

straight center band of the hippodrome, twenty-five feet in length, would be shaped by intermediate cubic structures of sandstone (the entry cabinet and the Speaker's cabinet) and above, a strong vaulted support for the half domes to thrust upon. Jefferson did not want to deviate from the plan by changing the room's approved shape from an ellipse to a hippodrome. But after Latrobe's polite presentation and an ensuing discussion, Jefferson conceded to the architect.

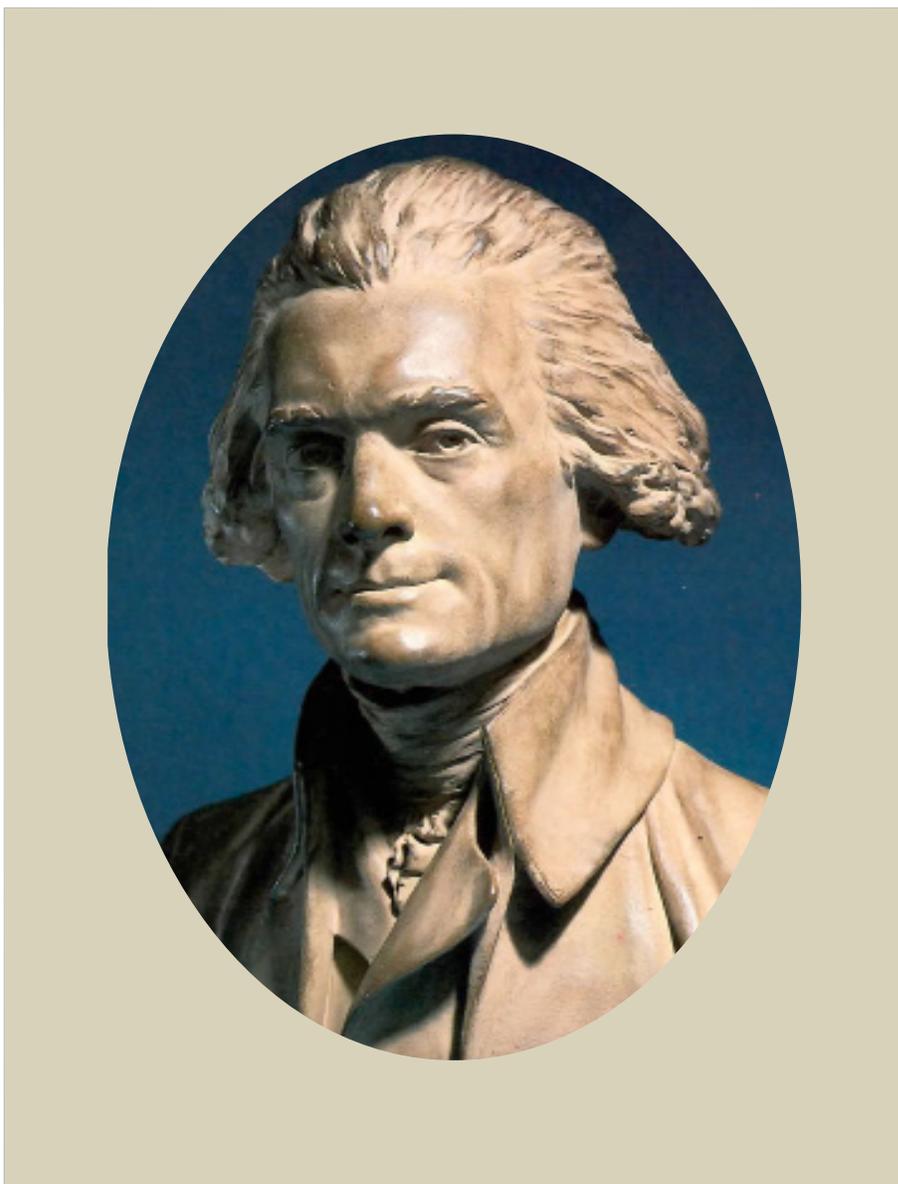
The exterior walls, three and a half feet thick and buttressed at the corners with giant sandstone piers, essentially *poché* for the figural space of the Hall, were vaulted inward ten feet to meet the hippodrome-shaped roof support system consisting of entablature, twenty-four support columns and support wall.

Another conflict arose between Latrobe and Jefferson, however. They disagreed on the architectural order for the main columns. Jefferson wanted to use a Roman Doric from the Theater of Marcellus and Latrobe wanted to use the Corinthian from the Monument of Lysicrates in Athens. Latrobe demonstrated to Jefferson in a drawing that a Doric order in the Hall would not work because of the inability to achieve square metopes at the current column spacing. Jefferson, the stickler for classical rules, again demurred to the architect. Latrobe suggested using Jefferson's favorite entablature as a compromise (a simplified version) from the Temple of Jupiter Stator in Rome, also known as the Three Columns in the Roman Forum.<sup>8</sup>

Latrobe now had a clear mandate to build the chamber in his own aesthetic vision with his own structural solution. Essentially, building the Capitol's chambers inside of Thornton's Baroque box became an infill project for Latrobe, not unlike Sir John Soane's Bank of England, or Robert Adam's 1760s infill of the Syon House whose exterior walls dated to the 16th century. All Latrobe had to do was maintain Thornton's design for the exterior elevations (fig.3), which he disliked and thought laughingly old-fashioned.

