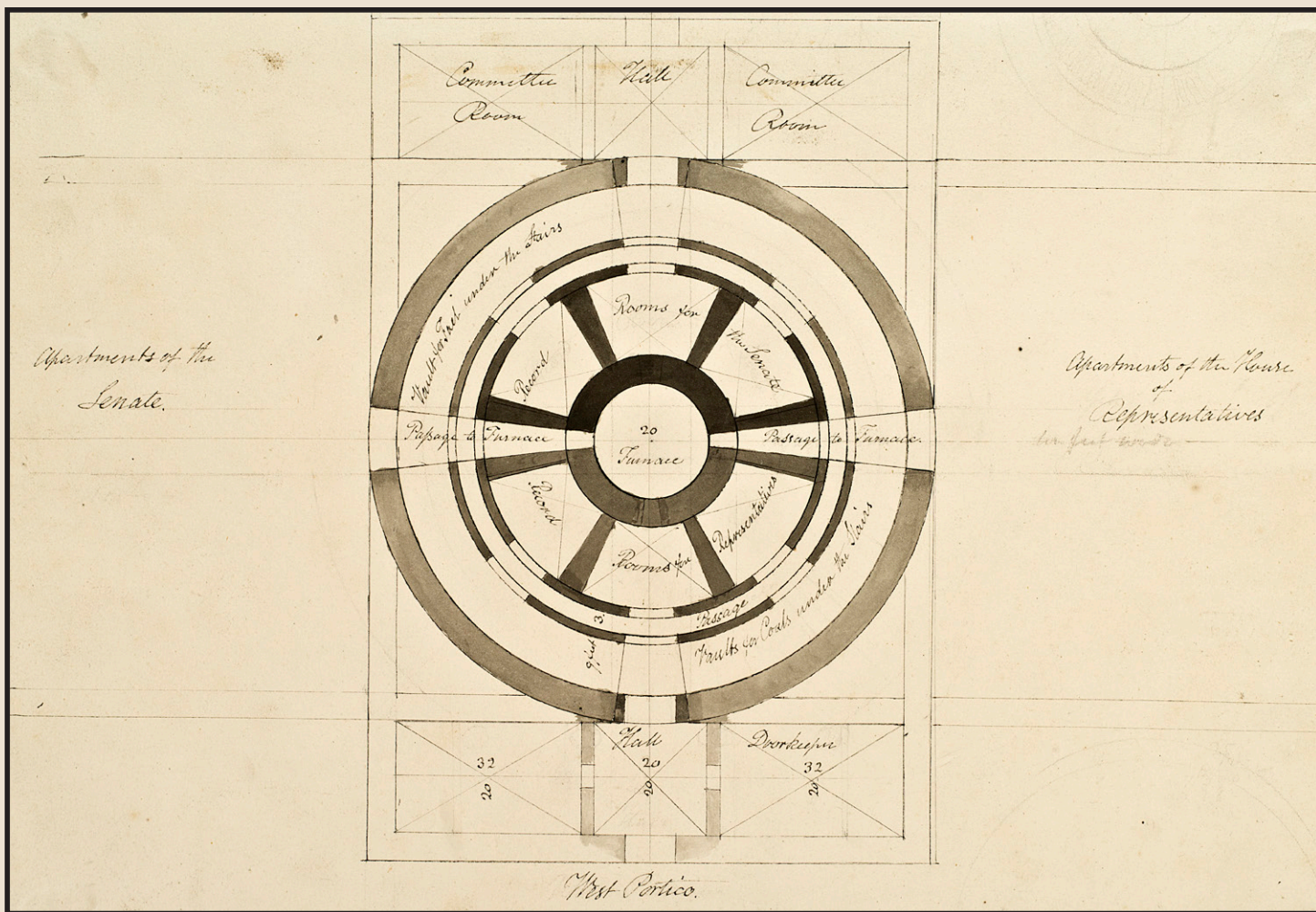


Fig. 8. Trumbull's plan for the Center Building's ground level matches his January 1818 description to Charles Bulfinch.

identified the "Grand Vestibule for Great Public Occasions" in the Capitol's center and depicted the two semicircular staircases as described by Trumbull that descended to the ground level. The painter framed the staircases with "a bronze railing five feet high.... and the spectator cannot approach nearer to the wall on which the paintings hang than ten feet."<sup>10</sup>

Trumbull's second drawing enclosed in his letter to Bulfinch "represents the grand staircased vestibule" so that the stairs ended at the entrances to the vestibules leading directly to the House and Senate chambers. The stairs were depicted on Busby's plan but more graphically on Trumbull's 1818 sketch section of the Rotunda. (Fig. 9) In his letter to Trumbull, Bulfinch had offered to design a "saloon or gallery" to replace the Rotunda for the display of paintings, citing the Rotunda's great size as too "vast" and



Fig. 9. Trumbull's 1818 section sketch of his design for the Capitol's two-story "Vestibule."

possible damage to paintings by ignorant visitors. In his response Trumbull objected because lateral light through windows in rectangular picture galleries—from the Grand Gallery of the Louvre to New York City Hall’s Governor’s Room—was “bad light”—that is, unstable, constantly changing from shadowy to bright. He harked back to his discussions with Latrobe and his drawings: “I have never seen paintings so advantageously placed in respect to light and space, as I think mine would be, in the proposed circular room, illumination from above.” Diffuse light from above that flooded rooms—as from cupolas atop domes such as Trumbull depicted atop his vestibule—was valued by architects because of its even clarity, free from exterior moving shadows. Busby wrote “lighted from above” in the center of his depiction of his “Grand Vestibule.” Trumbull noted that his design would solve Bulfinch’s two objections to using the Rotunda as an art gallery—separation of art works from visitors and even light.<sup>11</sup>

Although Trumbull sketched his dome as a smooth hemisphere (with no coffers indicated) his depiction of the overall circular form of his two-story space implied the Roman Pantheon, the model proposed by several of the Capitol’s early designers. Other features Trumbull described in his letter to Bulfinch that appeared in his sketch are the frieze topped by a cornice between the Rotunda and Dome and door and picture frames. Although only depicted in a rudimentary fashion, these architectural ornaments can be identified with the American Georgian tradition of the time of the Revolution.

I want not a column nor a capital; plain solid walls, embellished only by four splendid door-casings of white marble and elegant workmanship; a fascia of white marble running around the room, with an ornament somewhat like that which surmounts the basement story on the outside; and a frieze crowning the top of the wall, where, either now or at some future time, basso-relievos may be introduced; these are all the decorations which I propose, except the paintings.<sup>12</sup>

Between these two walls I place grand quadruple stairs, beginning at the doors of the two halls, and mounting on the right and left, to the floor of the dome vestibule [rotunda]. Twenty feet within this inner wall of the stairs, I raise a third con-

centric wall, of equal, or (if required) of greater solidity.<sup>13</sup>

No surviving copy depicts Trumbull’s third drawing sent to Bulfinch.

No. 3, is a slight ideal view of the grand vestibule and staircase, as seen at entering from the hall of either portico....Perhaps I am wrong, for we are all partial to the off-spring of our own minds; yet I cannot but believe; that the effect of such a room would be peculiarly grand and imposing, from the union of vastness of dimensions with simplicity of form and decoration.<sup>14</sup>

Just as Bulfinch quietly went about erecting his own modest redesign of Latrobe’s Rotunda, he also ignored another of Trumbull’s suggestions in a 17 April 1818 letter, to “plant out” the lower of Bulfinch’s two basements on the west front. Rather, the architect revised and simplified Latrobe’s scheme of a level terrace that connected the Capitol’s east and west grounds before descending via walkways to the foot of Capitol Hill. But a careful examination of pertinent visual and documentary evidence shows direct links between Trumbull’s descriptions, his surviving sketches and drawings, and Busby’s etchings that correct a long-held misconception among scholars (including this one) that Busby drew some planned version by Bulfinch for completing the Capitol’s center building.<sup>15</sup>



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# Notes

1. Neil Bingham, *C.A. Busby: The Regency Architect of Brighton & Hove* (London, 1991), pp. 45-6; 52-5; Theodore Sizer, "John Trumbull, Amateur Architect," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 8(Jul.-Dec. 1949):1-6. The only other original printing of Busby's plan known to exist, in addition to Shattuck's, was sold recently by a dealer, Boston Rare Maps, and remains in private hands.

2. Theodore Sizer, ed., *The Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull, Patriot-Artist, 1756-1843* (1841; reprinted, New Haven, CT, 1953). Irma B. Jaffe's *John Trumbull: Patriot Artist of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1975) is the outstanding biography of the artist. Helen A. Cooper, ed., *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter* (New Haven, CT, 1982) compiled essays by several Trumbull scholars, including Egon Verheyen's excellent "John Trumbull and the U.S. Capitol: Reconsidering the Evidence," pp. 260-280. Verheyen did not illustrate Busby's etching nor explicitly state that they reflected an alternative Bulfinch design.

3. Several modern studies of the history of Trumbull's Rotunda paintings begin with Charles E. Fairman's *Art and Artists of the Capitol of the United States of America* (Washington, DC, 1927), pp. 53-63; Jaffe, *Trumbull*, pp. 236-63; Jules David Prown, "John Trumbull as History Painter," in Cooper, *Trumbull*, pp. 73-90.

4. Benjamin Henry Latrobe to John Trumbull, 22 Jan. 1817, in John C. Van Horne, et al., eds., *The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (New Haven, CT, 1988) 3:856-7; 942-4; 951-4.

5. Charles Bulfinch to James Monroe, 26 Nov. 1817, NARA, RG 42, Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Park of the National Capitol, Entry 1, Letters Received; Harold Kirker, *The Architecture of Charles Bulfinch*, (Cambridge, MA, 1969), pp. 321-40.

