

SPECIAL EDITION

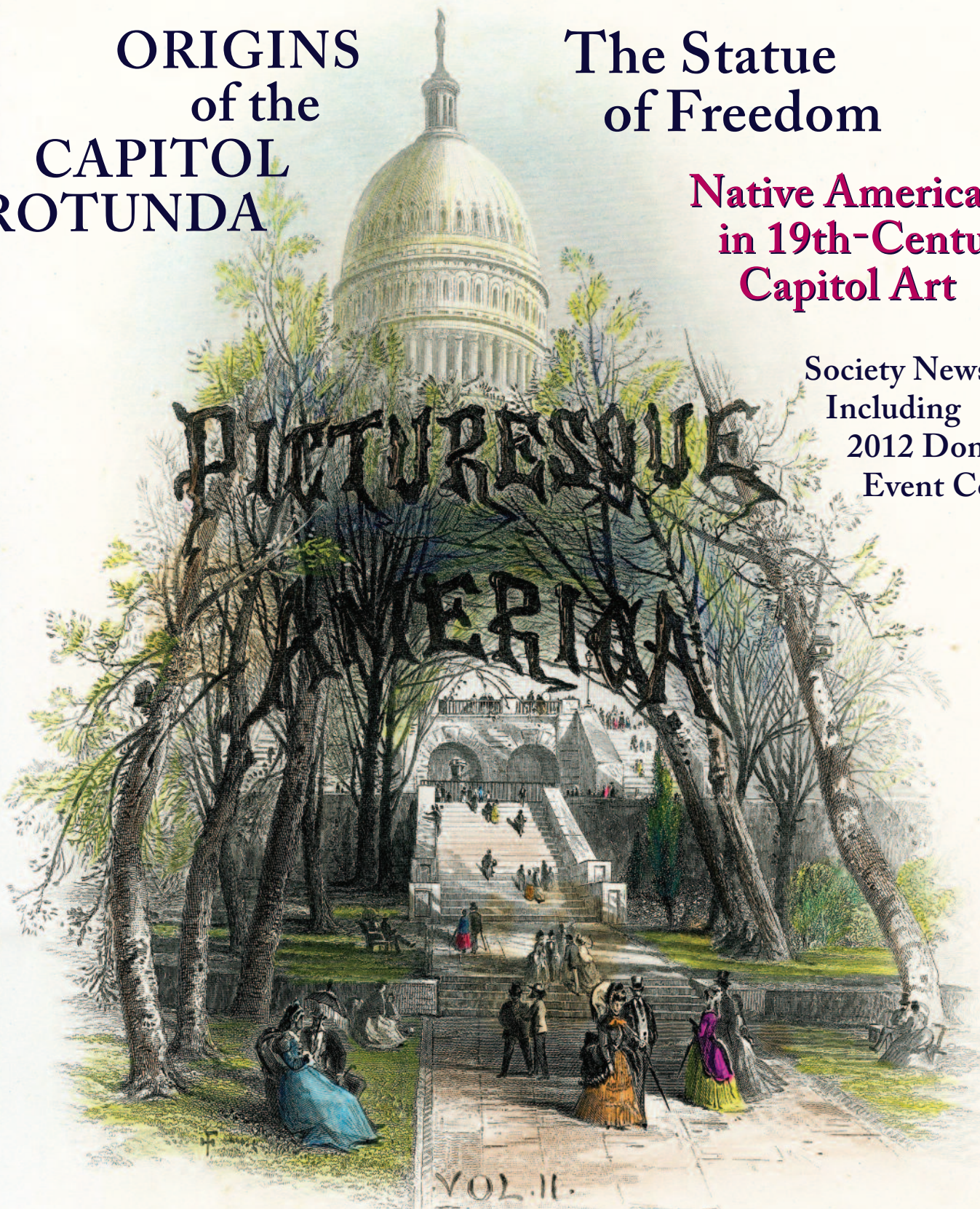
THE CAPITOL DOME

ORIGINS
of the
CAPITOL
ROTUNDA

The Statue
of Freedom

Native Americans
in 19th-Century
Capitol Art

Society News...
Including
2012 Donors &
Event Coverage



READER MAIL

Letters from readers regarding our last special edition, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society.

CORRECTION

ON PAGE 36 OF THE WINTER 2013 edition of the *Capitol Dome* is a lovely picture of President Reagan and four of his closest friends. The character second from left is identified as Cong. Barber Conable, but it is not he. In fact, it is my second favorite Congressman, yours truly.

Ever since I came to Congress back in another long-forgotten century, I have wished I were Barber Conable, and tried, with a notable lack of success, to emulate his style and success.

Parenthetically, it should be noted here that, in addition to his other skills and interests, Barber was, after Fred, probably Congress' premier historian.

The good news here is that I have achieved my highest ambition. I have finally been mistaken for Barber! Because of that thrill, I shall not demand a correction, nor even a year's free subscription to the *Dome*.

~Rep. Bill Frenzel
Washington, DC



EDITOR'S NOTE: Our thanks to Hon. Bill Frenzel for so kindly pointing out our error. We reprint the picture here, with the correct caption.

President Schwengel and Congressmen Bill Frenzel (second from left) and J.J. Pickle (far right), along with sculptor Marcel Jovine, present President Ronald Reagan with a complete set of the Society's 1987 Signing of the Constitution Commemorative Medals.

... I WRITE TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON THE [50th anniversary] issue in general and the essay on Congressman Schwengel in particular.

I was in my first academic position at the University of Iowa in 1961 when Cong. Schwengel and I began a deep and abiding friendship. Indeed, it was at his insistence that I finally agreed to become Executive Director of the U.S. Civil War Centennial Commission at a time when Centennial matters were in crisis. He was a tower of strength as we slowly got the train upright and back on track. He was a walking encyclopedia on the Capitol building, a genuine

authority on Abraham Lincoln, and one of the few truly honest politicians I have ever known.

Throughout our long relationship, he refused to call me by my nickname, "Bud." To him, I was always "Dr. Jim." His infectious chuckle, boundless energy, and open expression of friendship were traits I can never forget.

Please extend my warmest thanks to Jeffrey Hearn for the depth and balance of his article/tribute.

~James I. Robertson, Jr.
Oak Grove, VA

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on the web: www.uschs.org
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Cover: Tourists stroll up the sidewalk to the west front of the Capitol in the frontispiece to volume 2 of Picturesque America by William Cullen Bryant published by D. Appleton and Company in 1874. This print is one of several items recently donated to the society by Karen Miles.

GRAPHIC ORIGINS

OF THE U.S. CAPITOL ROTUNDA

BY DON ALEXANDER HAWKINS

“Pray get me by some means or other a compleat set Piranesi’s drawings of the Pantheon ... I wish to render them useful in the public buildings now to be begun at Georgetown.”
(fig. 1) Thomas Jefferson to Wm. Short, March 16, 1791

“... the great circular room and dome made a part of the earliest idea of the Capitol, as projected by Major L’Enfant, drawn by Doctor Thornton, and adopted by General Washington. You will see it so marked on the plan of the city engraved by Thackara and Vallance in Philadelphia, 1792.” John Trumbull to Charles Bulfinch, January 28, 1818

PRESIDENT WASHINGTON WAS DISAPPOINTED with the results of the competition for the design of the United States Capitol; therefore, the commissioners of public buildings he had appointed were also disappointed.¹ The competition had been announced in March 1792,² and over a dozen sets of drawings had been submitted by mid-July. None was acceptable, and by November, the architect of the least unacceptable competitive drawing was struggling with his fifth attempt at a design.³ French-born architect Stephen Hallet had every right to expect that, with the active support of the commissioners and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, he would eventually succeed. He may have heard that William Thornton, a doctor from the West Indian island of Tortola, had been in communication with the commissioners, requesting permission to make a very late submission.⁴ He also may have heard of their politeness and vague encouragement of Thornton, while letting him know that Hallet was well advanced with his drawings. Hallet never saw the drawings Thornton brought from Tortola, but if he had, he is unlikely to have been much concerned: the amateurish inadequacy of Thornton’s proposal would have been obvious to him.⁵ But then Thornton made another design, and in a matter of weeks he had displaced Hallet as the potential architect of the Capitol.⁶

His prize-winning design is unlike any that had come before it, even his own first attempt.⁷ So how did Thornton-the-Newcomer manage to leapfrog over Hallet-the-Industrious, who had been working so closely with both the secretary of state and the commissioners? First, by not officially submitting his first weak design, he avoided being eliminated in the first round of the competition. Second, the official plan of the federal city, produced just before his arrival in Philadelphia, gave him graphic clues to the desirable scale and massing of the building on the crest of its pedestal-like hill. Third, he conferred with someone who had useful insights into the

problems Jefferson was having in his effort to get the French architect to design a building for his American clients.

At the time Peter Charles L'Enfant, the designer of the Federal City, refused to continue working if it meant subordinating himself to the commissioners, he had not yet submitted a single design for its buildings.⁸ In the midst of those final negotiations, Jefferson complained that "five months and more have been lost" since the idea of soliciting designs from others had been brought up the previous August.⁹ That may have been when Jefferson made a diagrammatic plan for a circular Capitol. It was the same size as the Roman Pantheon, whose interior geometry fascinated Jefferson: a hemispherical dome covering a cylindrical space whose height equaled its radius. Jefferson did not put his plan forward then or later; he is not known to have shared this plan with L'Enfant or anyone else. L'Enfant continued working with

Fig. 1. Pantheon at Rome, engraving by Piranesi.



the surveyors, the Ellicott brothers, in laying out the city without designs for the major federal buildings, but some details of its plan indicate that he harbored definite ideas about their shapes and sizes.