### The Halle aux blés

Now that the South Wing's major parameters were established, and the brick and sandstone walls of the roughly 120-



*Fig. 5. Jean-Antoine Houdon, Bust of Thomas Jefferson, 1789.*

foot by 94-foot edifice rose, Jefferson and Latrobe turned their attention to the roof that would rise above the entablature inside the hippodrome. Here, the last major design conflict would arise between the architect and the client. In 1804, Jefferson suggested strongly to Latrobe that the Hall should have a skylit roof, similar to what he'd seen at the Paris grain market (Halle aux blés) in 1785, when he was United States minister to France.

Jefferson thought the grain market's roof the most dazzling display of light he'd ever seen. He first saw it on an excursion with the pretty Maria Cosway, a married twenty-six-year-old Italian-English artist (fig. 4). The forty-three-year-old Jefferson (fig. 5), a recent widower, was smitten with Cosway and visited many sites around Paris with her. In his famous Head and Heart letter to her, the future American President described the market as, "the most superb thing on earth."<sup>9</sup>

Latrobe resisted the Jefferson's suggestion for a glass roof



Fig. 6. Jean-Baptiste Maréchal, [*Extérieur de la Halle au blés*], 1786.

similar to the Halle aux blés for both technical and philosophical reasons. Technically, the roof would drip—either through direct leakage or as a result of condensation. Philosophically, Latrobe thought that direct light within this solemn legislative chamber would be entirely wrong. Again, the strong-willed architect and the president faced off against each other, with Latrobe writing Jefferson: “So spangled a ceiling, giving an air of the highest gaiety, will I think destroy the solemnity that is appropriate to the object of the edifice.”<sup>10</sup>

The Paris grain market (fig. 6) was designed by Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières and was built on the site of the Hôtel de Soissons by 1767. Le Camus incorporated Catherine de Medici’s Colonne de l’Horoscope in his open circular building. Jacques-Guillaume Legrand and Jacques Molinos designed the glazed roof which, completed by 1783, had captured Thomas Jefferson’s romantic imagination (fig. 7). The grain market was so admired for its function, its circulation, and its lighting that it quickly became regarded as one of the preeminent industrial buildings in Europe. In 1803 the Legrand-Molinos roof was destroyed by fire. An iron and glass roof replaced it in 1813. The site is now the Bourse de commerce.

Latrobe wanted to light the Hall of the House of Representatives with a large cupola or lantern (lantern) in the center of the roof. The lantern’s vertical sashes would be far more resistant to leakage and breakage, and would deflect light indirectly into the room providing what he called “unity of light.” Jefferson dismissed Latrobe’s Lantern design, as he claimed there was no classical precedent for it.

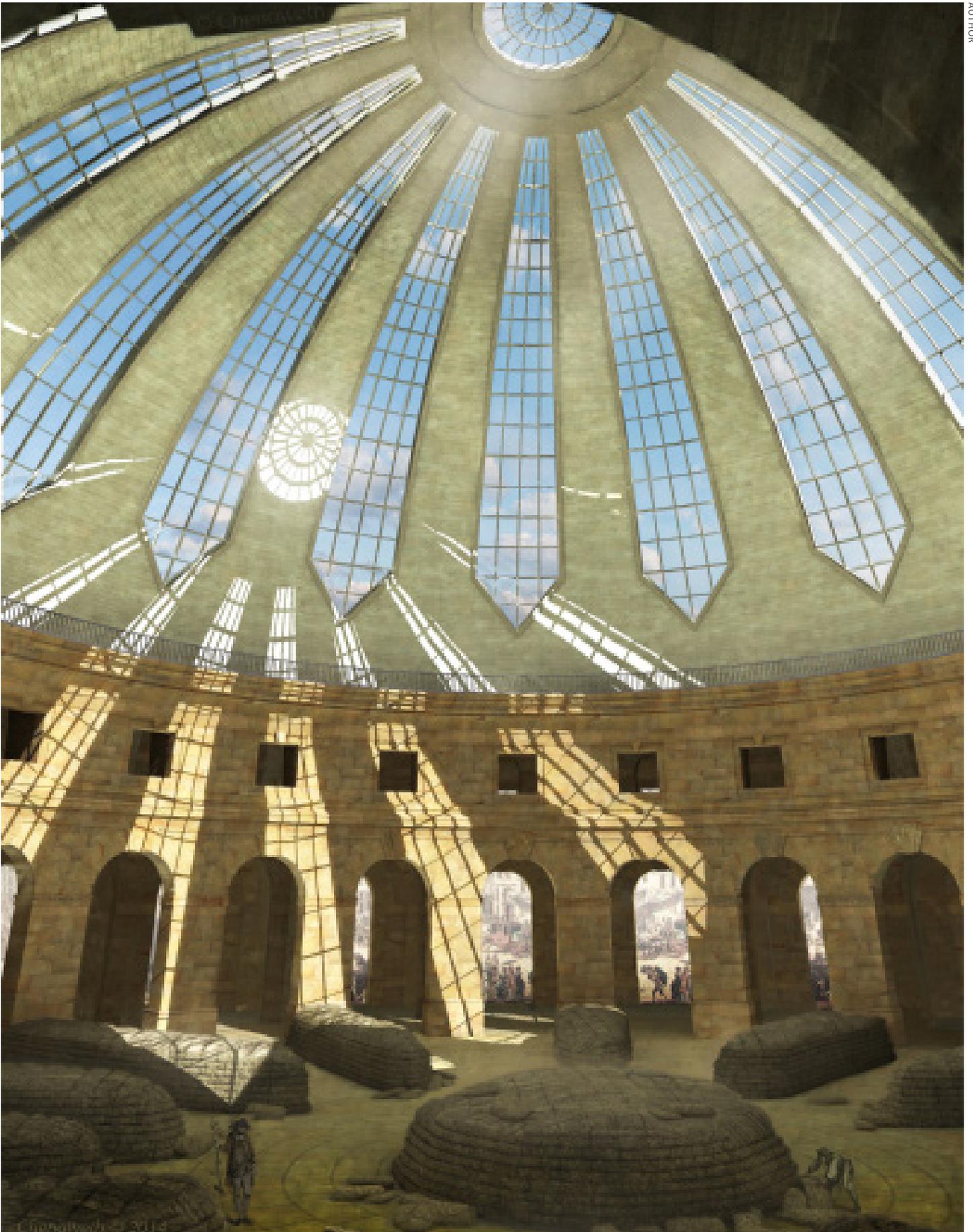
Jefferson was not seduced by Latrobe’s arguments. This became their most difficult disagreement regarding the design and construction of the Capitol. Finally, a frustrated Jefferson simply told Latrobe to do what he (Latrobe) thought best, but made his own desire quite clear:

I cannot express to you the regret I feel on the subject of renouncing the Halle au blés (sic) lights in the Capitol dome. That single circumstance was to constitute the distinguishing merit of the room, & would solely have made it the handsomest room in the world, without a single exception.<sup>11</sup>

In this standoff, it was Latrobe who blinked. He then proceeded to build the glazed roof in the style of the Halle aux blés as the President had wished.

As late as November 1806, when the logistics of ordering glass for the roof became a topic of discussion, Latrobe still tried to persuade Jefferson of the suitability of a lantern scheme by providing him a beautiful watercolor perspective drawing of the Capitol’s exterior from the northeast, showing how attractive and yet minimal the lanterns would appear on both the North and South Wings (fig. 8).

Latrobe had one more trick, however. As he designed the domed roof to cover the eighty-five-foot-long hippodrome roofopening, he designed into the center of the framing plan a ring of timbers strong enough to hold a large lantern (just in case the roof leaked). The entire glazed dome contained one



*Fig. 7. Recreation of the interior of the Halle aux blés by the author.*

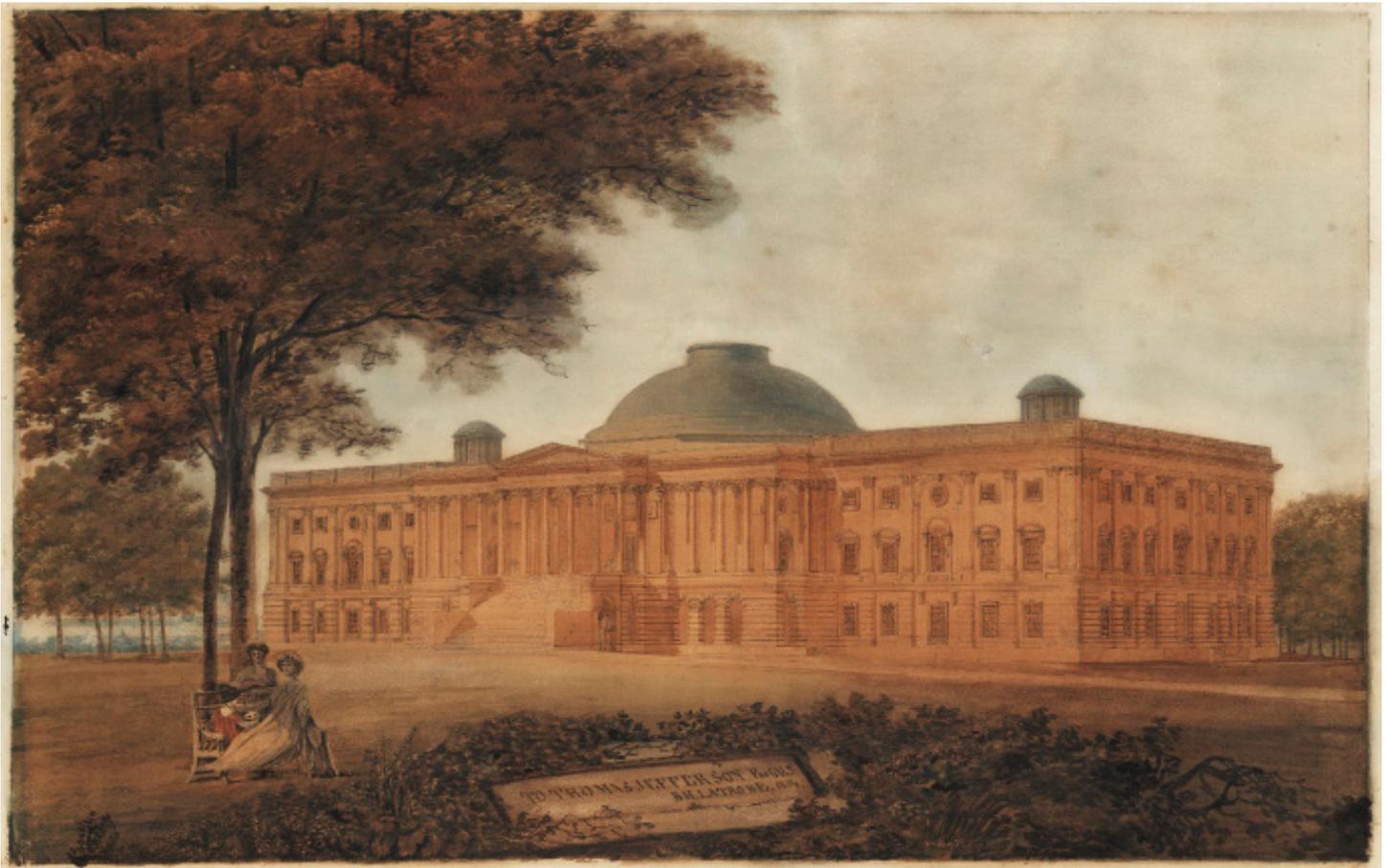


Fig. 8. Latrobe, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., Perspective from the northeast (1806). This watercolor, ink, and wash drawing is inscribed on the back: "TO THOMAS JEFFERSON Pres. U.S., B.H. LATROBE, 1806."