6. William B. Bushong, ed., *Glenn Brown's History of the United States Capitol* (Washington, DC, 1998), p. 160; Pamela Scott, *Temple of Liberty: Building the Capitol for a New Nation* (New York and Oxford, 1995) 61-3; Scott, "Charles Bulfinch: Well-Connected, Refined Gentleman Architect," in Donald R. Kennon, ed., *The United States Capitol: Designing and Decorating a National Icon* (Athens, OH, 2000), pp. 56-84; William C. Allen, *History of the United States Capitol* (Washington, DC, 2001), p. 151; Damie Stillman, "The United States Capitol: Icon of the Republic," in C. Ford Peatross, et al., eds., *Capital Drawings: Archi-*

*tectural Designs for Washington, D.C., from the Library of Congress* (Baltimore, 2005), pp. 73-5.

7. Sizer, *Autobiography of Trumbull*, p. 266.

8. Clay Lancaster, "New York City Hall Stair Rotunda Reconsidered," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 29(Mar. 1970):33-9.

9. Sizer, *Autobiography of Trumbull*, p. 263.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 267. The author is working on a book about Bulfinch's eleven years in Washington, its centerpiece his completion of the Capitol and its grounds between 1817 and 1829.

## IMAGE CREDITS:

Fig. 1. Brian Shattuck

Fig. 2. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-ppmsca-19868]

Fig. 3. From negative by Frances Benjamin Johnston (for Glenn Brown), [ca. 1900-03], in William B. Bushong, ed., *Glenn Brown's History of the United States Capitol* (Washington, DC, 1998), p. 161.

Fig. 4. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-ppmsca-40461]

Fig. 5. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-USZC4-172]

Fig. 6. John Trumbull, detail, "Sketch of Paintings in Vestibule", John Trumbull Papers, Box 1-Folder 7, New-York Historical Society. Photography (c)New-York Historical Society.

Fig. 7. Arthur Drooker

Fig. 8. John Trumbull, "Center Building of the Capitol", 1818, Album File (PR2), The Trumbull Album (vol. 466, #60, folder: 7), New-York Historical Society. Photography (c)New-York Historical Society.

Fig. 9. John Trumbull, "Section Sketch, Two-Story Vestibule", 1818, Album File (PR2), The Trumbull Album (vol. 466, #62, folder: 8), New-York Historical Society. Photography (c)New-York Historical Society.



# LONE STAR DIPLOMATS:

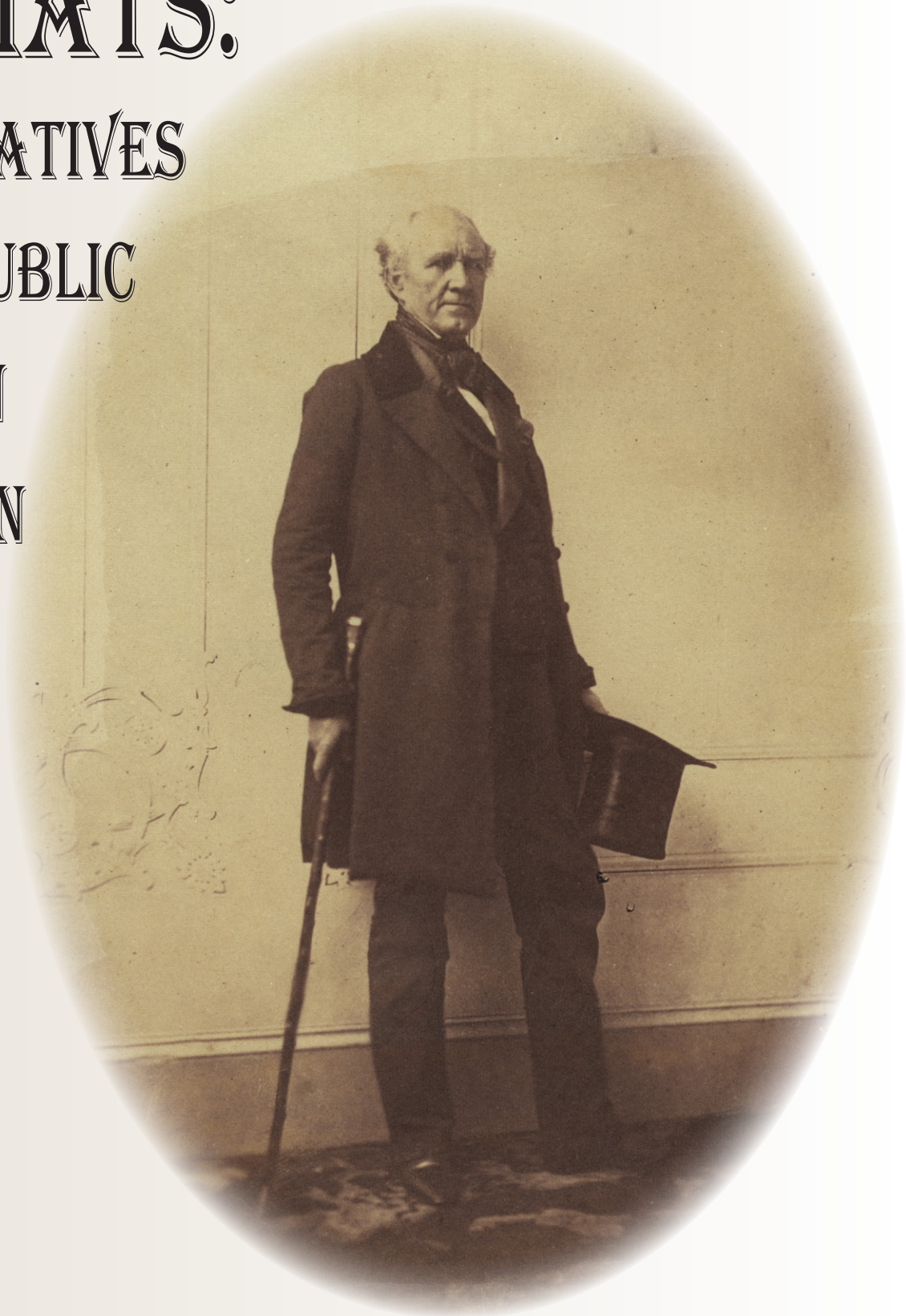
REPRESENTATIVES

OF THE REPUBLIC

OF TEXAS IN

WASHINGTON

by Kenneth R. Stevens





Texas is a unique state for many reasons, but one of the most significant is that for nine years, from 1836 to 1845, it was an independent republic. During that period Texas maintained a diplomatic legation in Washington, D.C., where its representatives pursued the fledgling nation's international objectives, which included obtaining recognition of Texan independence, and ultimately, annexation as a state of the United States. The efforts of Texas diplomats in Washington helped write a significant chapter in the history of the United States. The annexation of Texas in 1845 was the main factor that led to war with Mexico in 1846, which was followed by the acquisition of all the territory between New Mexico and California in 1848, which in turn led to the sectional crisis that resulted in the Civil War in 1861.

And yet, for more than 160 years after the Texas legation closed its doors in Washington, its story could not be fully told. One intriguingly elusive part of the picture was missing. The legation's papers were initially stored in the Office of the U.S. Adjutant General in Washington, D.C. In 1846 the newly-elected U.S. senator from Texas, Sam Houston (fig. 1), was directed to take control of all the documents and convey them to the Texas secretary of state in Austin. For some reason, Houston instead took them to his home. Most were ultimately turned over to the state, but a single box containing over 250 documents was not, and over the ensuing years it passed through the family of Houston's son, Andrew Jackson Houston, and eventually to other people. Along the way, its contents were exposed to heat, humidity, and Hurricane Carla in 1961 (when the house in which they were kept was wrecked and then damaged further by fire). Following the hurricane, the documents' odyssey continued; for a brief time, they were even stored in the trunk of a car, until they found rest in a bank vault. Only in 2006 did they come into the custody of a repository able to safeguard them from further ravages of nature, neglect, and possible oblivion.<sup>1</sup>

Texas diplomacy actually began even before Texas formally declared its independence from Mexico on 2 March 1836. In December 1835, the provisional government commissioned Stephen F. Austin, Dr. Branch T. Archer, and William H. Wharton as agents to the United States. Their mission was to raise funds, encourage public support in the United States, and secure the recognition of Texas by



SEE NOTES FOR IMAGE CREDITS.

*Fig. 2. Texas gave this marble statue (by Elisabet Ney) of Stephen Austin to the Capitol's National Statuary Hall Collection in 1905.*

*Fig. 1. (left) This photograph of Samuel Houston, taken in 1856 or 1857 by an unknown photographer, was unpublished before 2005. Houston was a senator when it was taken.*





Fig. 3. William H. Wharton (c. 1850)

the United States government.<sup>2</sup>

It was an odd combination of political enemies. Austin (fig. 2), originally from Missouri, was known as “the father of Texas.” In the 1820s he had obtained permission from Mexico to introduce the first 300 Anglo settlers into the territory as an “empresario.” In 1835, he was a member of what was deemed the “Peace Party,” which sought to maintain a working relationship with the Mexican government.

Wharton (fig. 3), from Nashville, Tennessee, arrived in Texas in 1827. He soon thereafter married Sarah Ann Groce, the daughter of the richest man in Texas. For a wedding present her father gave the couple a 16,000-acre plantation in Brazoria County. He was a prominent member of the so-called “War Party,” which had given up getting along with Mexico.