A “Map of Red and Yellow Dotted Lines” (fig. 3) was drawn by Benjamin Ellicott as part of a report on the progress of the survey of the city in November 1791.¹⁰ It shows the centerlines of the streets and avenues, color-coded to indicate whether they were already laid out or would be so during the current surveying season. The



Fig. 2. The L'Enfant Plan of Washington, D.C.

A) Manuscript drawing, 1791.

B) Coast and Geodetic Survey tracing, 1887.

C) Coast and Geodetic Survey scanned copy, 1991.

map stands chronologically between the surviving L'Enfant manuscript (fig. 2A) that was submitted to the President on August 19, 1791, and the series of engravings of the plan that began to be produced in March 1792.¹¹ The Map of Dotted Lines shows that L'Enfant participated with the surveyors in the process of simplifying significant aspects of the plan relative to the August version, fixing in place every important element of the city's northwest section. East of the Capitol, the colors of some lines and the sketchiness of others indicate that final planning in that half of the city was far less advanced than it was in the western half.

The manuscript plan was one of a series of maps drawn by or for L'Enfant in the process of developing a design for the city. It is casually drafted, indicating its preliminary character. The lines defining its avenues are not strictly parallel with one another or evenly spaced, and their intersections are oddly irregular. This irregularity is sometimes cited as characteristic of L'Enfant's “painterly” design technique, well suited to the design of a garden. Close inspection of the drawing reveals that it is not so much gardenesque as it is careless and undeveloped. For instance, the convergences of the four pairs of avenues meeting near the Capitol are noticeably skewed where the contemporary rules of composition dictated symmetry or an appearance of symmetry. The streets are mostly traced over lightly penciled rectilinear guidelines, and are more regular than the diagonal avenues. Though not perfect, Ellicott's Map of Red and Yellow Dotted Lines is far more carefully drawn than the August 19 manuscript, notably so at the Capitol, where the avenues are drawn symmetrically, though not precisely in their final locations.

In 1887 after nearly a century of fading and rough usage, the then-visible elements of the manuscript map were preserved in a carefully traced copy by the Geological Survey (fig. 2B). In 1991, they copied it again by digital scanning (fig. 2C).¹² Much of the Capitol plan had been erased from the manuscript early in its history, and neither of the later attempts to salvage its fugitive image retrieved useful clues to the building's planned shape. In 2009 spectral imaging at a variety of light

frequencies and at higher resolution than formerly, was carried out by the Library of Congress Preservation Directorate.¹³ With this application of newer technology, new evidence of L'Enfant's intentions for the Capitol finally appeared. Heretofore, the buildings on Ellicott's engraved maps have been the earliest preserved images of the Capitol. Possibly because there was no way to determine whether they were copied from L'Enfant's original manuscript or made up by the engraver, they were never seriously studied as artifacts in the history of the Federal City. Despite the statement by Trumbull quoted above, their history, meaning, and value were almost entirely overlooked.¹⁴ Now that some of the

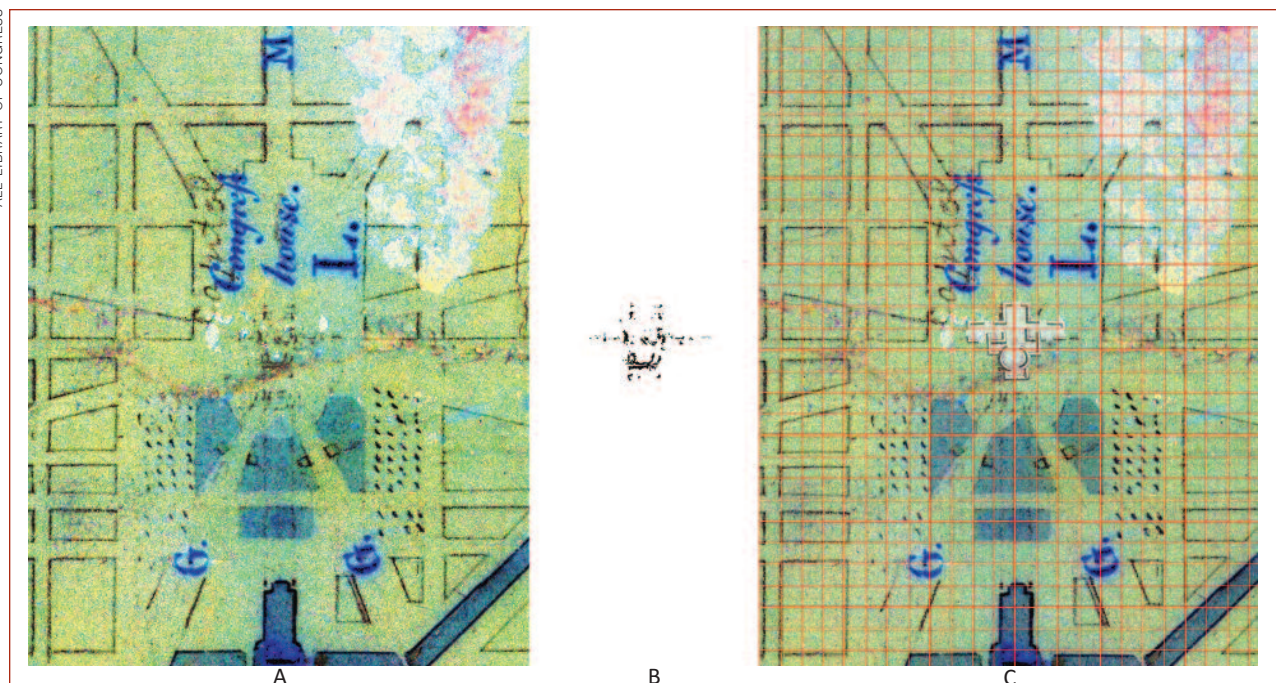
markings of two and a quarter centuries ago have finally been induced to emerge from the background of the manuscript plan, useful comparisons with the engraved images are finally possible (fig. 4A & 4B).

There were three primary engravings. 1) In March 1792 Thackara and Vallance of Philadelphia produced a small version at 1:39,000 scale for publication in the *Universal Asylum or Columbian Magazine*, whose tiny image of a Capitol conveyed a strong sense of a bold and complex structure (fig. 5A). Its most significant element, a large central rotunda, is flanked by wings that are stepped back eastward from the crest of the hill, with a peripteral temple structure projecting from between the wings towards East Capitol Street. 2) In June 1792 Samuel Hill of Boston produced a 1:19,800 scale version whose Capitol image, though nearly twice as large as the first, is less intelligible in architectural terms, and conveys less of a sense of a programmatically developed building (fig. 5B). 3) In October 1792 Thackara and Vallance



Fig. 3. Map of Red and Yellow Dotted Lines, by Benjamin Ellicott, 1791.

Fig. 4. L'Enfant Manuscript and June Engraved Capitols.
A) L'Enfant manuscript pseudocolor enhancement. B) Derived black image. C) Hill engraved Capitol over pseudocolor with 100' grid lines.



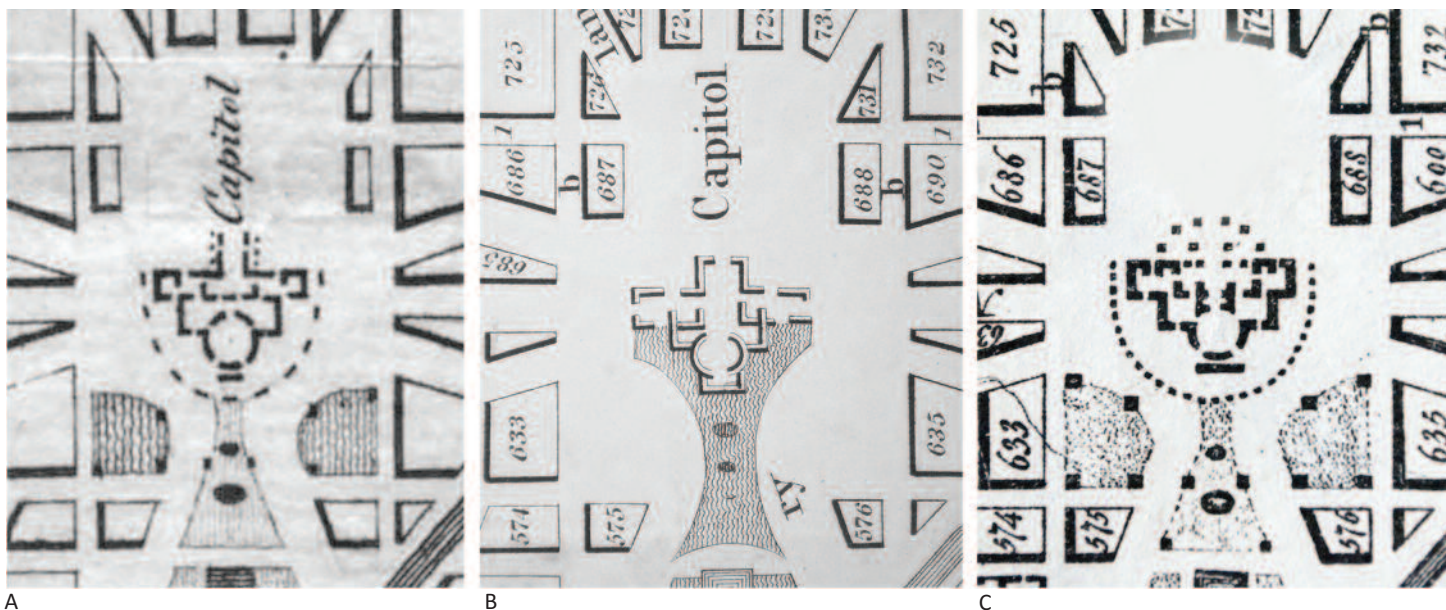


Fig. 5. Capitol images on engraved maps of the Federal City.