hundred skylights in twenty vertical bands, and its spring was 12 feet 6 inches from the top of the forty-foot-high entablature. Another French architectural model was used for the roof framing. Latrobe reported to Washington's principal newspaper: "This enormous roof is in thickness only 16 inches and is a very remarkable specimen of excellent carpenter's work. It is constructed on the plan of Philibert de l'Orme . . . and is pierced with square lights . . . in all 100."<sup>12</sup> He also stated in this report that the South Wing could be solidly vaulted if necessary. The built dome was covered with sheet iron on the exterior and plastered on the interior. The interior was faux-painted by George Bridport of Philadelphia to simulate coffered panels alternating with the bands of skylights. The completed chamber was ready for the House of Representatives by 1808.

A monumental allegorical sculpture of a sitting *Liberty* was designed by Latrobe and carved by Giuseppe Franzoni, and was completed in its plaster state by September 1807. The *Liberty*, a story unto itself, was an integral part of Latrobe's design sequence. The rest of the chamber was finished off with platforms, carpeting, mahogany desks and chairs, a Speaker's Throne, Argand lamps and an Argand chandelier, gilt railings, and deep crimson baize curtains draped between the majestic

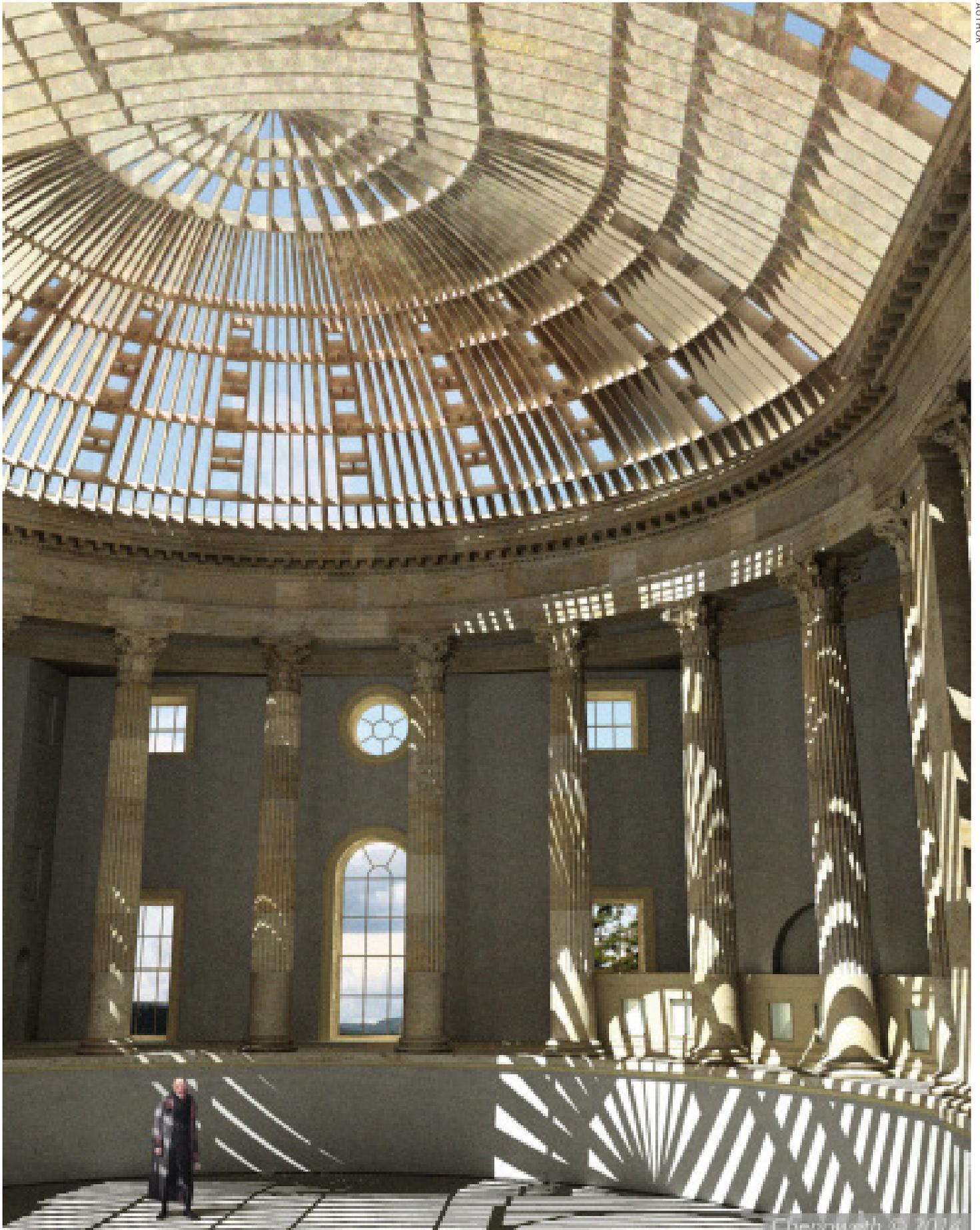
26-foot 8-inch tall columns that rested atop the seven-foot hippodrome wall circumscribing the room.