Branch Archer, a Virginian, was a graduate of the College of William and Mary and had a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He came to Texas in 1831 after killing a cousin in a duel.<sup>3</sup>

Austin thought that Archer was “wild in his politics” but he especially despised Wharton, who he believed lacked political integrity. “Associated with such men,” he complained, “what have I to expect? Or what has the country to hope?” Wharton reciprocated in his contempt for Austin. The empresario, Wharton publicly stated, combined “disgusting self conceit—arrogant dictation, and ... inconsistent stupidity.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet, united by their common mission, they became close friends on the voyage from Velasco, on the Texas Gulf Coast, to New Orleans. Austin wrote home that Dr. Archer was a “noble fellow” and he and Wharton were on the “best terms.” Their earlier conflict, he said, was simply due to misunderstandings.<sup>5</sup>

As they made their way to Washington, the commissioners spoke to enthusiastic crowds in New Orleans, Nashville, and Louisville, while dramatic events occurred back home. Texas declared independence on 2 March 1836. Just over one week earlier, Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna led an army of 5,000 men into San Antonio and raised a red flag on the tower of the San Fernando church, signifying that no quarter would be given to the 200 Texan rebels who had occupied the Alamo mission.

The Alamo fell on 6 March, and the few who survived the battle were executed. Three weeks later, on 27 March, 400 Texan troops surrendered to a superior Mexican force at Goliad and were executed by order of Santa Anna. Then, at San Jacinto, on 21 April, amid shouts of “Remember the Alamo” and “Remember Goliad,” Sam Houston’s army inflicted a stunning defeat on Santa Anna’s army, killing 650 Mexican soldiers and taking 300 prisoners.

Santa Anna fled the field dressed in the uniform of a private, but was recognized and taken prisoner. The Mexican leader signed two treaties, one public and one secret, at Velasco on 14 May 1836. In the public treaty Santa Anna agreed to withdraw Mexican forces beyond the Rio Grande and not to take up arms against Texas again. In the secret treaty he promised to “so prepare matters” in Mexico that Texas independence would be recognized. In exchange the Mexican leader would be freed and returned to Mexico. Many wanted to execute the Mexican leader, but President David Burnet objected that Santa Anna dead was no more than “Tom, Dick, or Harry,” but alive he might be of some use to Texas.

Santa Anna was held prisoner for five months while the victors debated his fate. Eventually the Mexican leader was escorted to Washington, where he met with President Andrew Jackson (fig. 4) before he was returned to Vera Cruz on an American warship.<sup>6</sup>

Austin, Archer, and Wharton arrived in Washington in late March 1836. There was, of course, no Texas embassy building. Like many other officials living in Washington in that era, including congressmen and senators, the Texas representatives over the years domiciled in a number of different boarding houses and conducted much of their business from there. (Currently, the Washington, DC chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas is researching the locations of those sites and hoping to obtain some recognition for them.) The Texans who represented the republic over the years became well-known figures at the seat of government. Some of them came from well-connected Southern families, and Southern politicians in particular made sure they were included in the District's social events. They enjoyed easy access to government, from the president on down.

But although politely received, the “ambassadors” were never able to secure formal recognition by the United States. The great difficulty, they impatiently informed their own government, was that even though newspaper accounts reported that Texas had declared its independence, they had received no formal notification of that event. The United States would not recognize Texas, they wrote, “until it is presented to them by someone with ministerial powers from the same Convention that made the declaration.” If they had received such powers, they asserted, “Texas would have been, by this time, recognized, if not admitted into this Union.”<sup>7</sup>

The commissioners were unaware of the political drama that had unfolded in Texas since their departure. Governor Henry Smith was increasingly at odds with the Provisional Council. After a number of quarrels, he adjourned the body, denouncing them as “scoundrels” who were guilty of “low intrigues.” They in turn charged Smith with “official perjury,” as well as “slanders and



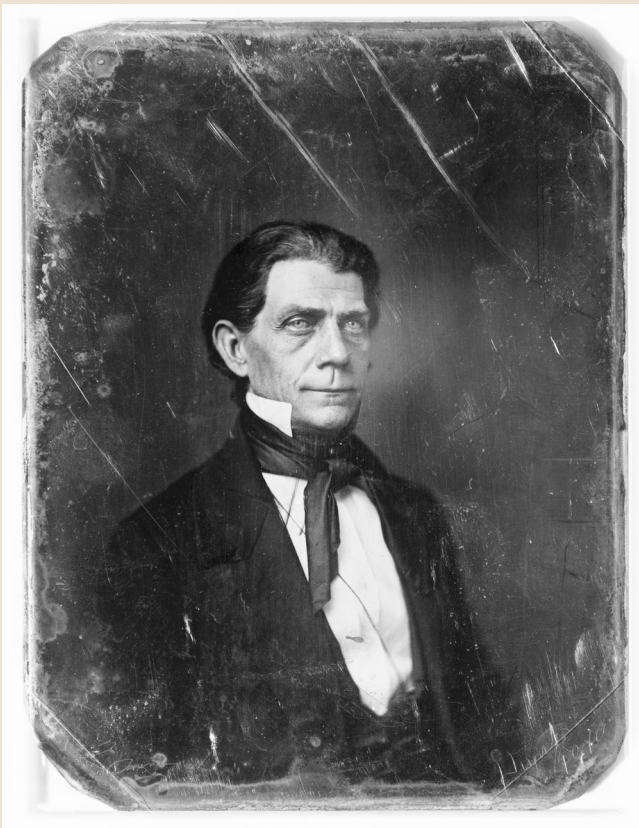
*Fig. 4. Andrew Jackson by David Rent Etter (1835)*

libels,” and removed him from office.<sup>8</sup> David G. Burnet became interim president on 17 March 1836.

The provisional council appointed seven additional Texas agents to the United States over the next two months, without informing any of the preceding representatives that they had been replaced. The welter of diplomatic appointments seems to confirm the impression of Virginia traveler William Fairfax Gray that the Texans did not know “how to go about their business.” Unable to accomplish their goals, the discouraged original commissioners returned to Texas. Austin later said that one of his great regrets was the time he had wasted in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

In September 1836, Texans elected Sam Houston the first president of the Republic, a contest in which he outpolled Stephen Austin by a vote of 5,119 to 587. It was a





*Fig. 5. Memucan Hunt, c. 1850, produced by Mathew Brady's studio*

humiliating defeat for “the father of Texas,” which was salvaged somewhat when Houston appointed him to be the Republic’s first secretary of state.

Houston also appointed Austin’s fellow commissioner William H. Wharton as the first Texan minister to the United States. Soon thereafter Houston sent Memucan Hunt (fig. 5) to join Wharton in Washington. Hunt came from a prominent North Carolina family. He moved to Mississippi where he became a planter. When the Texas revolution broke out, he raised a company of volunteers for Texas in 1836, but they arrived after the Battle of San Jacinto. Even so, Burnet appointed him a general in the Texan army, and Houston asked him to join Wharton in Washington.

The majority of Texans wanted immediate annexation to the United States, but to the surprise of nearly everyone, Jackson was unenthusiastic. Jackson was a warm friend of Sam Houston and several other Texans,

but he feared that annexation of Texas, which Mexico still considered a rebellious province, would lead to war with that country.

Equally significant, by the time of the Texas Revolution the antislavery movement was rising in the United States; it was obvious that Texas would be a slave state if it became part of the union. Controversy over the slavery question had grown greatly since the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and Congress was being flooded with thousands of anti-slavery petitions. Many of them were introduced by John Quincy Adams, who, following his presidency, had been elected to Congress from Massachusetts in 1830. In 1836, Congress passed a “Gag Rule” prohibiting the introduction of anti-slavery petitions, but Adams circumvented the rule by introducing them as petitions against Texas annexation.<sup>10</sup>

It was clear that annexation would agitate the slavery question in the United States and damage the election chances of Jackson’s hand-chosen successor, Martin Van Buren. So Jackson stalled. He sent Henry Morfit, a Washington claims attorney and political operative, as a special agent to Texas to investigate circumstances there. In a series of reports, the agent said that he doubted Texas could successfully defend its independence against Mexico. The reports gave Jackson the room he needed. In a special message to Congress on 21 December 1836, the president advised against “too early” recognition of Texas as an independent state. The United States, he said, should stand back until time and events demonstrated that Texas could sustain its independence.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, Texas supporters in Congress devised a back-door method to attain recognition. With Jackson due to leave office on 4 March 1837, Congress passed a resolution providing for a U.S. diplomatic representative to Texas whenever the president felt there was “satisfactory evidence that Texas is an independent power.” The bill passed the House by a vote of 121 to 76. Just before midnight, on 3 March, the Senate confirmed (by a vote of 23 to 19) the appointment of Alcée La Branche, a Louisiana sugar planter, as the first U.S. *chargé d’affaires* to the Republic of Texas. That night Jackson invited Wharton and Hunt to the White House to celebrate the occasion with a glass of wine. The commissioners rather grandly informed their government that “President Jackson has closed his political



Fig. 6. The east front of the Capitol, photographed by John Plumbe c. 1846

career by admitting our country into the great family of nations.”<sup>12</sup>

Still, what many Texans desired was not just recognition by but annexation to the United States. Sam Houston believed it was essential if Texas were to survive. In a private letter to Andrew Jackson, Houston had written: “It is policy [here] to hold out the idea ... that we are very able to sustain ourselves against any power...yet I am free to say to you that we cannot do it....My great desire is that our country Texas shall be annexed to the United States .... I look to you as the friend and patron of my youth and the benefactor of mankind to interpose on our behalf and save us.”<sup>13</sup>