A) Thackara and Vallance, Philadelphia, March 1792.

B) Samuel Hill, Boston, June 1792.

C) Thackara and Vallance, Philadelphia, October 1792.

Fig. 6. Competition announcement, Maryland Gazette or the Baltimore General Advertiser, 1792.

WASHINGTON, in the Territory of COLUMBIA.
A PREMIUM
 Of a LOT, in the City, to be designated by impartial Judges, and FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS, or a MEDAL of that Value, at the Option of the Party, will be given by the Commissioners of the Federal Buildings, to the Person who, before the Fifteenth Day of July, 1792, shall produce to them the most approved PLAN, if adopted by them, for a CAPITOL, to be erected in this City; and TWO HUNDRED and FIFTY DOLLARS, or a MEDAL, for the Plan deemed next in merit to the one they shall adopt. The Building to be of Brick, and to contain the following Apartments, to wit:

A Conference-Room,	} sufficient to accommodate 300 Persons each.	} These Rooms to be of full Elevation.
A Room for the Representatives,		
A Lobby or Antichamber to the latter,		
A Senate-Room of 1200 square Feet Area,		
An Antichamber or Lobby to the last.		

Twelve Rooms of 600 square Feet Area each, for Committee-Rooms, and Clerks' Offices, to be of Half the Elevation of the former.

Drawings will be expected of the Ground-Plats, Elevations of each Front, and Sections through the Building, in such Directions as may be necessary to explain the internal Structure; and an Estimate of the cubic Feet of Brick-Work composing the whole Mass of the Walls.

March 14, 1792. THE COMMISSIONERS.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

produced the 1:19,800 scale engraving which received approval as the “official” plan of the city. Its Capitol image is similar to the first, except that there is no eastern projection. Instead, eight large squares—approximately 50' by 50'—are distributed in the east plaza in a manner that has never been explained and still challenges the imagination (fig 5C).

The engraved Capitol appears to be over 800' long; about the length of the modern expanded building and nearly two and a half times the length of the structure begun in 1783. It is so long that L'Enfant's east plaza is widened on the engravings from 800' to 1200' to make room for it. It is not likely that even the habitually grandiose L'Enfant intended a Capitol as huge as this. But if L'Enfant did not intend it to be so large, how are the images to be explained? The minute size of the first engraved image may be the key: it is only 0.28" long. L'Enfant's manuscript plan is nearly two and a half times the scale of the first engraving, but its capitol is only about 0.4" long. An engraving of the Capitol reduced in the same proportion as the city plan would have been less than an eighth of an inch long. The engraver probably knew it would be impossible to draw such a minute building plan legibly, so he chose to enlarge its scale to maintain its legibility.

The second engraving, by Hill, is very awkwardly drawn, but it and its east plaza are generally consistent with the proportions of the first. The same is true of the third—Thackara and Vallance's larger engraving—which shows the Capitol's west front virtually duplicating the first, and in the same oversized proportion to its context. This seems to indicate that, having once established the cartographic image, the engravers chose to maintain its proportions when it was no longer technically necessary; in fact, an image the size of the first engraved one would have been closer to the correct proportion to its setting.

When the engraved images are adjusted in scale and transposed on the resurrected traces of the original drawing at the center of the manuscript, the Hill image is the one with which it coincides most nearly (fig. 4A). Though far from identical, they have enough points in common for us to see that the L'Enfant Plan's fugitive Capitol image, at 500' long, is very likely to have been the direct inspiration for the engraved images.

Before the first of the engravings appeared though, Capitol designs were being sought from the American public at large. Four days after notifying L'Enfant that his terms for continuing work on the city were unacceptable, Jefferson wrote the commissioners to be prepared to advertise for building designs, following this up with a draft that offered a prize of five hundred dollars or a medal of that value for the “most approved plans” for the President’s house and a similar announcement a week later for plans of a Capitol.¹⁵ Drawings were to be submitted to the commissioners for judgment by July 15. The advertisements were sent off to be placed in newspapers throughout the country (fig. 6), and for the next four months a dozen or so architects and would-be architects devoted themselves to the invention of a new building type—one that would comfortably and with appropriate symbolism accommodate a bicameral legislature for the government of a republic.

Little guidance was provided by the advertisement, so the competitors were on their own when it came to decisions about the composition of the plan and the massing of the building. Not surprisingly, the results in July ran the gamut of possibilities within the common language of late renaissance architecture. Only the uniquely French-trained architect Etienne (Stephen) Sulpice Hallet broke the pattern by submitting a Capitol in the form of a Roman temple (fig. 7F). Having earlier shown the secretary of state an entirely different design in a contemporary French idiom with a small dome (fig. 7C), Hallet took the rejection of that approach as a hint to imitate Jefferson’s own design for the Virginia State Capitol. He was right, insofar as it got him past the first hurdle.¹⁶ Unfortunately for the concept, when he was asked to add more conference rooms and an office for the President, the temple form could not be made to accommodate them gracefully and he was asked to change direction.

He was directed, in fact, to go back to the building style he had proposed before the competition was announced, so in August Hallet dutifully set to work on a second version in that style (fig. 7G). This was rejected in its turn, and he was told in October to try a third, more economical and efficient version in the same style. Through all this, Hallet was never awarded the prize.

The President had not liked Hallet’s temple design, preferring a design by an amateur, Judge George Turner, whose drawings are not known to have survived. All we know about its design is what may be deduced from the President’s written comments. It must have had an apse because, when Washington suggested a “pilastrade” be added to the roof, he urged that it be continued around the apse.

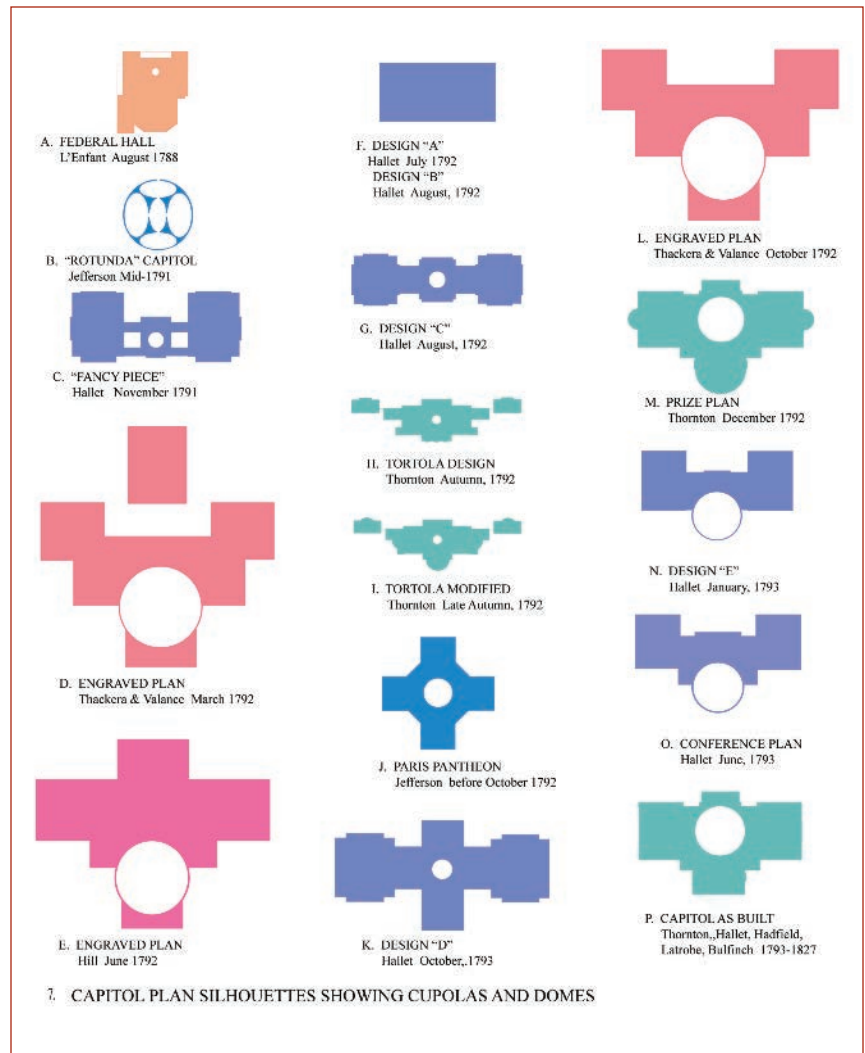


Fig. 7. Capitol plan silhouettes showing cupolas and domes.

Fig. 8. Hallet Capitol elevations.