### The Destruction

On August 24, 1814, a combined British force led by Rear Admiral George Cockburn and Major General Robert Ross marched into Washington, supposedly in retaliation for the destruction of York (now Toronto) in 1813 by American forces. Both the Capitol and the White House were burned as well as other public buildings. Cockburn's lieutenant, ordered to burn the Capitol, is reported to have said as he stood at the entrance, "it is a pity to burn anything so beautiful."<sup>13</sup>

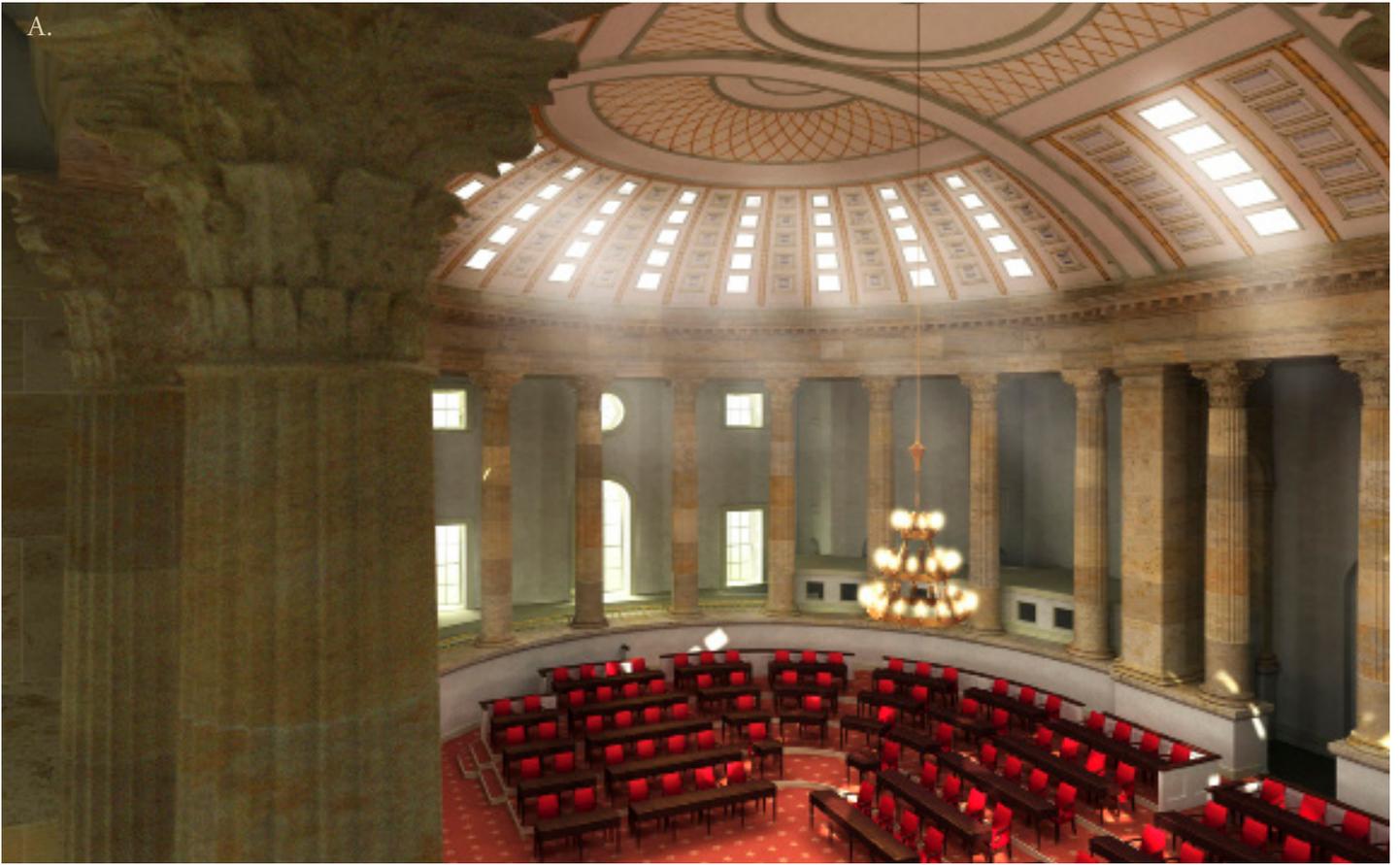
### The Enigma

In Paris in the summer of 2001, having won the Gabriel Prize for drawing, I studied several of Thomas Jefferson's favorite buildings in an attempt to better understand his aesthetic and his design principles. My research led to the Halle aux blés,



*Fig. 9. Recreation drawing by the author showing Jefferson inspecting the roof framing of the Hall of Representatives.*

A.



Figs. 10A and 10B. Recreation drawings by the author showing the different effects of (A) the built version (Jefferson) and (B) the unbuilt version (Latrobe).

B.