With recognition achieved but annexation beyond reach, Wharton was eager to return home. Leaving Hunt in Washington to represent Texas, Wharton made his way to New Orleans, where he caught the Texas schooner *Independence*. As the vessel neared the Texas coast, it was intercepted by the Mexican fleet. A running battle ensued as the *Independence* made for the shore, but within sight of the Brazos River, as people on shore watched, the captain was forced to strike his colors and surrender. The *Independence* was seized and Wharton and the other passengers and crew were imprisoned in Matamoros, Mexico. That summer he managed to escape, disguised—according to some accounts—in





Fig. 7. Mirabeau Lamar

a nun's habit.<sup>14</sup>

Memucan Hunt remained in Washington and, early in August 1837, sent U.S. Secretary of State John Forsyth a formal proposal for the annexation. While Texas was successful as an independent nation, its people felt "filial reverence for the constitution and the people of the United States." In addition, he said, bringing Texas into the union would give the United States control of the Gulf of Mexico and protect its western frontier. However, if Texas remained independent its interests would conflict with the United States and there raise issues that would be "difficult and painful." If Texas did not become part of the United States, he warned, it would become a formidable rival.<sup>15</sup>

Hunt was stunned to learn only days later that Forsyth, a Georgian, was "violently opposed" to Texas annexation. He was, Hunt proclaimed, a "traitor" to the South. Forsyth made clear that the Van Buren administration had no interest in making Texas part of the union. Annexation, he said, would violate a treaty of friendship with Mexico and probably lead to a war. Besides, he questioned whether it was even constitutional for the United States to annex another country. Going further,

Forsyth suggested it had been a mistake for the United States even to have recognized Texas independence.<sup>16</sup>

In September 1837, Houston sent Peter W. Grayson, the Texas Attorney General, to Washington as a special agent to join Hunt. Their efforts were fruitless. Grayson informed his government that annexation was "*exceedingly doubtful*" because the Van Buren administration was deferring to the "prejudices" of the northern states. Convinced that the mission was hopeless, Hunt resigned as minister to the United States and returned to Texas in June 1838. Houston ordered Hunt's replacement, Dr. Anson Jones, to "unconditionally" withdraw the proposal for annexation, which he did on 12 October 1838. The election of Mirabeau B. Lamar (fig. 7) to the presidency in 1838 seemed to close the matter for good.

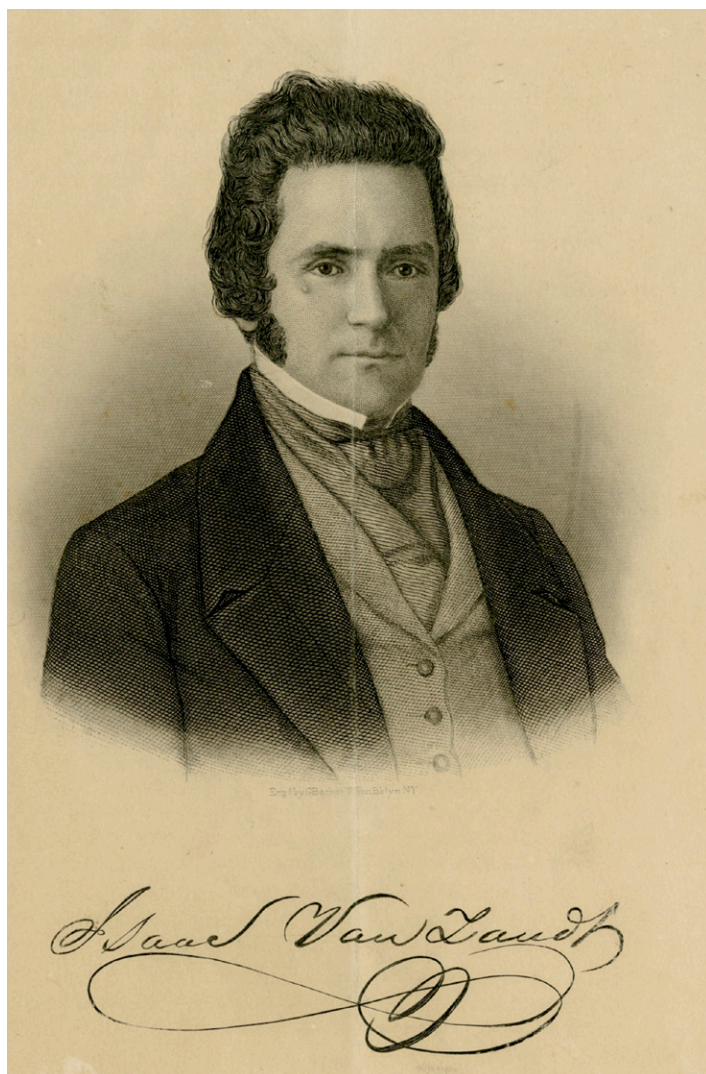


Fig. 8. Engraving of Isaac Van Zandt by G. Bather and Son



Lamar disparaged annexation and believed that Texas could not with any sense of “national pride or dignity of character renew the negotiation.” On 23 January 1839, the Texas Congress formally approved withdrawal of the annexation proposal.<sup>17</sup>

In 1841, following Sam Houston’s reelection as Texas president, James Reily, an attorney who had emigrated to Texas from Mississippi, was appointed *chargé d’affaires* to the United States. During his brief service in Washington, Reily signed a treaty of amity and commerce with Secretary of State Daniel Webster, but the Texas Senate did not like the terms and declined to ratify it.<sup>18</sup>

In 1842, Houston appointed Isaac Van Zandt (fig. 8), an attorney from Marshall, Texas and member of the Texas Congress, as *chargé* to Washington. Van Zandt arrived in Washington at an auspicious time. John Tyler (fig. 9) of Virginia had succeeded to the presidency upon the untimely death of William Henry Harrison, in April 1841, only one month after taking office. Tyler, a slave-owning Virginian, was a dedicated adherent of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, and he was determined to bring Texas into the union.

When his secretary of state, Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, balked at the prospect, Tyler eased him out of the cabinet and replaced him with Abel P. Upshur, a fellow Virginian, who was as eager to annex Texas as he was. Upshur wrote to a friend that the annexation of Texas was “the great object of my ambition. I do not care to control any measure of policy except this; and I have reason to believe that no person but myself can control it.” On 16 October 1843, Upshur wrote Van Zandt that he was prepared to negotiate an annexation treaty whenever the Texan was granted authority to do so. Van Zandt sent the news to Texas by special courier; Houston presented the proposal to the Texas Congress in January 1844. The Texas Senate approved of the negotiation and

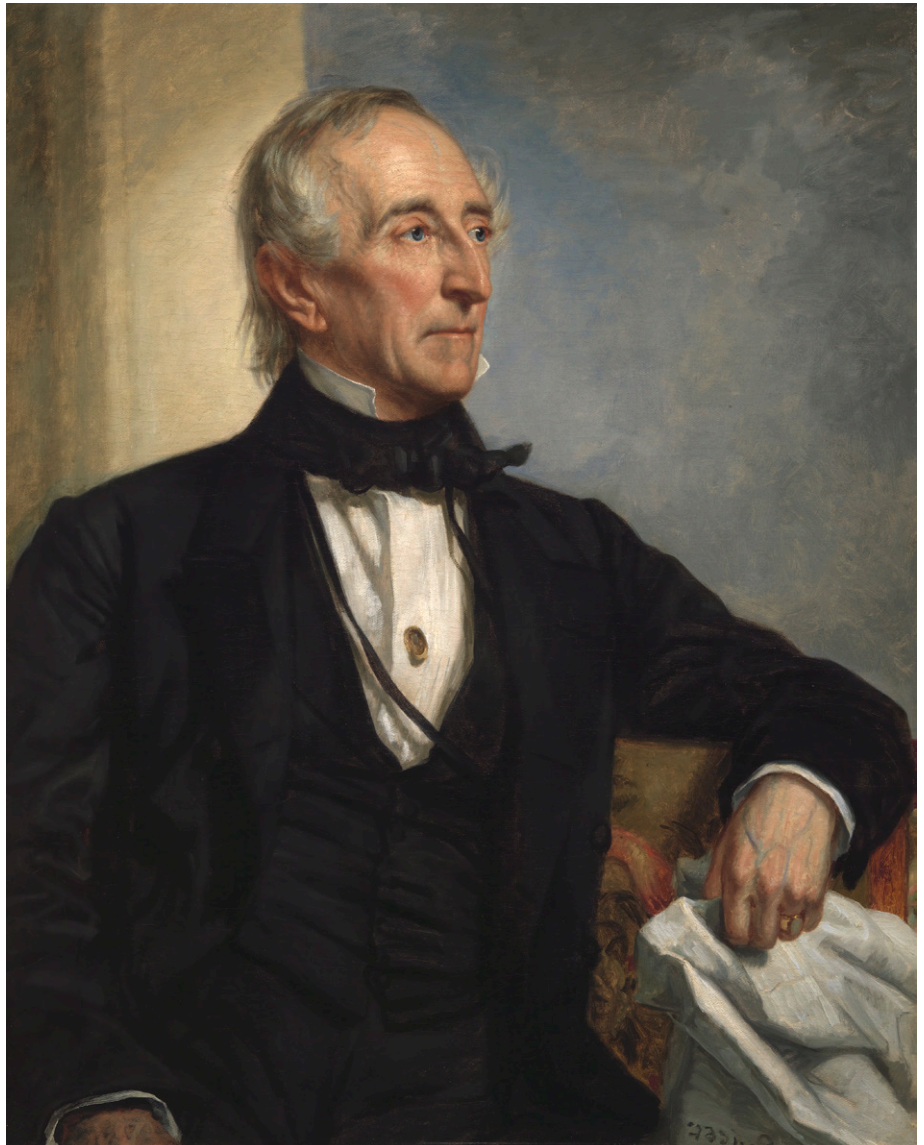


Fig. 9. John Tyler, oil on canvas by George Peter Alexander Healy (1859)

dispatched veteran diplomat J. Pinckney Henderson to Washington to work with Van Zandt.<sup>19</sup>