A. Fancy Piece - November, 1791



B. Design "C" - August, 1791

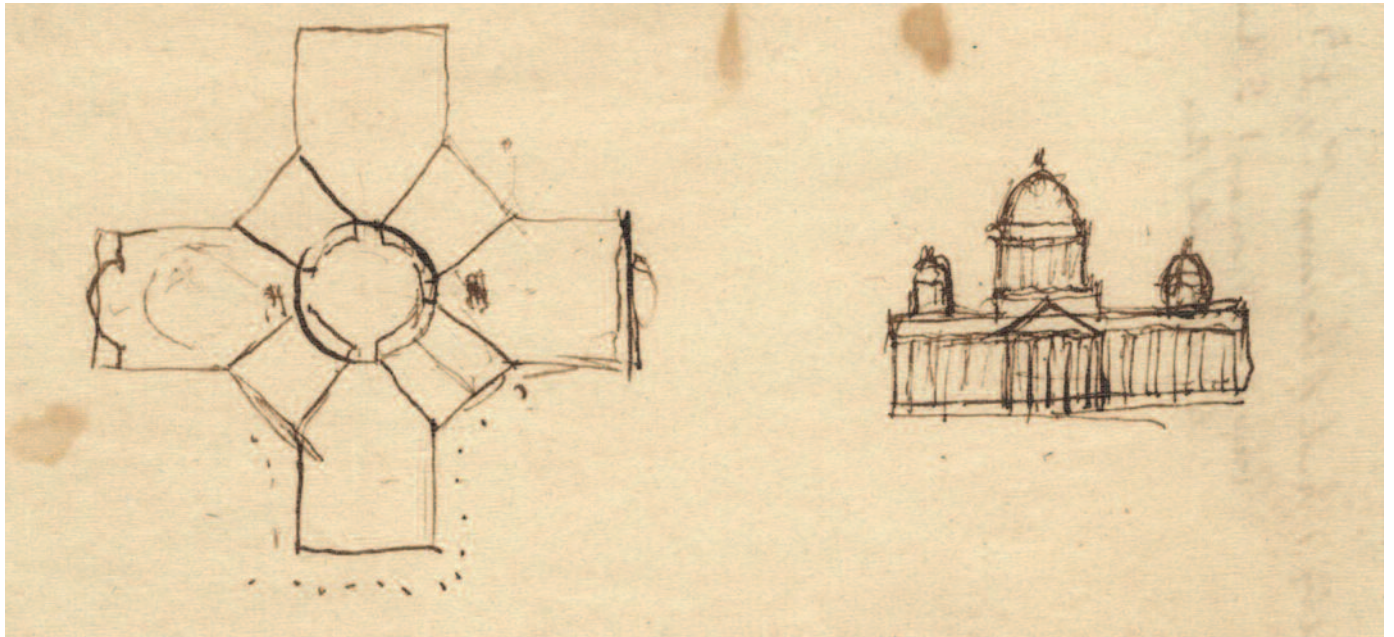


C. Design "D" - October, 1791



D. Design "E" - January, 1793

The apse notwithstanding, its plan must have been relatively simple, otherwise Washington likely would not have suggested that a colonnade entirely surround it. It must have been grandly scaled, because Washington worried whether its forty-one foot upper story ceiling height might be excessive. It didn't have a cupola or lantern, or Washington wouldn't have suggested adding one to receive a clock. For a while, the commissioners continued discussions with Turner and Hallet concurrently, but Hallet's apparent talents and industriousness eventually won him their confidence. By the beginning of November 1792, he appeared to be



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within a few architectural adjustments of achieving an approvable Capitol design—and finally winning the medal.

After the deadline for submissions in mid-July, the commissioners had received the letter from William Thornton mentioned above, notifying them that he intended to submit drawings for a Capitol. The drawings never arrived, but a few days after Thornton himself landed in Philadelphia on November 1, he sent a letter apologizing for not having sent them. He asked if he might still submit a design in the near future, having been informed by his friend Judge Turner that it might not be too late.¹⁷ The commissioners responded that, though Hallet was working with them on a design, no final decision had been made concerning the Capitol.¹⁸ They suggested he deliver his drawings by the first of December, and included a friendly salutation to Judge Turner. No drawings still having arrived by December 4th, they sent another letter suggesting that Thornton deliver them to Secretary of State Jefferson in Philadelphia by January 1st, as that was when they expected Hallet to be finished with his latest design. They didn't tell Thornton that Jefferson was working closely with Hallet. In fact, Jefferson had sketched an idea for him, based diagrammatically on the Paris Pantheon (fig. 9), which appears to have influenced the composition of Hallet's fifth proposal (fig. 7K).¹⁹

In a response dated December 12, Thornton explained to the commissioners, "I should have been much more forward with my plans if I had been previously acquainted with the grounds, for I had calculated upon five hundred feet front, but am engaged in new ones more suited to the situation."²⁰ His reference could not

Fig. 9. Jefferson sketch of Paris Pantheon. The manuscript is held in the Massachusetts Historical Society, where it is cited as: Washington: Capitol (study plan and elevation), recto, 1792, by Thomas Jefferson. N387; K132 [electronic edition]. Thomas Jefferson Papers: An Electronic Archive. Boston, Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2003. <http://www.thomasjeffersonpapers.org/>.

have been to his Tortola drawing (fig. 10), which had a three hundred and seventy foot frontage. Instead, it implies that he was aware of L'Enfant's design, that he knew it was intended to be about five hundred feet long, and that he had been told his own design should not be as large as that. During his brief time in Philadelphia he had recognized the inadequacy of his Tortola drawings. He never mentioned them to the commissioners.

The identity of the author of the Tortola drawings has been questioned in the past, but substantial internal evidence leaves little room to doubt that it was Thornton.²¹ One instance of this is that the odd neologism “Representants” appears in place of “Representatives” on the Tortola Plan, and in Thornton's own description of his Premiated Plan a few months later, but nowhere else in the Capitol literature. In addition, Washington's comments noted above negate the possibility of its being Turner's proposal, with its small dome that could easily accommodate a clock, its complex plan, its twenty-eight foot ceilings, and its continuous balustrade.²²

The sheet of paper with the front elevation of the Tortola drawing has an unusual attachment: a flap containing an alternative design for the north pavilion with a rounded one-story porch in place of its original three-bay central projection. This flap appears to be an addition to the original design intended to go along with two semicircular apses on the ends of the main block. There are two sets of plans with the drawings: one finished, and drawn entirely with straight lines, and the other unfinished, showing three hemicycles on the main block and a curved porch front on one wing (fig. 71). The unfinished drawing, when compared with the more



**Fig. 10. William Thornton,
Tortola east elevation.**

finished plan, clearly represents an attempt by Thornton to enlarge the appearance of the building in a way that would not require his starting over with the entire set of drawings.

Thornton was wise not to submit these drawings, finished or otherwise, to the commissioners. The ineptitude of the original plan and the extreme naïveté of his attempts to bulk out an undersized building would surely have disqualified him from any further consideration by them. He did show the drawings to someone, however, and it is most likely to have been his friend Judge Turner. On the back of the unfinished plan sheet is graphic evidence of an informative and fruitful discussion with someone. There are two loosely drawn sketches obviously intended to represent designs of the Capitol. One is an amalgam of the elements Hallet had been working with in his series of drawings related to the “Fancy Piece”: a five-part

building with a small dome set on a circular colonnade over a square block (fig. 11). The tetrastyle portico with flanking columns is similar to, but not identical with, the design Hallet was working on at that moment. The end pavilion sketches are very much like Hallet's first two such designs. The similarities and differences between the sketch and Hallet's designs are of the sort that might have been the result of being drawn by someone who had seen all his drawings and was attempting to give a sense from memory of how things stood in the Capitol design process. No one except for the President, the secretary of state, the commissioners and Turner is known to have been in a position to



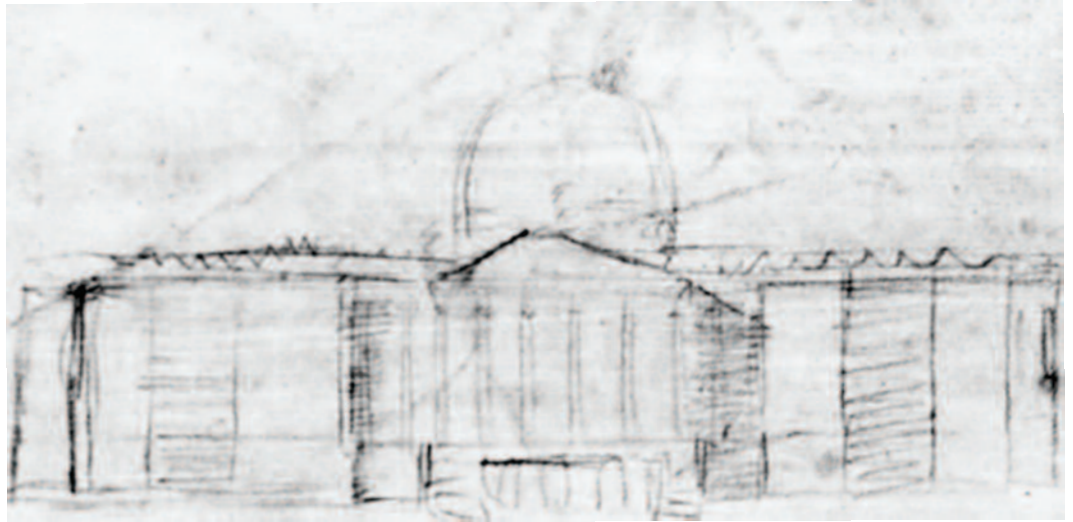
Fig. 11. Horizontal sketch on reverse of Tortola drawing.

know how to make such drawings or such a report. Of these, the commissioners were far away, the President had no known interaction with Thornton, and the secretary of state wrote on December 13, 1792, that Thornton had not presented “any” design. That leaves only Turner as the likely informant: no longer a contender for the prize, but repeatedly referred to as a friend of Thornton.