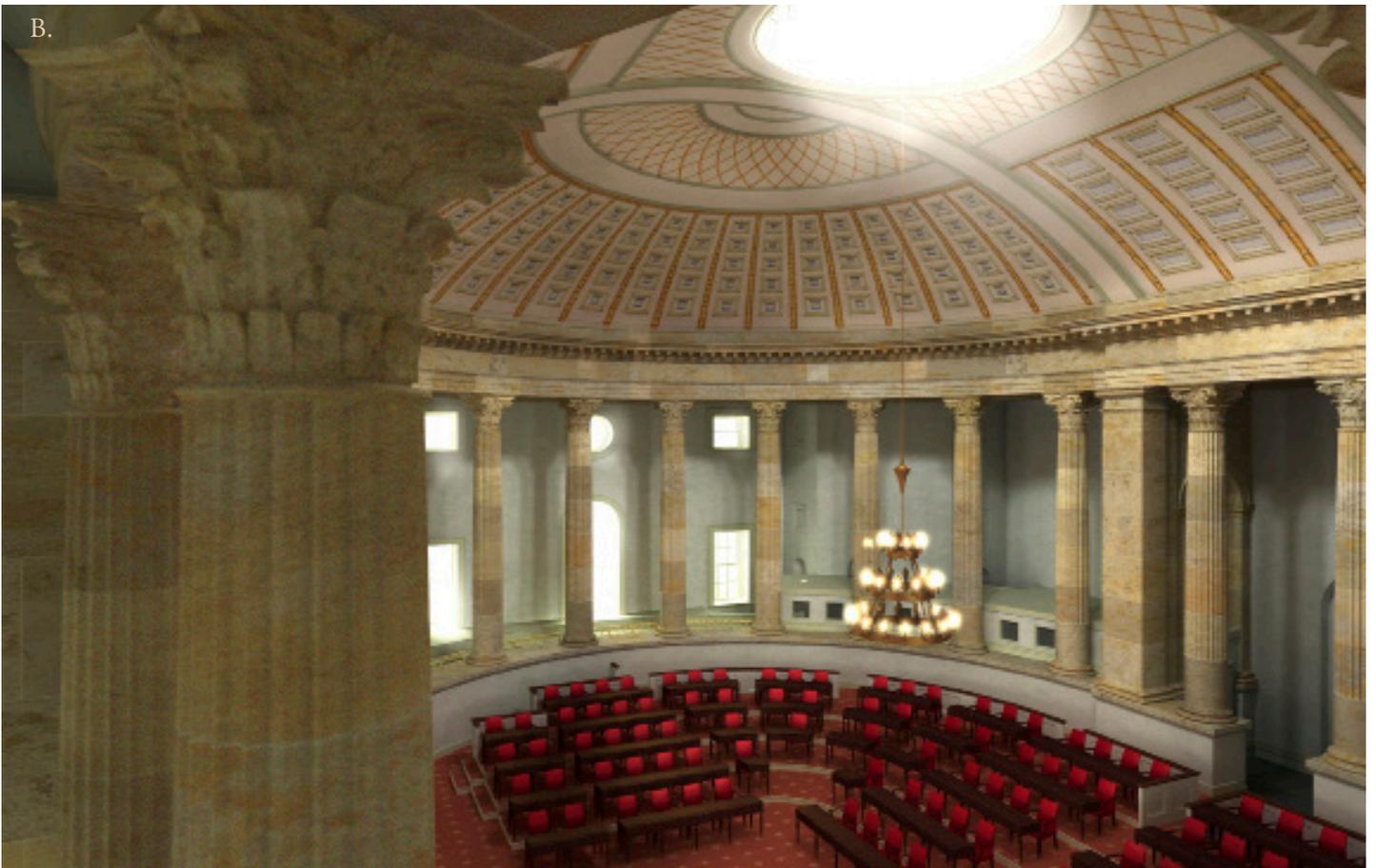
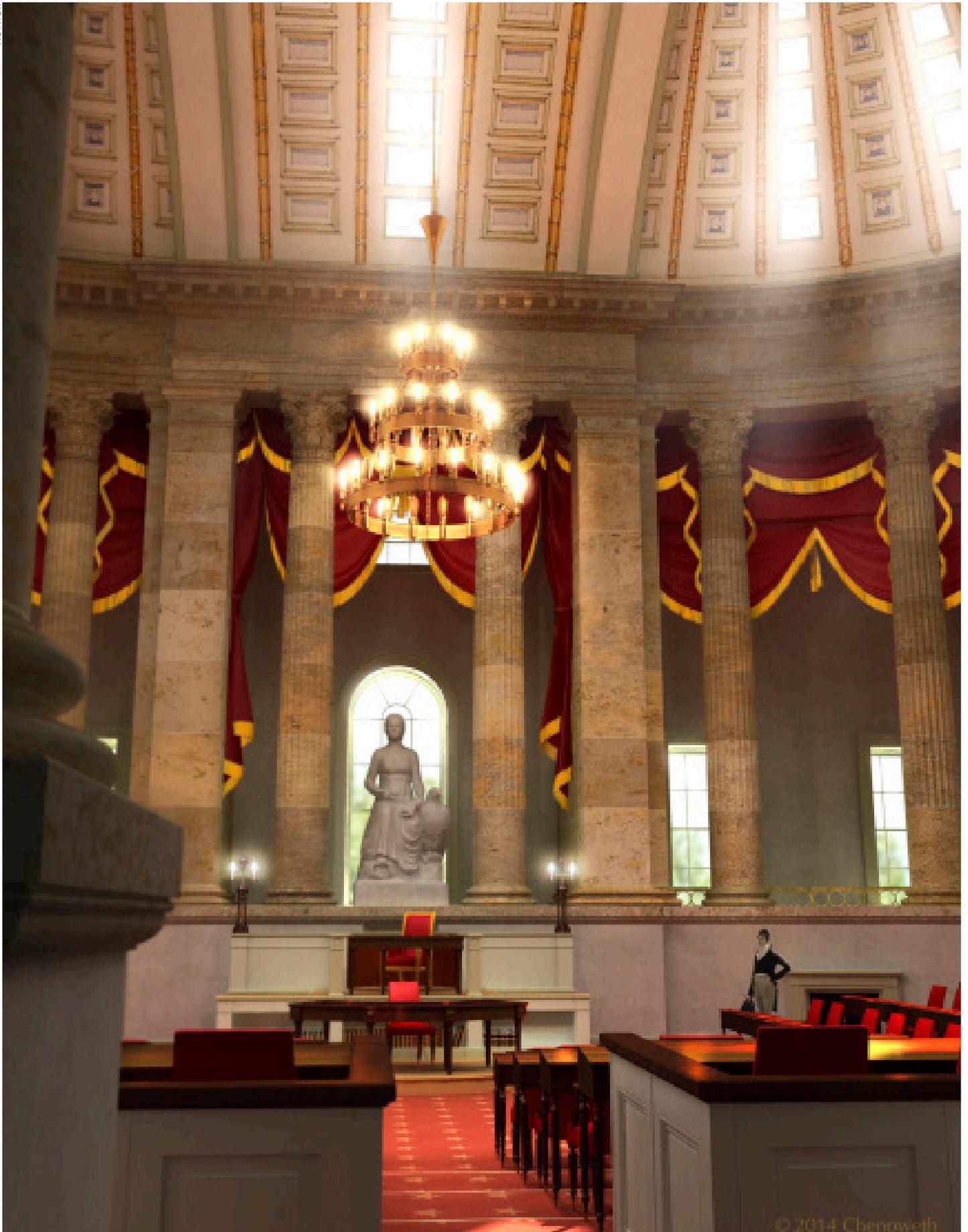




Fig. 11. Recreation drawing by the author of the completed chamber from the east looking southwest.



*Fig. 12. Recreation drawing by the author of the completed chamber at the entry sequence.*



*Fig. 13. Drawing of the exterior of the Capitol about 1814, from the northeast. This is the approximate approach from Bladensburg Road by the British troops.*

and then to the story of the construction of the Capitol and Jefferson's confluence with Latrobe. As an architect and artist, I became transfixed by the enigma of this most beautiful room, as well as the specific and practical design solutions the architect faced and how he solved them. But no topographical drawing or painting exists of this American architectural masterpiece. Could this American treasure be pieced back together so we can see it? What can we learn about the structure and construction of the South Wing by recreating it? Whose ideas were better regarding the lighting of the chamber? Jefferson had speculated that the chamber would be the "handsomest" in the world. Latrobe himself stated to Congress in his 1806 report, "That it will be a splendid room,—probably the most splendid Legislative Hall that has ever been erected,—is certain."<sup>14</sup>