The discussions were secret and delicate. Texans had requested annexation before and had suffered embarrassment when the United States declined its overture. They did not intend, as Houston wrote, to be the bride left at the altar again. Moreover, Texans had achieved a tenuous armistice with Mexico and worried that annexation talks with the United States would lead to renewed hostilities. Van Zandt asked if the United States would provide Texas with military and naval protection before a treaty was ratified. The suggestion made President John Tyler nervous but he agreed. Upshur assured Van





Fig. 10. This 1844 pro-Democrat lithograph by James S. Baillie and H. Bucholzer predicts the end of Whig opposition to Texas annexation. In its description of the cartoon, the Library of Congress notes "James K. Polk, the expansionist candidate, stands at right near a bridge spanning 'Salt River.' He holds an American flag and hails Texans Stephen Austin (left) and Samuel Houston aboard a wheeled steamboat-like vessel, 'Texas.' Austin, waving the flag of the Lone Star Republic, cries, 'All hail to James K. Polk, the friend [sic] of our Country!' The Texas boat has an eagle figurehead and a star on its prow. Below the bridge, pandemonium reigns among the foes of annexation. Holding onto a rope attached to 'Texas' above, they are dragged into [the] Salt River. Led by Whig presidential nominee Henry Clay, they are (left to right) Theodore Frelinghuysen, Daniel Webster, Henry A. Wise, and an unidentified figure whose legs are tangled in the rope. ...Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, straddling a barrel labeled 'Abolition' in the river, shouts at Clay, 'Avaunt! Unholy man! I will not keep company with a blackleg!', referring to the candidate's reputation as a gambler."

Zandt that "at the moment a treaty of annexation" was signed the United States would send army and navy forces for the protection of Texas.<sup>20</sup>

Upshur was confident that the Senate would pass the annexation treaty with the two-thirds majority necessary for treaty ratification. In January 1844, he assured Murphy that "a clear constitutional majority of two thirds" of the Senate favored the annexation treaty. "The salvation of our Union," he wrote a few days later, "depends on its success." On 27 February 1844, Van Zandt and Upshur informally completed an annexation agreement.<sup>21</sup>

The next day, 28 February, the Texas representative joined Upshur and Tyler, with many other Washington dignitaries, including Members of Congress, diplomats, and Washington doyenne Dolley Madison, on a Potomac cruise aboard the Navy's newest and most technologically advanced warship, the *Princeton*. The steam-powered frigate had a propeller below the waterline making it less vulnerable to enemy fire, and it carried a powerful new gun dubbed the "Peacemaker." The passengers admired the vessel and the crew fired the "Peacemaker" for their entertainment. As the day was ending they prepared the gun for a final salute as they





Fig. 11. This 1844 Currier lithograph depicts the explosion aboard the *Princeton*.

passed George Washington's estate at Mount Vernon. Tyler was about to join the group on deck but stayed behind along with Julia Gardiner, the vivacious daughter of the wealthy New York politician David Gardiner, whom he was courting. It was a providential delay, for when the *Peacemaker* was fired, it exploded, sending pieces of the cannon and shrapnel across the deck (fig. 11). Eight were killed and more wounded. The dead included Secretary of State Upshur and Julia Gardiner's father. Had Tyler been near the cannon he might have died as well.<sup>22</sup>

The *Princeton* disaster proved a fatal blow to the Texas annexation treaty. A week after the explosion Tyler nominated South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun to serve as his third secretary of state. He proved an unfortunate choice. Calhoun was a statesman of great experience; he had represented South Carolina in the U.S. House of Representatives, served as secretary of war in James Monroe's administration, as vice president to John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, and at that time was U.S. senator from South Carolina. But he was deeply identified with—and dedicated to—

southern sectionalism and slavery.

On 12 April 1844, Van Zandt, Henderson, and Calhoun formally signed the treaty. Texas would enter the union as a territory which would later be incorporated as a state. Texas public lands would be transferred to the United States and the federal government would assume the public debts of Texas. Slavery was not mentioned, but in their report home the Texas representatives assured their government that the treaty protected our "domestic institutions." Though they had felt "obliged" to avoid any direct reference to slavery, the treaty protected "the right of property, etc., which we understand to include our right to slaves, as the constitution of the United States recognizes that species of property."<sup>23</sup>

Whether the treaty would have received a two-thirds vote of the Senate is a matter of conjecture. But Calhoun himself bears a measure of responsibility for derailing the agreement. On 18 April, in a letter to the British minister in Washington, Sir Richard Pakenham, Calhoun pronounced British antislavery efforts in Texas as a threat to the "prosperity and safety"



of the United States. He informed Pakenham that Texas and the United States had completed an annexation treaty, which was “the most effectual, if not the only, means of guarding against the threatened danger, and securing their permanent peace and welfare.”<sup>24</sup>

Calhoun might have stopped there, but he did not. He continued, arguing that evidence showed that in states that had ended slavery, the condition of African Americans “had invariably sunk into vice and pauperism, accompanied by the bodily and mental inflictions incident thereto—deafness, blindness, insanity, and idiocy, to a degree without example; while, in all other States which have retained the ancient relation between the races they have improved greatly in every respect—in number, comfort, intelligence, and morals....” In Massachusetts, the state where the “greatest zeal” for abolition existed, their condition was “the most wretched,” while in the Southern states slaves enjoyed “of a degree health and comfort” that compared favorably with the “laboring population of any country in Christendom.”<sup>25</sup>

These astounding assertions were based on faulty data compiled in the 1840 United States census report. Critics pointed out flaws in the methodology of the census that skewed the findings—John Quincy Adams repeatedly called for a House investigation of the census methods—but the administration defended the results.<sup>26</sup>

Tyler submitted the treaty to the Senate on 22 April 1844. Tyler expected that the treaty would be debated by the Senate in executive session, but instead, anti-slavery Senator Benjamin Tappan, an Ohio Democrat, leaked the document to the press. The papers included Calhoun’s incendiary letter to Pakenham. The injunction of secrecy was formally removed and the resulting publicity led to a heated national discussion over adding more slave territory to the nation. The disclosures were a death blow to the treaty, which went down to defeat in the Senate by a vote of 35 to 16 on 8 June 1844.<sup>27</sup>

That fall Democrat James K. Polk, of Tennessee, who had supported Texas annexation, was elected president. During the lame-duck period between the election and the inauguration, Tyler used Polk’s victory as justification to proceed with annexation by another means. In his last annual message of 4 December 1844, Tyler announced that Polk’s victory showed that it was the will of the people that Texas should be “annexed to the Union promptly and immediately.” He recommended

Texas annexation by act of Congress, which required a simple majority rather than a two-thirds vote. Though critics attacked the measure as unconstitutional, the House and the Senate approved annexation on 26 February 1845, and Tyler signed the measure three days later.<sup>28</sup>

On 3 March 1845, only a few hours before the moment Tyler would turn over official duties to James K. Polk, the outgoing president dispatched Andrew Jackson Donelson, the nephew of Old Hickory, to Texas with the offer of annexation. Within a week of Donelson’s arrival in Texas, popular demonstrations supported annexation. At the last moment, Mexico, with British encouragement, proposed a permanent peace treaty with Texas on the condition that the Republic would remain independent of the United States. But it was too late for such measures.<sup>29</sup>

Thereafter, events moved quickly. A convention met at Austin on 4 July 1845 and approved the offer of annexation to the United States. In October the annexation offer and the new state constitution were formally submitted to the people of Texas; approval was unanimous. On 29 December 1845, President James K. Polk signed a bill admitting Texas as a state in the United States. On 19 February 1846 in Austin, Anson Jones, the last president of Texas, lowered the flag of Texas at a ceremony at the capitol. On that notable occasion he said: “The lone star of Texas, which ten years since arose amid clouds over fields of carnage, and obscurely shone for a while, has culminated, and following an inscrutable destiny, has passed on and become fixed forever in that constellation which all freemen and lovers of freedom in the world must reverence and adore—the American union.... The final act in this great drama is now performed. The Republic of Texas is no more.”<sup>30</sup>



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# NOTES

1. Under the custody of the Center for Texas Studies at Texas Christian University (TCU), and TCU's Special Collections in the Mary Couts Burnett Library, the long-lost collection of letters was transcribed for publication as *The Texas Legation Papers, 1836-1845* (Fort Worth, TX, 2012), edited by the author of this article.

2. H.P.N. Gammel, ed., *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897* (Austin, TX, 1898) 1:534; Commission of Austin, Archer, and Wharton, 7 Dec. 1835, and Henry Smith to Austin, Archer, and Wharton, 8 Dec. 1835, in George P. Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas* (3 vols., Washington, DC, 1908-1911) 1:51-52, 52-54. Hereafter cited as DCRT.

3. For biographies of the commissioners see David Minor, "Archer, Branch Tanner"; Eugene C. Barker, "Austin, Stephen Fuller"; and Merle Weir, "Wharton, William Harris," all in the *Handbook of Texas Online* (<https://tshaonline.org/handbook>).

4. Austin to Richard R. Royall, 25 Dec. 1835, Eugene C. Barker, ed., *The Austin Papers* (4 vols., Washington, DC, 1924-1928) 3:292-294; William H. Wharton to the Public, 9 Nov. 1834, in Barker, *Austin Papers* 3:25-26.

