AUTUMN BROWN BAGS CONSIDER CONSERVATION IN THE CAPITOL

In October, two speakers detailed different aspects of ongoing conservation occurring within the Capitol complex. First, Curator for the Architect of the Capitol Michele Cohen discussed the Grant Memorial. Her presentation included information about the creation of the memorial in the early 20th century, including its theme of postwar reunification through focusing on individual pain and soldiers’ dependence upon one another. Cohen also covered the ongoing conservation of the memorial, which is intended to return the pieces to their original finish, preserve that work with new protective coating, and fabricate and install pieces lost to vandals or corrosion.

Construction Manager in the Office of the Architect of the Capitol Joseph Abriatis spoke about the restoration of the Capitol Dome and Rotunda. The Architect’s office is hoping, with regular maintenance, this restoration will last about 75 years; planning for it began in 1992. Abriatis provided myriad details and facts about the interior and exterior scaffolding and other elements of the restoration infrastructure and process. During the presentation, attendees passed around examples of corroded pieces, paint chips, and the repair process used on cracks.

Cohen’s talk has been broadcast on C-SPAN’s American History TV. To find all of our past events, search for “U.S. Capitol Historical Society.”
SPRING EVENTS AT USCHS:
BOOK TALKS AND ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM COMING UP

This spring, the U.S. Capitol Historical Society is planning several noon book events in addition to the annual symposium. On Thursday, March 10, author John Norris will discuss his newest book, Mary McGrory: The First Queen of Journalism, with Historian Emeritus of the Senate Don Ritchie. Cindy Gueli will discuss her book on Wednesday, March 16; Lipstick Brigade: The Untold True Story of Washington's World War II Government Girls explores the roles and experiences of women government workers in Washington, DC during WWII. Finally, on Wednesday, April 13, Mau VanDuren will talk about his work on Many Heads and Many Hands: James Madison’s Search for a More Perfect Union.

All talks are free and open to the public and will begin at noon in Ketchum Hall at 200 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002. Pre-registration is recommended.

Next, USCHS will present its annual symposium in May. This year’s event is taking a broad look at immigration across U.S. history. Passed nearly thirty years ago, the Simpson-Mazzoli Act tackled the revision and reform of immigration laws to handle both legal and illegal immigration. The symposium will use this 1986 legislation as its stopping point as speakers from around the country examine immigration and related issues through American history. The event is free and open to the public; check www.uschs.org for updates and pre-registration forms as they become available.

USCHS CO-SPONSORS PRESIDENTIAL EVENTS

On 6-7 November 2015, the U.S. Capitol Historical Society partnered with the Friends of the James A. Garfield National Historic Site, the National Park Service, and numerous other academic and cultural institutions in beautiful northeastern Ohio for the Second Annual James A. Garfield Symposium. The collaboration was especially relevant to the USCHS’s mission because the symposium’s theme was “Garfield in Washington.” In sessions devoted to, among other topics, the Electoral Commission of 1876 and the social life of black elites in DC, symposium participants were invited to broaden and deepen their knowledge of Garfield’s public service as an important member of the U.S. House of Representatives (1863-80), before his better-known but arguably less impactful six months as president (1881). The collaboration also represented an innovative step towards developing a “Congressional History Consortium” by which resources, programmatic events, and a limited range of benefits might be shared among USCHS and other institutions and historic sites dedicated to promoting the history of Congress through the lives of its former members.

On December 3, USCHS joined five other organizations to sponsor “Abraham Lincoln—A Press Conference.” George Buss appeared as Abraham Lincoln and answered questions from past National Press Club presidents and the audience. Robert Lenz, a former Abraham Lincoln Association president, accompanied Buss and acted as Lincoln’s press secretary. The event proceeded as if it were April 1865, after the fall of Richmond but (obviously) before Lincoln’s assassination. Questions and topics ranged from the role of the press, to Lincoln’s personal feelings, to the Civil War and the postwar future. The event co-sponsors included the Abraham Lincoln Association; the Illinois State Society of Washington, DC; the Lincoln Academy of Illinois; the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia; and the National Press Club.
Christopher Gahan, Chief of Staff to Senator Pat Toomey (PA), was the U.S. Capitol Historical Society’s guest speaker at the Congressional Breakfast in the Mike Mansfield Room of the U.S. Capitol on October 6, 2015. Gahan spoke informally with Leadership Council, Constitution Signers, and Brumidi Society members of the USCHS Capitol Committee, providing an engaging history lesson on the desks in the Senate Chamber. One of the Capitol Committee members commented that Gahan’s presentation was the perfect combination of “levity, creativity, and history.”

Special thanks to The Boeing Company for its exclusive support of this event.
The USCHS Board of Trustees will present David McCullough with the Freedom Award. McCullough has been widely acclaimed as a “master of the art of narrative history.”

USCHS members at the Cornerstone ($100) level or higher will receive an invitation to a reception on Wednesday, May 11, 2016 in National Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol where McCullough will receive this prestigious award. Watch your mailbox and email for an invitation. Space will be limited to the first who accept the invitation. Not a USCHS member? Join or renew now!

For questions or additional information, please contact Bee Barnett by email or by phone at (202) 543-8919 x 20.

LEAVES A LEGACY

By including USCHS in your bequests, you can instill and foster informed citizenship for generations to come. If you are considering a bequest to USCHS, here is some suggested wording for your attorney:

After fulfilling all other specific provisions, I give, devise, bequeath _____% of the remainder [or $_____] to the United States Capitol Historical Society, a District of Columbia charitable corporation [Tax ID #52-0796820] currently having offices at 200 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002.

For more information please contact Laura McCulty Stepp, VP, Membership and Development at 202-643-8919 x22.
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TO MAKE BEAUTIFUL THE CAPITOL

Detailed history of renowned Italian-born artist Constantino Brumidi’s masterful work “making beautiful” the walls and ceilings of the United States Capitol over a span of 25 years starting in 1854. Every page delights with gorgeous, full-color photographs and images of Brumidi’s art, from photographs of the frescoes and decoration, to sketches, paintings, and images of the artist, particularly the Brumidi Corridors and his “monumental fresco” in the Capitol Rotunda, called The Apotheosis of Washington. Fascinating anecdotes are included throughout of the artist and the inspirations he received for various elements, his relationship with engineer Montgomery C. Meigs, and the conservation efforts to preserve his work accurately for posterity. Published by the Senate Curator, Paperback, 2014: 137 p.

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