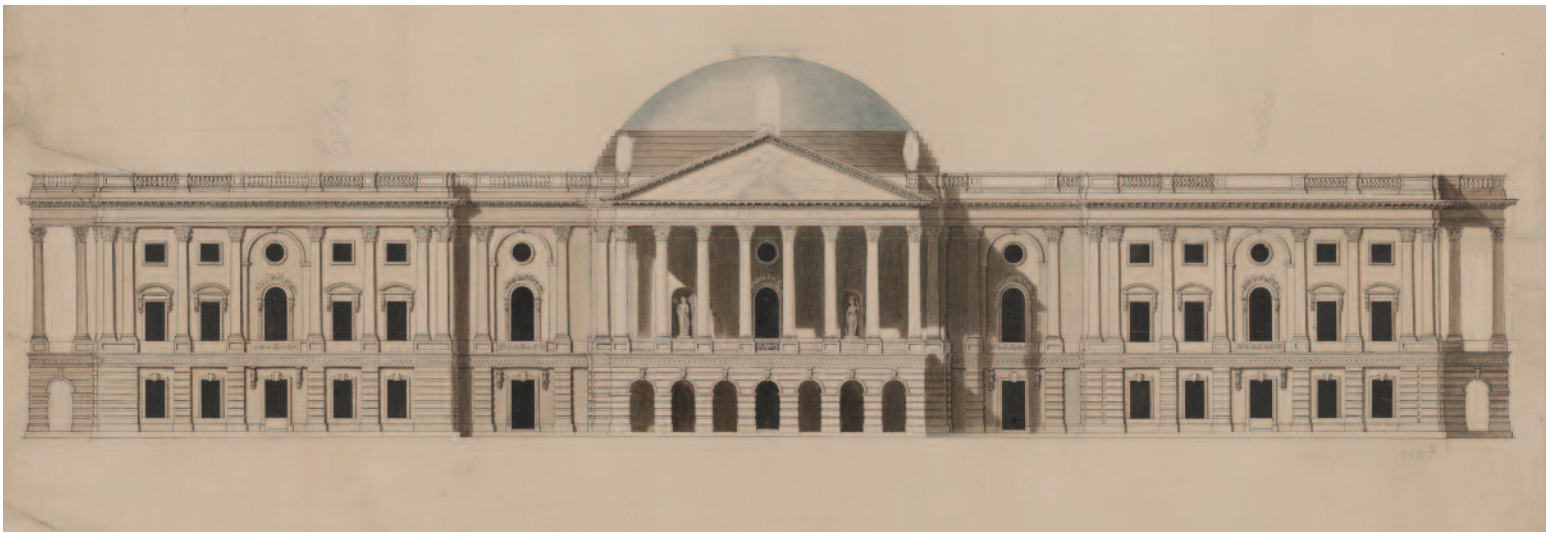
The other sketch on the back of Thornton's drawing is one of the keys to understanding Thornton's shift from the small scale of Tortola to the grandeur of his next design (fig. 12A). It shows another five-part building, but the connections between the middle block and the wings are just shadowed setbacks: the rooflines of the setbacks, the wings and their north and south hemicycles are continuous. The hexastyle portico rests on an arcade and a horizontal line indicates an elevation

composed as a piano nobile above a basement. Shading on the wings divides them vertically into three parts with apses at the north and south ends. A bulbous dome rises above the center block surmounted by a substantial lanterne. Three loose vertically spiraling lines at the ends and peak of the portico's entablature represent sculptures of standing figures. The erasures of three figures from Thornton's later elevation draw particular attention to this feature, contrasting with the repetitiousness of fifty-eight urns arrayed along the rooflines of the Tortola design. While studying this sketch, it is worth recalling two of Washington's suggestions to Turner: a dome that could hold a clock, and a continuous balustrade around the whole roofline, including the hemicycles. This drawing contains both. It also has curving stairs flanking the central arcade, not part of any other known designs, but a more plastic version of the main stairway of the Tortola design. Looking forward to what



A

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B

Fig. 12. Drawings before and after prize winning proposal.

A) Vertical sketch on reverse of Tortola drawing.

B) Thornton east elevation of Capitol after 1793.

Thornton would design within two months, this sketch is extremely significant.

After conversing with a friend who was privy to the progress of the competition and the influence of Secretary of State Jefferson, the next step for Thornton was to assemble the elements of an acceptable design into a single set of drawings.

He had to consider three questions that related to the scale of the drawings and of the building:

1. The Tortola plan was very close to the same length as Hallet's designs, but it was made of small disconnected and varied parts. Thornton would overcome this by composing his next building of fewer, more similar, and more continuous masses.

2. Hallet made his drawings at the medium small scale of 1:200. Tortola was drawn at the very small and unimpressive scale of 1:240. For his next submission Thornton doubled the scale of his drawings to 1:120.

3. Thornton probably recognized the power of the oversized Ellicott rotundas to help focus the plan of the Federal City on the Congress in the center of the city. The large rotunda on his design indicates a realization that his Capitol needed to be centered on a three-dimensional counterpart to the bold circle on the engraving.

From his attempt at revising the Tortola plan he salvaged the basic idea of three

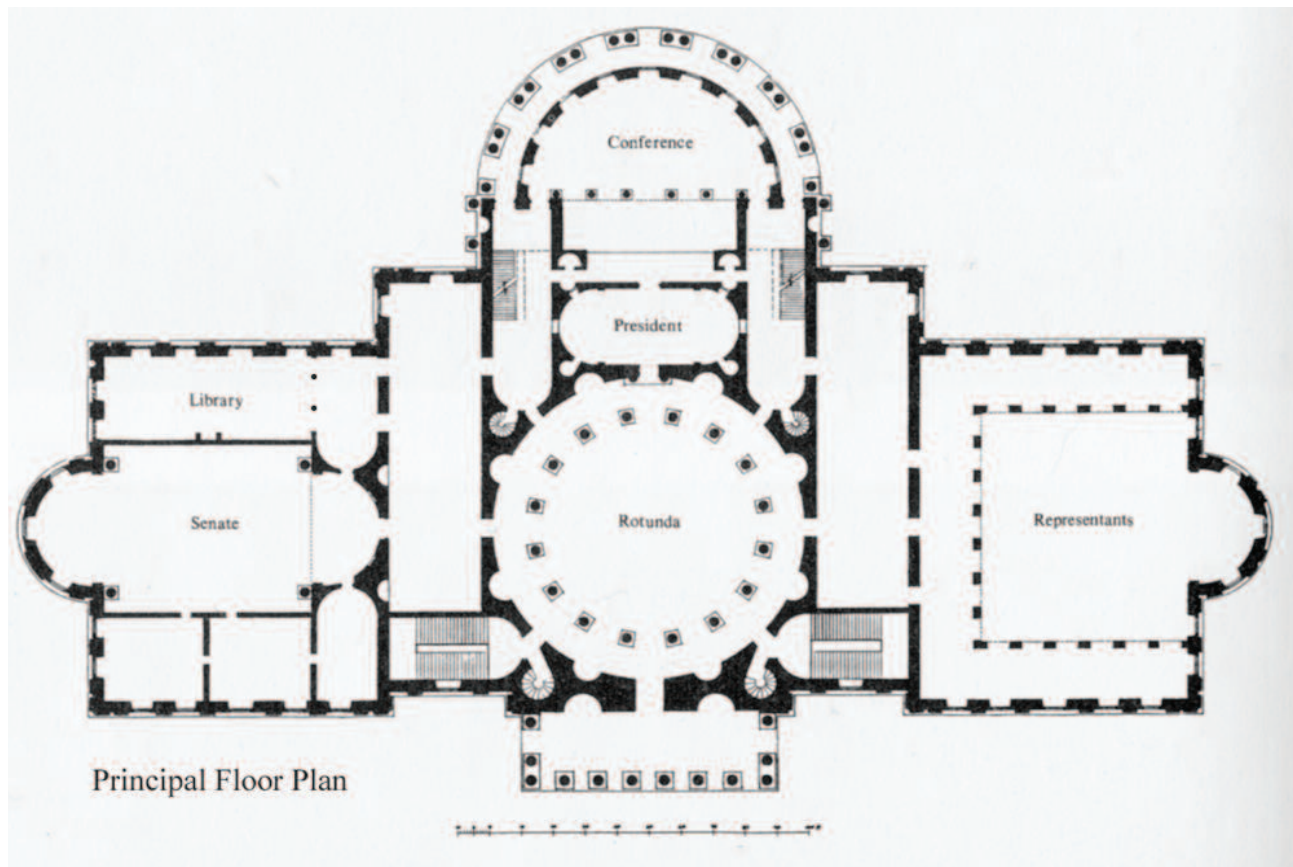
offset blocks with hemicycles. In acknowledgment of Jefferson's attachment to Roman precedents, he proportioned the central rotunda in imitation of the Pantheon. In recognition of the English Late Renaissance tone of the most sophisticated American architecture, he reduced the number and simplified the style of his design's elements. The result was the set of drawings he asked his influential friend John Trumbull to present to George Washington in January 1793: the prize-winning design. The drawings Thornton originally submitted have been lost, but the author's reconstruction of the plan (fig. 7M), and the nearly contemporary east elevation (fig. 12B) are consistent with what is known about it.

Washington had just spent half a year watching Jefferson try to guide a Frenchman in the serial revision of distinctly French style buildings toward an "American" solution. Nothing was so unsatisfactory to President Washington as to be ignorant of the facts and terms of an issue he was required to decide, and the architecture of the French Renaissance was a perfect example of a subject of which he repeatedly professed his own ignorance. Nothing was heard from him on the topic from August until after Trumbull, the preeminent American artist of the day, had laid Thornton's drawings before him with his own positive recommendation. The relative simplicity and less exotic tone of Thornton's design immediately washed away the accumulated anxiety of Washington's period on the sidelines. We can almost hear the lift in his spirits in his letter introducing Thornton and the plan to the commissioners. "Grandeur, Simplicity and Convenience appear to be so well combined in this Plan of Doctor Thornton's, that I have no doubt of its meeting with that approbation from you, which I have given upon attentive inspection, and which it has received from all those who have seen it and are considered as judges of such things."²³

Almost two years after Jefferson had sent for drawings of the Roman Pantheon, Thornton successfully incorporated one of the "ancient monuments approved by the ages" into the Capitol of a modern republic, so he liked it, too.