5. Austin to James F. Perry, 4 March 1836, in Barker, *Austin Papers* 3:317-318.

6. Stanley Siegel, *A Political History of the Texas Republic, 1836-1845* (Austin, TX, 1956), pp. 40-41; Will Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico* (Lincoln, NE, 2007), pp. 176-183.

7. Austin, Archer, and Wharton to the Government of Texas, 6 April 1836, DCRT 1:79-80.

8. W. Roy Smith, "The Quarrel between Governor Smith and the Council of the Provisional Government of the Republic," *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 5 (April 1902):324.

9. Paul Lack, ed., *The Diary of William Fairfax Gray: From Texas to Virginia, 1835* (Dallas, TX, 1997), pp. 55, 58; Gregg Cantrell, *Stephen F. Austin: Empresario of Texas* (New Haven, CT, 1999), pp. 346-347.

10. Lynn Hudson Parsons, *John Quincy Adams* (Madison, WI, 1998), pp. 224-231.

11. Morfit sent twelve reports, which are published in Senate Document 20, 24th Cong., 2d sess., Serial 297; John M. Belohlavek, "Let the Eagle Soar!": *The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson* (Lincoln, NE, 1985), pp. 232-233; Jackson's message to Congress is in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (20 vols., New York, 1897) 4:1484-1488.

12. Siegel, *Texas Republic*, p. 77; Wharton and Hunt to James P. Henderson, 5 March 1837, DCRT 1:201-202.

13. Houston to Jackson, 20 Nov. 1836, *Austin Papers* 3:457-458.

14. Jonathan W. Jordan, *Lone Star Navy: The Fight for the Gulf of Mexico and the Shaping of the American West* (Washington, DC, 2006), pp. 83-87.

15. Hunt to Forsyth, 4 Aug. 1837, in William R. Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860* (12 vols., Washington, DC, 1932-1939) 12(*Texas and Venezuela*):129-140. Hereafter IAA.

16. Forsyth to Hunt, 25 Aug. 1837, IAA 12:11-13.

17. Grayson to Houston, 21 Oct. 1837, DCRT 1:264-265; Robert A. Irion to Anson Jones, 12 July 1838, in Stevens, *The Texas Legation Papers*, pp. 294-296; Anson Jones to Aaron Vail, 12 Oct. 1838, in IAA 12:173-174; Mirabeau B. Lamar, "Inaugural Address of Mirabeau B. Lamar," 10 Dec. 1838 and "[Notes for the Inaugural Address] on the Annexation of Texas," in Charles A. Gulick, ed., *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar* (6 vols., Austin, TX, 1920-1927) 2:316-323, 324-327; Gammel, *Laws of Texas* 2:75.

18. Reily to Jones, 3 Aug. 1842, DCRT 1:576-580.

19. Upshur to Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, 26 Oct. 1843, quoted in Edward P. Crapol, *John Tyler: The Accidental President* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), p. 195; IAA 12: 53-54; Siegel, *Texas Republic*, pp. 227-229.

20. William G. Crane, *Life and Select Literary Remains of Sam Houston of Texas* (Dallas, TX, 1884), pp. 370-373; Van Zandt to



Upshur, 17 Jan. 1844, House Executive Document 271, 28th Cong., 1st sess., (Serial 444), pp. 88-89; Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, 20 Jan. 1844, DCRT 2:239-243.

21. Upshur to Murphy, 16 Jan. 1844 and Upshur to Murphy, 23 Jan. 1844, marked "Private and Confidential," in IAA 12: 59-65 and 69).

22. Robert Seager II, *And Tyler Too: A Biography of John and Julia Tyler* (Norwalk, CT, 1963), pp. 204-206; Crapol, *John Tyler*, pp. 207-209.

23. Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and other International Acts of the United States of America* (8 vols., Washington, DC, 1931-1948) 4: 697-699; Van Zandt and Henderson to Jones, 12 April 1844, DCRT 2:269-273.

24. Calhoun to Pakenham, 18 April 1844, in Clyde N. Wilson, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (28 vols., Columbia, SC, 1959-2003) 18(1844):273-278.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Frederick Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas* (New York, 1972), pp. 62-68; Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History* (New Haven, CT, 1988), pp. 26, 28-31; Melissa Nobles, *Shades of Citizenship: Race and the Census in Modern Politics* (Stanford, CA, 2000), pp. 31-35.

27. "Proceedings of the Senate and Documents Relative to Texas from which the Injunction of Secrecy has been Removed," Senate Document 341, 28th Cong., 1st sess., 1844; Merk, *Slavery and Texas*, pp. 68-81.

28. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers* 5:2197-2198; Crapol, *John Tyler*, p. 220.

29. Kenneth R. Stevens, "The Diplomacy of the Lone Star Republic," in Kenneth W. Howell and Charles Swanlund, *Single Star of the West: The Republic of Texas, 1836-1845* (Denton, TX, 2017), pp. 293-294.

30. Herbert Gambrell, *Anson Jones: The Last President of Texas* (Austin, TX, 1947), pp. 406, 418-419.

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Fig. 2. Architect of the Capitol

Fig. 3. Courtesy Friends of the Governor's Mansion, Austin, Texas

Fig. 4. Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) by David Rent Etter, after the James Barton Longacre engraving from a painting by Joseph Wood, 1835. Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.

Fig. 5. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-USZ62-109855]

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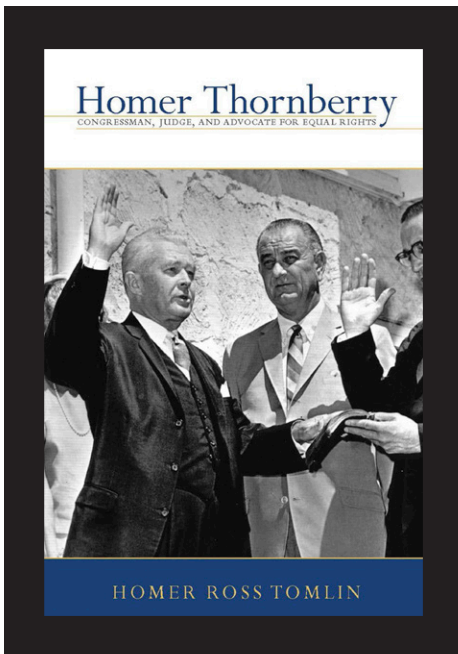
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## Homer Thornberry: Congressman, Judge, and Advocate for Equal Rights

HOMER ROSS TOMLIN  
(Fort Worth, TX, 2016),  
222 pp., \$32.50



Looking back at the 1960s in Washington, it is easy to be mesmerized by the sheer, sprawling scope of the Great Society as a legislative undertaking. Not to be overlooked, however, are the individual transformations upon which the program was built. After all, the Great Society,

and the sea changes of the sixties, were the sum of these numberless revolutions in individual hearts and minds that, together, remade American society during the decade.

The career of Homer Thornberry (1909-1995)—eight-term Democratic congressman from Texas's tenth district, Fifth Circuit judge, and erstwhile LBJ Supreme Court nominee, memorialized here in a new biography offered by his grandson—is an exemplar of such transformations.

Thornberry would be of anecdotal interest to history if only for his close relationships with fellow Texas Democrats Lyndon Johnson and House Speaker Sam Rayburn. The Thornberry and Johnson families were close socially. The three Thornberry children knew the Johnsons as “Uncle Lyndon” and “Aunt Bird.” Thornberry helped Johnson through convalescence from his near-fatal 1955 heart attack with nightly marathon domino games in his hospital room and was with him at Parkland Hospital in Dallas on 22 November 1963 (although not, as recounted here, one of the party in the vice president’s car when the assassination occurred). Bachelor Rayburn was a frequent dinner

guest at the Thornberrys’, enjoying “southern staples like buttermilk, buttered corn on the cob, and chilled raw onions” (64). Thornberry became one of the select few included in the Speaker’s “Board of Education,” the bourbon-fueled pow-wows that Rayburn hosted after-hours in his private office in the Capitol.

A life story like Thornberry’s puts to shame our present generation of callow Americans: adversities were overcome, in fact leveraged, to launch life-long careers of public service. Thornberry’s parents, William and Mary, were teachers at the Texas Deaf and Dumb Asylum in Austin. Both were deaf and mute; Homer learned to sign before he could speak. As a neighbor recollected, the couple were “about as poor as Job’s turkey... [t]here just wasn’t anything that they had at all” (11). The family’s situation was made even more tenuous by William’s death in the 1918 influenza pandemic.

Out of these straitened circumstances, Thornberry climbed rapidly. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin—a seedbed for Texas politicians-in-the-making—and then from its law school. He



became Travis County Deputy Sheriff at age 21 and was elected to the Texas Legislature in 1936 and as Travis County District Attorney in 1940. In 1948, when Lyndon Johnson stepped aside from his House seat to make his successful bid for the Senate, Thornberry had his backing as his replacement. Thornberry won that year's Democratic primary and thereafter—the state of the Texas Republican Party being what it was at midcentury—ran unopposed in each of the next six congressional elections.

Tomlin places Thornberry's development as a policymaker in the context of two opposed political currents: postwar Washington's rising liberal moment, and the contrary, rightward movement experienced in Texas in the same years. A series of conservative governors, helped along by the conservative "Texas Regulars" faction of the state Democratic Party, oversaw a blue-to-red transition fueled by nouveau riche oil fortunes untethered from much sense of the social responsibility of wealth and by poisonous opposition to Supreme Court civil rights rulings.

Thornberry was swept up in the national current. Although in his early years in Congress he voted along traditional southern Democratic lines in opposition to labor and civil rights interests, Thornberry made an abrupt about-face on the Civil Rights Act of 1957. After opposing the bill as introduced, he supported the revised version that won passage, thereby, notes Tomlin, "cementing his complete reversal on... civil rights legislation in general" (74). Thornberry was one of

the few southerners to give early support to the Civil Rights Act of 1960, the year that "marked Thornberry's definitive break from the conservative coalition" (89). He became "the only southerner on the Rules Committee to regularly back the Kennedy administration" (110).