All parties to the decision expressed their sympathies for "poor Hallet" who had spent months trying to satisfy their developing notions of what the Capitol should be. Realizing that he had been outflanked by a competitor, his first response was to create yet another design, this time in massing similar to Thornton's winning entry (fig. 8D).²⁴ This attempt at maintaining his position was not encouraged by Jefferson, to whom he sent a descriptive letter, but the commissioners enlisted his help in analyzing Thornton's drawings "so the whole should be in the mind of one person."²⁵ This, of course, opened the door to a frontal assault on the winning design. When Hallet's severe critique reached Washington he was chagrined, of course, to be told that the design that felt just right to him was riddled with faults; so six months after he had thought his problems solved, he ordered the secretary of state to convene a conference of experts in Philadelphia to determine a solution to the problems raised by Hallet and, by that time, by James Hoban, the architect of the President's House.²⁶

A thorough discussion of the difficulties inherent in Thornton's plan led to Hallet being commissioned to make another set of drawings—his seventh—that was deemed to be a practical combination of the ideas of the two designers (fig. 70).²⁷ A cornerstone was soon laid and construction was begun on the basis of the so-called Conference Plan. When, a year later, the commissioners discovered Hallet to be making further changes to the design without their approval, the stage was set



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Fig. 13. *William Thornton's premiated design of the U.S. Capitol, 1793.*

for Thornton to return to the task of making a workable plan of his own design ideas. He took full advantage of that opportunity when he was appointed to be one of the commissioners of public buildings in 1795.

From that point onward the plan of the Capitol has been Thornton's, as modified, adapted, and enlarged by other, far more able architects. Nevertheless, the core ideas were his, centered on his great rotunda, which ended up precisely on the major cross axis of the city. It is an irony of cartographic history that no published map of the city ever had Thornton's plan at its center. Instead, the plan that got Hallet fired appeared there repeatedly until, after 1830, it was replaced by Bulfinch's (fig. 7P) and then Walter's. The Capitol has evolved and grown over the years, but in the middle of the composition, as projected by L'Enfant, engraved by Ellicott, drawn by Thornton, and approved by Washington, is a huge rotunda.

Don Alexander Hawkins is an architect and an almost lifelong Washingtonian. His interest in the city's early history became focused on the city's geography and development during his studies for a Master's Degree in Urban Design at Catholic University. Several of his maps describing the beginnings of Washington have appeared in *Washington History* magazine and other publications. He has contributed numerous articles to *Washington History's* series on unbuilt Washington. His reconstruction of William Thornton's lost design of the U.S. Capitol has been published widely in scholarly works by others. As Chairman of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, Hawkins is an active advocate for design that adheres to the principles that guided L'Enfant and the MacMillan Commission. He is currently summarizing his studies in a forthcoming book about Washington's L'Enfant Plan.

NOTES

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Behold the Statue of Freedom

Sculptor Thomas Crawford & Senator Charles Sumner

by Katya Miller

SENATOR CHARLES SCHUMER (D-NY) opened his remarks at the second inauguration of President Barack Obama on February 12, 2013, by pointing to the Statue of Freedom at the top of the dome of the United States Capitol and asking us to “Behold the Statue of Freedom.” He reminded us that there is still work to be done to establish the freedom for all symbolized by the statue when it was erected in 1863, the same year that President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. What Senator Schumer did not mention was the name of Thomas Crawford (fig. 1), the sculptor of the statue, and the story of his remarkable friendship with Charles Sumner (fig. 2), a leading senatorial supporter of emancipation.

The Statue of Freedom was the last commission Crawford completed in his tragically short life; he died of a brain tumor on October 10, 1857, at the age of 43. He was born in New York City and displayed a gift for drawing at an early age. Encouraged by his older sister, Jenny, he scoured the city for prints to study. He read extensively in the history of the architecture and art of ancient Greece and Rome.

At 19, Crawford apprenticed with the New York studio of Frazee and Launitz, where he learned wood and marble carving, while studying at night at the New York National Academy of Design. His employers suggested that he study in Rome with master sculptors. So off he went in May 1835, at the age of 21, with a letter of introduction to the renowned Danish sculptor, Bertel Thorwaldsen, who shared his studio space with the young American and introduced him to the art of carving the Tuscan marble from Carrara, Italy, favored by Michelangelo.¹ While living and studying in Rome, Crawford absorbed the classical forms of high European art and with contemporary sculptors Horatio Greenough and Hiram Powers participated in creating a genre

portraying American themes through neoclassical Italian forms.²

An acquaintance, George Washington Greene, the American consul to Italy, introduced Crawford to Charles Sumner of Boston. Greene had become Crawford’s good friend in 1838 when he took the sculptor, who was ill with “brain fever,” into his home for a month.³ Throughout his illness, brought on by poverty and overwork, Crawford diligently modeled a bust of Greene that Sumner admired and thought an excellent likeness (fig. 3). The sculptor introduced Sumner, a lawyer and a student of the classics, languages, music, and art, to Roman art, culture, and to Crawford’s fellow artists. The two young men became fast and life-long friends. They were only three years apart in age, tall and lanky with congenial temperaments. This friendship helped Crawford secure many of his first commissions.

While Crawford worked “with narrow means and serious misgivings as to the future,” Sumner, along with Greene, made it a point to encourage the sculptor’s ambitions. They directed English and American travelers to visit Crawford’s studio. “Crawford!” Sumner told him, “When I come again to Rome, you will be a great and successful sculptor, and be living in a palace.”⁴ Grateful for the new friendship and Sumner’s promotions on his behalf, Crawford sculpted a marble bust of the Bostonian (fig. 4). Sumner arranged for the Boston Athenaeum to purchase Crawford’s *Orpheus and Cerberus*, a statue of the mythical Greek musician holding a lyre with a three-headed hellhound by his side (fig. 5). Greene had lent Crawford the money to buy the marble and complete the statue.

Orpheus and Cerberus arrived in Boston in 1843 and was exhibited along with the bust of Sumner at the Athenaeum. Although the sculpture arrived with some of its parts broken off during the voyage, Sumner later wrote, “The ‘Orpheus’ is on its pedestal . . . and makes music with its beauty. It is thoroughly restored so



Fig. 1. This portrait of Thomas Crawford by Allyn Cox is in the Hall of Capitols mural in the ground floor of the House wing of the United States Capitol. ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

the stranger, who knew nothing of the accident during its shipping, might not dream that it was not fresh and whole from the artist's chisel. It is an exquisite work of art."⁵ Crawford's

first show in the United States established his reputation and led to

other commissions to sculpt mythological and religious figures. Unfortunately, because he was still a starving artist in Rome, he was unable to attend the opening of this first exhibit.⁶

Earlier in 1841, Charles Sumner visited his brother in New York City and met three intriguing young women: Julia, Louisa, and Annie Ward. The three daughters of Samuel Ward and Julia Rush Cutler were considered exceptionally beautiful and were known as "The Three Graces of Bond Street."⁷ Their home school education, liberal for the day, included ancient and modern languages. After their mother's early death, the young girls were raised by their strict Calvinist father, yet were free to pursue their particular personal interests and individual styles.

On April 23, 1843, Sumner stood by his close friend Dr. Samuel Howe (physician, abolitionist, and educational reformer) when Howe married Julia Ward, who later gained fame as the author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and the "Mother's Day Proclamation." Through his friendship with Sumner and Greene, Crawford met all three sisters. Annie traveled with the newlyweds on their honeymoon voyage to Europe. Middle sister Louisa Ward set sail for Rome in December 1843, accompanied by her father's cousin, George Washington Greene, Crawford's old friend and patron who was now the American ambassador to Italy. Crawford's studio was the family's first point of interest in Rome. They immediately became part of Crawford's social circle and attended many of the same cultural gatherings and salons where he had the opportunity to meet, court, and fall in love with Louisa. Later that year, Crawford returned to New York City to pursue his courtship. In November 1844, Crawford married the New York heiress, much to the chagrin of her uncle and guardian, John Ward.⁸ Crawford did not have the wealthy background or the education that Ward envisioned for the husbands of his nieces.

In Rome, the following year, Crawford carved a graceful marble bust of Louisa that was the expression of his undying love for his



Fig. 2. Senator Charles Sumner, photograph by Julian Vannerson, published in *McClees' Gallery of Photographic Portraits of the Senators, Representatives and Delegates of the Thirty-Fifth Congress* (Washington, D.C., 1859).

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new bride (fig. 6). The bust looked as though it was made of delicate porcelain and was carved with exquisite flowers gracing her flowing veil.

Crawford gave it as a kind of peace offering to her uncle John. The gift helped the sculptor gain greater recognition when the remarkable bust was exhibited in New York at the American Art-Union in 1849 and at the New York Crystal Palace exhibition in 1853.⁹

Thomas and Louisa returned to the United States in 1849 when a Boston paper announced the competition for a monument in Richmond, Virginia to honor George Washington. With the deadline fast approaching, Crawford modeled an equestrian Washington and sent it off to Virginia. The Virginia commissioners also wanted to honor six of their most prominent statesmen with statues around the base of the monument.¹⁰ Knowing that he had competition, Crawford made a special trip to Richmond to further his case. His efforts paid off and he was awarded the commission.¹¹

The monument includes a realistic, historical figure of Washington mounted on his horse,¹² six full-length statues, shields, and thirteen wreaths and stars (fig. 7). Crawford worked mainly in marble, but realized bronze was the best material for outdoor sculpture.¹³ Work for his first bronze casting began in 1850 and was completed by February 22, 1856.¹⁴ Before his death in 1857, Crawford completed only the equestrian Washington and the figures of Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson and the plaster casts of John Marshall and George Mason; sculptor Randolph Rogers oversaw the casting of Marshall and Mason and supplied his own statues of Thomas Nelson and Andrew Lewis.¹⁵

American sculptors were needed as the Capitol building progressed in the 1850s. Captain Montgomery Meigs, the engineer and officer in charge of Capitol commissions, requested the names of potential sculptors from Sen. Edward Everett (MA), a former

president of Harvard, governor of Massachusetts, and secretary of state.¹⁶ Everett recommended Horatio Greenough, but he had lost interest in Capitol commissions after the unhappy reception of his semi-nude classical statue of George Washington.¹⁷

Crawford, on the other hand, welcomed the opportunity to sculpt statuary for the United States Capitol in a realistic American manner. In August 1853, Meigs wrote to Crawford about a sculptural pediment and bronze doors for the east front of the new Senate wing, “I do not see why a Republic so much richer than the Athenian should not rival the Parthenon in the front of its first public edifice.”¹⁸ Crawford responded at the end of October with a compelling design for the pediment as well as the bronze doors for the eastern entrances to the House and Senate wings (figs. 8 a, b, and c).¹⁹ Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, in charge of construction of the Capitol Extension between 1853 and 1857, approved the details and secured the appropriation of money for Crawford’s work. The sculptor’s reputation, his easy and respectful relationship with patrons, and the realism of his American sculptural designs created a successful relationship with Meigs and Davis. While he concentrated on the artistic work for the Capitol, the nation was in turmoil over the slavery issue. Many of his and Louisa’s relatives were ardent abolitionists, and many of his friends, including Charles Sumner, were calling for an end to slavery. Crawford’s work went on, though he was not unaware of the politics surrounding him.