At this juncture, the realities of the changing political winds in Texas kicked in. Sensing the shift in his constituency, Thornberry called in his chits with Democratic leadership, garnering himself "a good, steady job" (109) as federal judge for the western district of Texas in July 1963. His LBJ-powered rise proved meteoric: in June 1965 Johnson moved Thornberry up to a Fifth Circuit judgeship, and, in 1968, attempted to elevate him to the Supreme Court. That move was part of a gambit to place Johnson's long-time consigliere, Associate Justice Abe Fortas, in the seat of retiring Chief Justice Earl Warren. The hope was that Thornberry's nomination would placate conservatives opposed to Fortas. But the deal fell apart; Fortas withdrew his name from consideration; and Thornberry's opening never materialized.

If Thornberry's initial conversion to the cause of midcentury American liberalism had been merely opportunistic—a decision to act as "a loyal lieutenant under Democratic leadership" (79)—his service on the federal bench, as a judge with life tenure, showed it to have been lasting. In his Fifth Circuit rulings declaring state poll taxes and the exclusion of African Americans from jury service unconstitutional, Thornberry placed himself, in the words of the *New York Times*, at the "storm cen-

ter of the fight over equal rights for the Negro" (137). Serving, as it did, the states of the old Confederacy, the Fifth Circuit was inundated by school desegregation cases, which it was called upon to decide with little Supreme Court guidance. Its liberal faction, Thornberry among them, broke ground in rulings that, in the opinion of Attorney General Ramsey Clark, "brought racial integration to the Deep South a generation sooner than the Supreme Court could have done it" (158).

Tomlin maps this evolution in his grandfather's politics. The intriguing question remains: from what sources did this transformation spring? Clearly, commitments beyond those of Democratic Party loyalty were involved, but what were these? The question matters, since it was transformations such as Thornberry's, experienced by multitudes of Americans—although few of them so importantly placed—that made enactment of the Great Society program possible. Tomlin's precis of his grandfather's career provides a map of these personal transitions that will prove of use in further explorations that seek to locate their well-springs.



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# SOCIETY NEWS

## Cokie Roberts Leads Panel of Prominent Historians: USCHS Hosts 25th Annual National Heritage Lecture

KATIE GARLOCK/PORTRAITS



*Moderator Cokie Roberts*

On the evening of October 20, in the historic Kennedy Caucus Room of the Russell Senate Office Building, the U.S. Capitol Historical Society hosted the 25th Annual National Heritage Lecture. This year's topic was "Doing History: Comparing Approaches to the Historian's Craft." Cokie Roberts served as moderator for the panel, which included documentarian Grace Guggenheim, historical researcher and writer Mike Hill, and novelist Thomas Mallon.

The United States Capitol Historical Society, the White House Historical Association, and the Supreme Court Historical Society established the National Heritage Lecture in 1991 to enhance knowledge and appreciation of the American system of government and the principles upon which it was founded. Hosted in turn by each of the three historical societies, each year the National Heritage Lecture explores one of the three branches of government and the momentous events and personalities associated with its history. The three historical organizations are private, nonpartisan nonprofits dedicated to research, education, and publication.

Stacy McBride, Staff Director for the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, welcomed attendees on behalf of Senator Roy Blunt. Don Carlson



(Chairman, U.S. Capitol Historical Society), Dr. Curtis Sandberg (Director, the David M. Rubenstein Center for White House History & Senior Vice President of Educational Resources), and Dr. David T. Pride (Executive Director, United States Supreme Court Historical Society) all participated in the program.

Cokie Roberts began the panel discussion by sharing her personal stories of the history of the room and the importance of witnessing and documenting history from multiple perspectives. Roberts engaged each member of the panel with insightful questions about their work and

led the lively discussion. Panelists shared their different methods of “doing history” and the unique challenges each faces: deciding how much fiction or how much history to write into an historical fiction novel; searching for primary sources and original footage; digging past the surface of primary sources to find the whole truth. Thoughtful questions from the audience led to candid and intriguing answers from the panelists.

The U.S. Capitol Historical Society would like to thank the United States Supreme Court Historical Society and the White House Historical Association.

## U.S. Capitol Historical Society Programs Feature Speakers, Book Talks, Discussions



*Eric Foner*



*Harold Holzer (center) talks with lecture attendees.*

The U.S. Capitol Historical Society has been pleased to offer a number of lectures and book talks, as well as the annual scholarly symposium, over recent months. *Washington Post* reporter **Robert O’Harrow** discussed his book on Montgomery Meigs, and author **Carl Adams** detailed his journey into the story of an enslaved Illinois woman, Nance, and Abraham Lincoln’s legal work on her behalf. Noted historian **Harold Holzer** delivered the annual Black History Month lecture; he discussed images of Abraham Lincoln that appear in the Capitol. **Paul Polgar** of the University of Mississippi spoke about the First

Congress and its debates about race and slavery.

The annual symposium in May marked the start of a new series of symposia that will focus on different aspects or periods of the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era. Keynote speaker **Eric Foner** (Columbia University) set the scene with his discussion of Reconstruction history and scholarship on May 11. The May 12 portion of the event featured six additional speakers from across the country: **L. Diane Barnes** (Youngstown State University), Spencer Crew (George Mason University), Paul Finkelman (University of Pittsburgh School of Law), **Lucy Salyer** (University of New Hampshire), **Brook Thomas** (University of California, Irvine), and **Michael Vorenberg** (Brown University). They addressed a variety of related topics, including art about Recon-



During the symposium, Chief Historian **Chuck diGiacomantonio** (right) presented the first place award to one of the winners, **Fafa Nutor**, of the 2014-15 Making Democracy Work Essay Contest. She read a portion of her essay to the audience. Congratulations, Fafa! The other first place winner, **Sophia Chen**, received her award during a separate visit to Washington.



struction, Thaddeus Stevens, Frederick Douglass, the 14th amendment, citizenship issues, and the process of deciding how to depict Reconstruction at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Many of these talks, including Foner's, have been broadcast on C-SPAN's American History TV and can

be found by searching "Capitol Historical Society" at [www.c-span.org](http://www.c-span.org).

Looking ahead, the Society is planning a robust fall series of lunchtime lectures on topics ranging across Capitol and DC history, art, and monuments. Visit [uschs.org](http://uschs.org) for more information or to pre-register!

## USCHS Member Event: The Brumidi Corridors Rediscovered

On 18 July 2017 the United States Capitol Historical Society hosted an evening reception and educational program about the restoration and conservation of the Brumidi Corridors of the United States Capitol. The breathtaking rooms and corridors located on the first floor of the Senate wing of the Capitol were decorated in the style of Raphael's Loggia in the Vatican by Constantino Brumidi and his team of artists between 1856 and 1878. Combining the ancient style with uniquely North American elements and icons, Brumidi and his team created a beautifully symbolic work in the passages of the Capitol.

Over more than 150 years, damage, deterioration, and layers of unfortunate overpainting dimmed and then obscured the brilliance of the original design. These degradations shifted the light and elegant palette to dark and dingy and covered the highly-skilled work of the original painters. Beginning in 1992, **Christiana Cunningham-Adams** led a team of highly-trained professionals in painstakingly removing the layers of over-

paint, at times with surgical scalpels, and stabilizing damaged areas of the walls.

Guests at the program gathered in the Lyndon B. Johnson Room, also decorated by Brumidi, just beyond the Senate floor. Following remarks from Chairman of the USCHS Board of Trustees **Donald G. Carlson**, Senator **Patrick Leahy** (VT), Deputy Architect of the Capitol **Christine Merton**, and USCHS President **Ronald Sarasin**, the group embarked on a guided tour of the corridors.

Along the tour route guests met and learned from **Amy Elizabeth Burton**, assistant curator for the secretary of the Senate; Dr. **Michele Cohen**, curator for the architect of the capitol; Cunningham-Adams, chief conservator on the project, who discussed how she and her team carefully restored and retouched the corridors to bring them back in line with Brumidi's vision; **Tom Fontana**, director of communications and special events for the Capitol Visitor Center; and Dr. **Barbara Wolanin**, curator emerita for the architect of the capitol.



*The evening's Brumidi corridor presenters, from left: Burton, Cunningham-Adams, Fontana, Wolanin, and Cohen*



*Society staff and volunteers prepare to lead the guided tours.*

BOTH: KATIE GARLOCK/PORTRAITONS



# CAPITOL COMMITTEE EVENTS

## INCLUDE ANNUAL LUNCHEES, HONOR HISTORY OF SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

ALL: KATIE GARLOCK/PORTRAITIONS



(above) Chairman Thad Cochran, Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy, and Senator Barbara Mikulski, former chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, attended the reception honoring the committee's history.



Senate Historian Betty Koed accepts her gift from the Society after delivering the keynote address at the reception.



Event attendees listen to Betty Koed's informative remarks about the Senate Appropriations Committee's history.