Crawford completed the full-size models for the Senate pediment group that he entitled *Progress of Civilization* in the spring of 1854 (fig. 8a). As a reflection of the era of Manifest Destiny, it illustrated the establishment of European culture on the North American continent.²⁰ At the center, a female figure symbolizes America; she is flanked by European pioneers and ‘vanquished’ American Indians. The pediment was controversial. Debaters in the House and the Senate argued that the Capitol did not need more art.²¹ It seemed as though everyone, newspaper editors and congressmen alike, was an art critic. The completed pediment was installed in 1863.

Crawford’s final commission in 1855 was an enormous statue representing the spirit of America to stand on the pinnacle of the Capitol dome. Between May 1855 and January 1856, Crawford sent Meigs and Davis three designs of carved models; the first two were rejected. One had a liberty cap. Jefferson Davis, a slave owner,

adamantly disapproved of the cap, stating “Americans were born free”²² and thus the Capitol should not bear any of the symbols of slavery. Crawford’s third and final representation changed from an Athenian figure to a very American figure.

As William C. Allen notes in the *History of the United States Capitol*, Davis wrote to Meigs, who guided Crawford in his designs, that “Why should not Armed Liberty wear a helmet.”²³ Meigs notified Crawford of Davis’s comments.

Crawford sent a photograph of his third design with a letter that explained what he had done and why. He dispensed with the cap per Davis’s wishes, and replaced it with a helmet the crest of which is composed of “an eagle’s head and a bold arrangement of feathers suggested by the costume of our Indian tribes.”²⁴ (As a West Point cadet, Jefferson Davis had drawn Minerva with a helmet.) The eagle, a symbol of freedom, appears on the Great Seal of the United States. A medallion carved with the initials U.S., similar to the medallions gifted to the Native American tribes by American presidents in the nineteenth century, holds together her inner drapery. Crawford himself stated that he placed it such that “the drapery is so arranged as to indicate rays of light proceeding from the letters.”²⁵ A sheathed sword rests in her right hand and

Fig. 3. George Washington Greene, by Thomas Crawford, plaster, 1841.

LONGFELLOW NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



Fig. 4. Charles Sumner, by Thomas Crawford, ca. 1837-39, marble.

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Fig. 5. *Orpheus and Cerberus*, by Thomas Crawford, 1843, marble.

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON



Fig. 6. *Louisa Ward Crawford*, by Thomas Crawford, 1846, marble (the bust is also known as Louisa Ward Terry, the name she took after marrying artist Luther Terry following Crawford's death).

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fig. 7. *George Washington Equestrian Monument* in Richmond, Virginia, by Thomas Crawford, 1854, bronze.

she holds a shield with a laurel wreath in her left. The talons of the eagle, also a Roman symbol of empire, hang down the sides of her helmet. He thought this was “more *American*.”²⁶

Meanwhile, Sumner was involved passionately in the abolition and pacifist movements at home. Now a senator from Massachusetts, he delivered his famous “Crime against Kansas” speech in 1856 during the debate to admit Kansas to the Union as a free or slave state. Sumner’s oratory had long been praised. Henry Wordsworth Longfellow (fig. 9) wrote that he delivered speeches “like a cannoneer ramming down cartridges” The speech he delivered that day is one of the most important documents of the pacifist movement. His earlier speech “The Grandeur of Nations” called for peace, justice, and humanity and denounced building a military that cost more than the commerce of the nation the military was to protect.

At the time he delivered the Crime against Kansas speech, Sumner was in his prime as an orator and by all accounts offended many. Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina took



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Fig. 8A. Progress of Civilization, by Thomas Crawford, marble, placed 1863, pediment over the east entrance to the Senate wing of the United States Capitol.

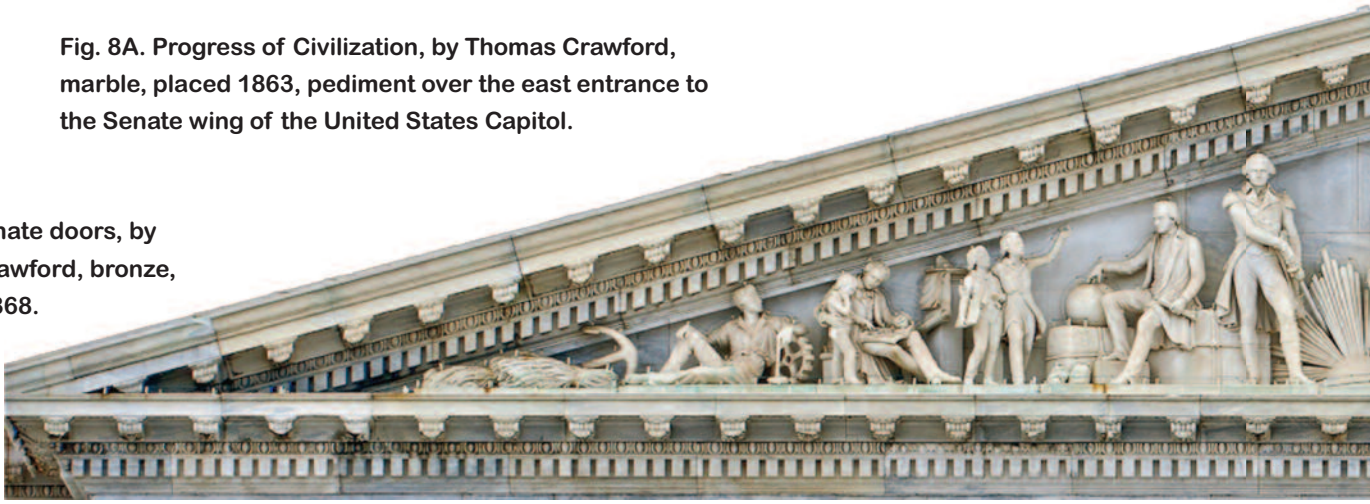


Fig. 8B. Senate doors, by Thomas Crawford, bronze, installed 1868.



offense at the personal insult in the speech to his kinsman Sen. Andrew Butler, and a day later beat Sumner over the head with his “unbreakable” cane (fig. 10). Sumner, seated at his desk, wedged in the tight space by his long legs, reared up and fell to the floor. All the while Brooks beat him so badly

that his cane broke.²⁷ And so did the desk. And so did the nation.

Charles Sumner never fully recovered from the shock of the beating. He spent years abroad rallying for long periods of time and acting as his old self, and other times looking for doctors to treat his pain. Each time he tried to return to the Senate he became disabled, unable to think clearly. While Sumner was going through his physical and mental crisis, Crawford was diagnosed with a brain tumor behind his left eye.²⁸ Both young men were wounded in their prime.

Crawford’s eye began to bother him in October 1856 and he worried about being able to work. He and Louisa sought out doctors in Paris and London, but no matter what they did, little if anything alleviated the symptoms. He wrote Meigs in November that the plaster cast of Freedom was completed and suggested that it be cast in bronze in Germany at the Royal Bavarian Foundry. It would be 19 feet 6 inches tall and weigh approximately 15,000 pounds. The casting did not happen, as Crawford became increasingly ill.²⁹

By the end of 1856, Crawford’s sight and ability to work long hours were greatly compromised. He had an operation that did not improve the condition of his eye or his health. In spite of his suffering, Crawford reportedly remained cheerful while hiding his pain, and had Louisa attend to the business side of the studio.³⁰

Sumner landed in Paris in March 1857 and immediately set out to find Crawford. He entered in his journal that he looked for Crawford in two hotels but “could hear nothing of him.” On March 25, Sumner at last found where Crawford lodged, but could not see him, “his wife told me of his condition, which is sad. I went away sorrowful.”³¹

On March 29, he recorded; “Beautiful day; called again at Crawford’s; his wife told me that he had



Fig. 8C. House of Representative doors,
by Thomas Crawford, bronze,
installed 1905.

expressed a desire to see me. The diseased eye was covered with a shade; but the other eye and his face looked well. The fateful disease seems, however daily to assert its power, and has already touched the brain. I held his hand, and expressed my fervent good wishes, and then after a few minutes left. I was told that it would not do to stay long. . . . The whole visit moved me much. This beautiful genius seems to be drawing to its close.”³²

In April, Meigs wrote Crawford that the Statue of Freedom would be cast in America. He wanted the art of casting encouraged in America, and for a better price. Crawford still wanted it to be cast in Germany. It was not to be; seven months after Sumner’s visit, Crawford died in London. He was buried in New York City. Both of his friends, Sumner and Greene, were pallbearers.

On May 12, 1858, the day before Sumner departed for a visit to Rome he wrote his friend Longfellow, “I have been in Naples, visited Paestum, which I had never seen before, and the ancient cities and driving near the rolling, fiery lava. All this was interesting; but nothing touched me like Rome. Constantly I think of early days when I saw everything here with such fidelity, under the advantage of health I do not now possess, and of the boundless hope for the future which long ago closed on me. . . . Of course, in my wanderings I cannot forget the friends, one of whom is dead (Crawford), who initiated me in Rome; and that happiest summer of my life is revived in all that I now see and do, with longings that I could have it back, but not, I think, on the condition that I should live the intervening years over again.”³³

On this trip Sumner visited Crawford’s Roman studio. He seemed unsure of the completion of the doors for the Capitol. He may not have understood the way Crawford worked and did not have confi-

dence that they could be finished without Crawford’s hand. He wrote Julia Ward Howe’s husband Samuel, “Crawford’s studio interested me much; but I was strongly of the opinion that it would be best to abandon all idea of continuing the Senate and House of Representative doors. His sketches seemed to be in a very crude





Fig. 9. "The Politics and Poetry of New England," photograph of Charles Sumner and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow by Alexander Gardner, 1863.

condition; so that if the doors were finished according to them, I fear they would not come up to his great fame, or sustain the competition of the careful works of other artists, and if the sketches were completed by another hand, then the work would in great measure cease to be Crawford's. His well-filled studio testified to his active, brilliant career. To me it was full of peculiar interest. It was just twenty years before that I found him poor, struggling on three hundred dollars a year, but showing the genius that has since born such fruit. Then, I predicted that if I ever came again to Rome I should find him living in a palace,—in a palace, but not living, alas."³⁴

Crawford never saw the Statue of Freedom that we can see today. After a rough voyage across the sea, with emergency stops in Gibraltar and Bermuda, docking in New York City, the plaster cast was shipped to Washington. The work on the Dome was nearing completion. The statue was cast in bronze at the foundry of Clark Mills, which had continued working throughout the Civil War. Philip Reid, an enslaved worker at the foundry, disassembled the plaster cast and tended the fires for the bronze casting. The final section of the statue was placed on top of the Dome on

Fig. 10. A detail from "Argument of the Chivalry," by Winslow Homer, printed by John H. Buford, Boston, 1856.



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December 2, 1863. There was little fanfare or celebration. The war raged on.

In the years after Crawford's death, Sumner was a vocal and persistent voice for the freeing of the slaves. When Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, he promised Sumner the signing pen (fig. 11).³⁵

One hopes that Louisa with their four children were able to see the finished Capitol. When Crawford died, Annie was eleven, Jeannie was ten, Mary was six, and Francis (Frankie) was only three years old. All went on to lead interesting lives; Francis became the bestselling author Francis Marion Crawford and Mary wrote memoirs and novels under her married name of Mrs. Hugh Fraser.

Crawford's sculp-



Fig. 11. The pen President Abraham Lincoln used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation was given to Charles Sumner to pass along to Massachusetts abolitionist George Livermore. MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

tural impact continues to be significant. His majestic Statue of Freedom (fig. 12) and other bronze and marble works continue to grace the Capitol. His friendship with Charles Sumner helped make his career possible, as did the confidence that Meigs and Davis had in his ability. His devotion to his vision is made manifest before our eyes in his Capitol sculptures; his name and his Statue of Freedom deserve to be better known.

At the Second Inaugural of our first African American president, Senator Schumer said, “When the Civil War threatened to bring construction of the Dome to a halt, workers pressed onward, even without pay, until Congress approved additional funding to complete the Dome that would become a symbol of unity and democracy to the entire world.” During this 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and completion of the United States Capitol with the



placement of the Statue of Freedom: Stop. Look Up. Behold.

Katya Miller is an author, videographer, and jewelry designer based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her research into the iconography of the Statue of Freedom led to her interest in Crawford and Sumner's friendship. She is a recent recipient of a United States Capitol Historical Society fellowship to support her further research. She is writing a book about the statue that she hopes to make into a documentary film. Please visit www.LadyFreedom.net and contact her with comments at miller.katya@gmail.com.

Fig. 12. Crawford's Statue of Freedom was erected atop the dome of the Capitol in 1863, the same year the Emancipation Proclamation was issued.

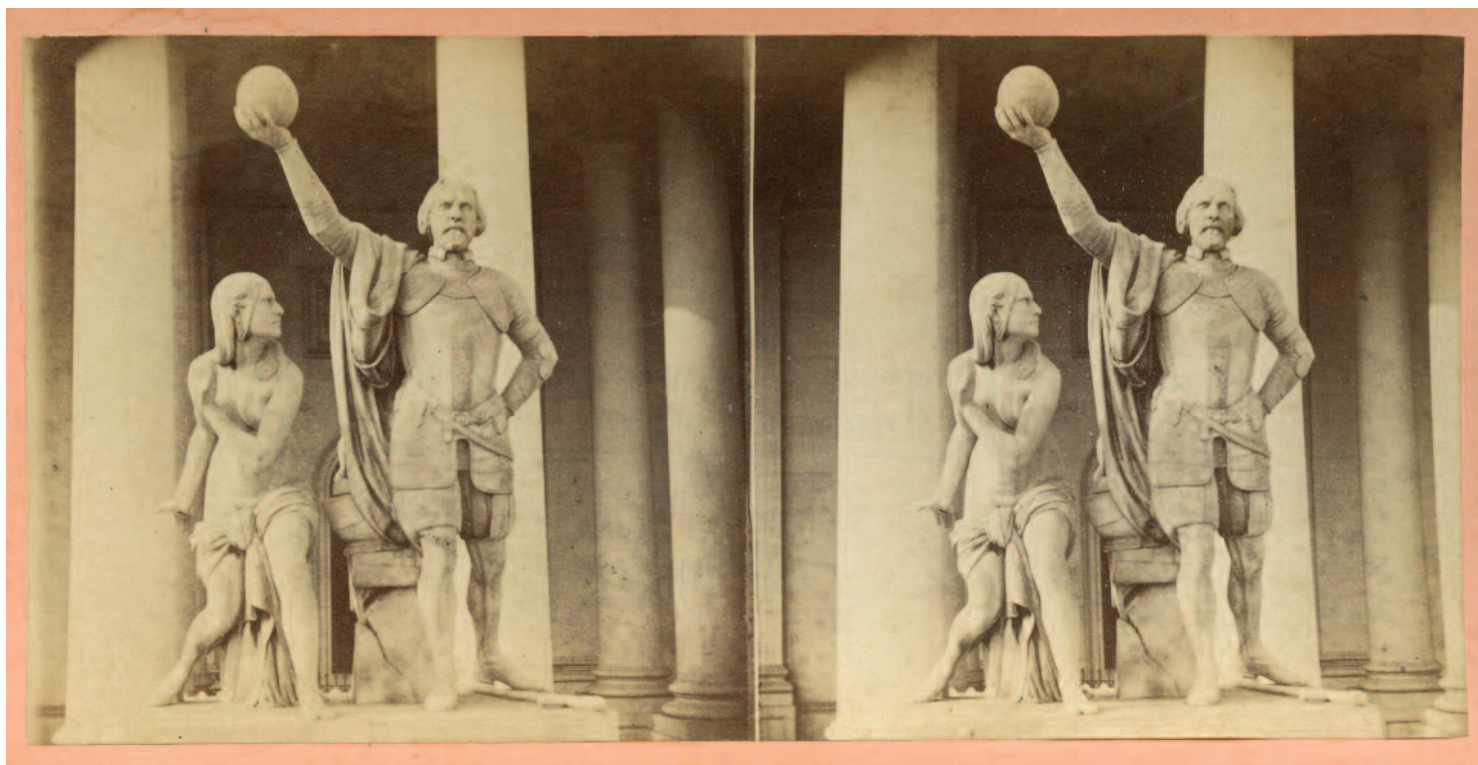
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TECUMSEH IN THE U.S. CAPITOL

NATIVE AMERICANS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CAPITOL ART

BY MARK N. OZER



UNITED STATES CAPITOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

As we observe the bicentennial of the War of 1812, the causation of the war remains unclear; its course fitful and uncertain; its results ambiguous. However, there was one clear result recognized at the time, which has remained prominent and has become even clearer in retrospect. Moreover, it became one of the major themes to be celebrated in the decoration of the antebellum expansion of the United States Capitol. At a time of fierce sectional differences, there was one aspect on which the north and south could both agree and celebrate—the elimination of Native American resistance in the Old Northwest.

The “Descent of the American Indian” is the motif of one of the dominant stories told in the decoration of the Capitol in the nineteenth century. There are several instances where this motif was carried out. The central East Front entrance was the site of

sculptures by Horace Greenough and Luigi Persico, now no longer on view. Luigi Persico’s *Discovery of America* (placed 1844), located on the south cheek block, depicts the figure of Columbus standing upright holding the globe in his outstretched right arm with a semi-nude native female crouching beneath (fig. 1). James Buchanan, then a Pennsylvania senator, was effusive in his praise of his friend’s statue: “The great discoverer when he first bounded with ecstasy upon the shore . . . presenting a hemisphere to the astonished world . . . a female savage, with awe and wonder in her countenance, is gazing upon him.” The figure group entitled *Rescue* (placed 1853) that Horace Greenough designed for the

Fig. 1. Stereoview by Bell & Bro., 1867, of Luigi Persico, *Discovery of America*, marble, erected 1844, removed 1958, transferred to Smithsonian Institution, 1976.