(left) Former Senate Appropriations Committee Staff Directors Frank Sullivan, Jim Morhard, Keith Kennedy, Steve Cortese, Terry Sauvain, and Charlie Houy pictured with current Staff Directors Charles Kieffer and Bruce Evans



The U.S. Capitol Historical Society celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Senate Appropriations Committee with an evening reception on 28 June 2017 in the Kennedy Caucus Room. To begin the program, **Charlie Houy**, former staff director under Senator Daniel Inouye, read a heartfelt letter written by Irene Hirano Inouye to the committee. Chairman **Thad Cochran** reflected on the rewarding work he has spearheaded, and Vice Chairman **Patrick Leahy** spoke about the bipartisan friendships that he cherishes. To conclude the program, Senate Historian **Betty Koed** highlighted milestones in the committee's history. Most notably, she told the story of Leona Wells, the first woman to hold a top committee position in the Senate when she served as chief clerk of the Appropriations Committee in 1911. The evening served as a joyous reunion for the committee, which welcomed back former Maryland Senator **Barbara Mikulski** and several former staff directors. The program aired on C-SPAN in July. Go to [www.c-span.org](http://www.c-span.org) and search for "U.S. Capitol Historical Society" to find the recording of this event.

**Dave Hoppe**, then Chief of Staff to Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI), was the U.S. Capitol Historical Society's (USCHS) honored guest at the Congressional Staff event on 18 November 2016. He joined over 50 members of the USCHS Leadership Council and Constitution Signers for lunch in Altria's beautiful atrium overlooking the Capitol. Hoppe shared intimate, humorous,

and unique anecdotes about his many years working in the Capitol. His stories illuminated the special and historic qualities of the building and his great appreciation of what happened before him in those offices and corridors. The event concluded with Hoppe's candid and thoughtful responses during a Q&A session.

Representative **Tom Cole** was the U.S. Capitol Historical Society's honored guest on 20 March 2016 at the Annual Trustee Lunch. Cole engaged a group of \$25,000 Leadership Council level members with a lively discussion moderated by U.S. Capitol Historical Society Board Chairman **Don Carlson**.

During the program, Cole fielded attendees' questions with honest and thoughtful answers to their policy questions and concerns, which gave insights into his job as a deputy whip for the majority. He spoke about his Native American heritage as a member of the Chickasaw Nation and discussed how he helped his mother become the first Native American woman elected to the Oklahoma State Senate. Cole shared that he enjoys being in Statuary Hall or the Rotunda at night, when the halls are empty. It is there where he thinks about all of the influential players in history who have stood in the Capitol before him. He concluded the discussion by saying, "if [as a Member of Congress] you are no longer in awe of the Capitol, it is time to retire." The Society thanks Cole for his time and his staff for their organizational support.

KATHY KUPKA PHOTOGRAPHY



*Dave Hoppe talks about his fondest memories of working in the Capitol during the Congressional Staff Lunch.*



*Capitol Committee members listen attentively to Dave Hoppe's remarks.*

KATHY KUPKA PHOTOGRAPHY





Don Carlson (USCHS board chairman, left) moderates the discussion with Rep. Cole during the Annual Trustee Lunch.



Rep. Tom Cole speaks to the Leadership Council Members of the Capitol Committee.

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Thanks to Altria for generously hosting and Bank of America for exclusively supporting the *Congressional Staff Lunch*.

Thanks to Express Scripts for providing the generous donation which made the *Annual Trustee Lunch* possible.

Thanks to Volkswagen, United Technologies Corporation, and Corn Refiners Association for their support of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society in honor of the *New Members of Congress*.

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## WELCOMING RECEPTION FOR NEW MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

BOTH: KATHY KUPKA PHOTOGRAPHY



*Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan*

On Tuesday, 7 March 2017, the United States Capitol Historical Society hosted a Welcoming Reception for new Members of the 115th Congress in National Statuary Hall. The event provided incoming freshmen Members with an opportunity to learn about the history of both the Capitol and the Congress.

On the unique privilege of working in the Capitol, Speaker of the House **Paul Ryan** said in his remarks that “you can’t just help but to take in a sense of awe and history as you walk through.” Similarly, House Democratic Leader **Nancy Pelosi** shared that “it’s really quite a thrill to be able to welcome new members to the Congress in the context of the history in which we all serve.” Assistant House Democratic Leader **James**

**Clyburn** noted that “I view the study of history, I view our observation of all these symbols of history, as being part of the experience of being an American.”

U.S. Capitol Historical Society President **Ron Sarasin**, who served in the House of Representatives from Connecticut from 1973 to 1979, acted as the master of ceremonies and shared some of his own experiences. “Every two years when the Congress convenes, I’m reminded of the sense of energy and purpose that comes with being a Member of this great institution—I imagine our honored guests are feeling the same way tonight,” commented Sarasin.

Members and guests also heard from Dr. **James Thurber**, founder of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University, and Democratic Freshman Class Co-Presidents **Val Demings** and **Donald McEachin**.



*House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi*

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The Society deeply appreciates all the Capitol Committee members for their continued involvement and support of its educational mission.

For more information about the many benefits available to Capitol Committee members, please contact Director, Corporate Giving Marilyn Green at (202) 543-8919 x21 or [mgreen@uschs.org](mailto:mgreen@uschs.org), or Manager of Development and Outreach Jennifer Romberg at (202) 543-8919 x23 or [jromberg@uschs.org](mailto:jromberg@uschs.org).



## *U. S. Capitol Society Board of Trustees Announces New Chairman of the Board*



*Donald G. Carlson (left) and the Honorable E. Thomas Coleman (right)*

**T**he Board of Trustees of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society (USCHS) has unanimously elected **Donald G. Carlson** to succeed retiring Chairman **E. Thomas Coleman**. “Don has worked hard on behalf of the Society for many years, and I am confident he will be a very good chairman,” Coleman remarked.

Under Coleman’s leadership, the board undertook a thorough review of the Society’s function and mission, enabling the staff and board to meet pragmatic operational concerns while maintaining an unwavering commitment to education and service. Coleman was instrumental in recruiting current USCHS President **Ron Sarasin** in 2000, whom Coleman credits with putting the Society on a solid financial footing. Coleman represented Missouri’s 6th District in the U.S. House of Representatives for nearly two decades.

The incoming chairman, Donald G. Carlson, currently a managing director in the Washington National Tax

Services office of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, has much experience on the Washington scene; he served 34 years on the Hill in four congressional offices. He served as chief of staff to Representatives Bill Archer and John Culberson. Carlson has served several terms on the USCHS Board of Trustees; he has been a key member of both the Executive Committee and the Development Committee. He is also chairman of the Advisory Board of The Archer Center—the Washington Campus of the University of Texas System, and serves on the board of The Ripon Society, the Advisory Council of The Texas Lyceum, and the Congressional Advisory Council of the International Conservation Caucus Foundation. Carlson said he “looks forward to building on the work of Chairman Coleman and expanding the programs which are so important to educating the public on the history and heritage of the U.S. Capitol.”

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#### Questions?

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# MARKETPLACE



## KIPLINGER VALET BOX

Walnut wood finish makes this valet box a rich addition to any storage space. Included in design is a cord accommodation in the rear, felt lining, and a color turn-of-the-century image of the Capitol from the Kiplinger collection. (11 1/2" x 9" x 3")

#002995      \$39.95      **Members**      \$35.95



## COLLECTOR'S APOTHEOSIS PLATE

The magnificent fresco that adorns the oculus of the Capitol dome by Constantino Brumidi is the centerpiece for this 7 1/2" porcelain plate. Gift boxed.

#000302      \$48.00      **Members**      \$43.20

## MARBLE DOME PAPERWEIGHT

Centered on a circular wood base, this replica of the dome of the U.S. Capitol is made from the marble of the east front steps originally installed between 1863 and 1865. The marble has been ground to a fine powder and resin is added for molding these handsome desk or shelf accessories. Gift boxed with provenance card. Made in America.

#002769      \$48.00  
**Members**      \$43.20



## APOTHEOSIS BOX

The magnificent fresco that adorns the oculus of the Capitol dome by Constantino Brumidi is the inlay tile for this versatile organizer.

(5" x 5" x 2 3/4")

#002784      \$36.00  
**Members**      \$32.40



# MARKETPLACE



## CAPITOL SNACK BOWL

Great for college students and game night, this lightweight melamine bowl makes a diverse serving piece. Use as a four-way snack server with side clip-on trays for dipping or as a large serving bowl! Bowl comes with four-way divider and two clip-on trays. (11 3/4"D x 5 3/4"T) **#002985** **\$36.00** **Members** **\$32.40**



## BRUMIDI EAGLE COASTERS

Four stone coasters rest in a pine wood base and feature a detail from the beautiful corridors of the Senate painted by Constantino Brumidi. Gift boxed. **#002485** **\$42.00**  
**Members** **\$37.80**



## FOUR-STAGE PORCELAIN REVERE BOWL

Designed especially for the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, this lovely porcelain bowl is the perfect presentation piece or gift item. Four images of the Capitol during its construction history are framed by evergreen laurels and 22 kt gold accent trim. Elegantly gift boxed with satin lining.

**#002419**

**\$150.00**

**Members**

**\$135.00**

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*From left, Ron Wise, Dee Hoffman, Paul Mazzuca, Aron McMillan, and James Olander listen to Elliott's presentation.*



*Farar Elliott*

## Volunteer Appreciation Program Features Farar Elliott

On Thursday, 2 February 2017, the United States Capitol Historical Society hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Event in the Capitol. The educational program featured a talk from **Farar Elliott**, curator of the House of Representatives.

More than 70 recurring USCHS volunteers came out to celebrate the work that had been done with their help. Society President **Ronald Sarasin** and Chairman **Donald Carlson** both gave remarks expressing their gratitude.

Elliott's talk, entitled "The Bear Garden," focused on the contrast between the rough-and-tumble atmosphere of the House of Representatives during the nineteenth century and the artifacts of the same period. While Members of the time could be brash and vulgar, the everyday items used in the House chamber evoked the lofty ideals woven into the fabric of our government.

Check out *The Capitol Dome* online!  
Find our online edition at [www.uschs.org](http://www.uschs.org).