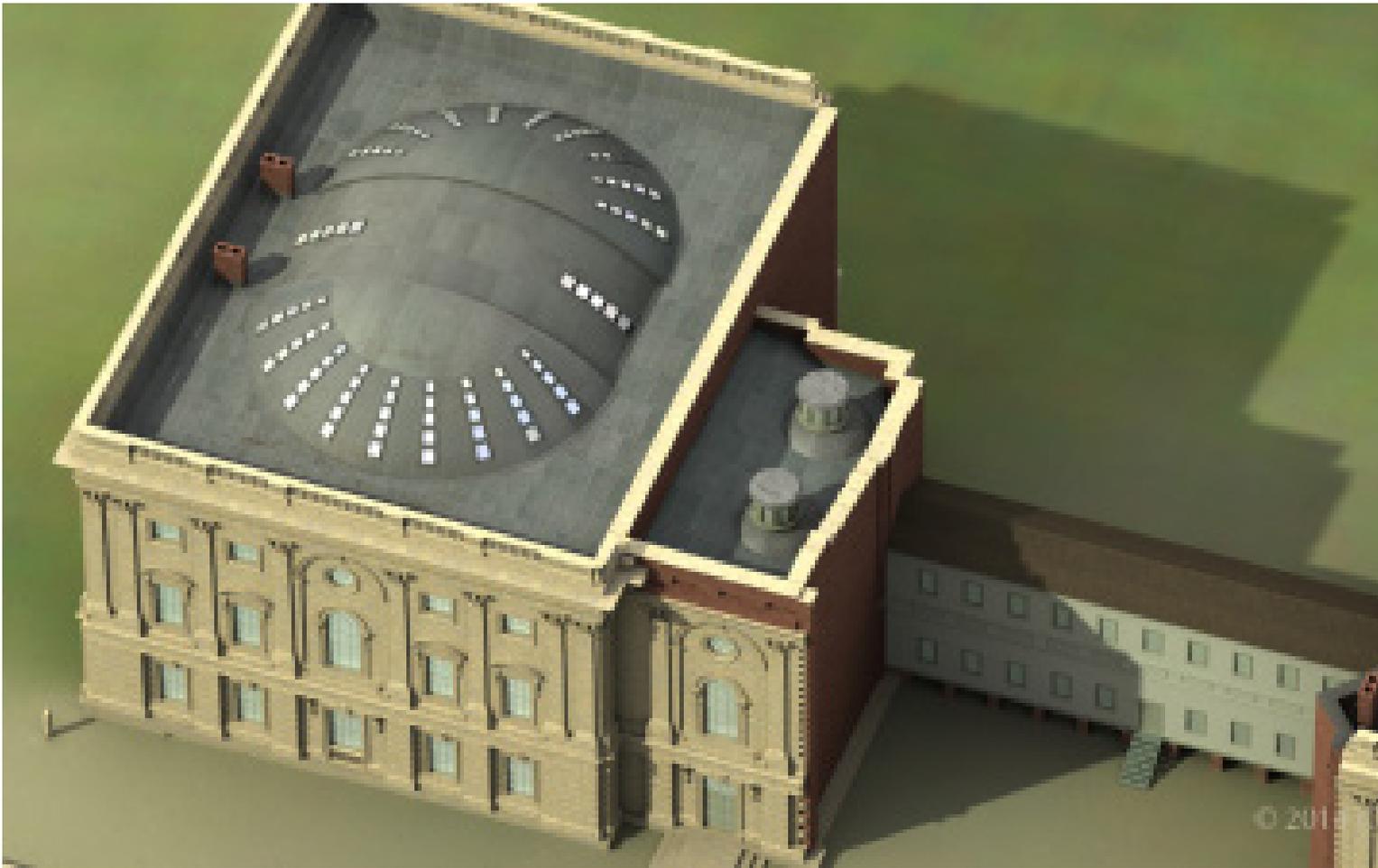
This was a perfect opportunity for me to explore an architectural history using the power of the computer. Although the drama and the narrative of the major characters during this time period provide an extraordinary and compelling history, oftentimes the description of lost art or architecture is reduced to an unsatisfying recitation of attributes. My goal was to bring

the chamber back to its full glory and allow visitors to see for themselves the old Hall of Representatives.

### A Methodology for Recreation

My first step was to examine closely Latrobe's existing construction documents. No more than twenty of Latrobe's original construction documents relating to this phase of construction of the South Wing are in the Library of Congress. The drawings are not complete; the design varies greatly over the course of many years; and many are at small scale.

Following the course of the narrative of letters from about 1803 to 1815 between all the principals involved, it became clear I needed to make a careful timeline of decisions and changes, as the construction process was in a state of constant flux. Essential facts used to construct my computer model mostly came from these letters and drawings and my timeline. A computer model does not allow fuzziness, so every element has to be defined. When determining a key dimension or architectural form, I often tried to rectify many conflicting



*Fig. 14. Recreation drawing by the author showing the exterior of the roof of the South Wing.*

bits of information. For example, all of the design documents depicting the vault between the interior entablature and the exterior wall show a segment of an arch. In two detailed topographical drawings of the Capitol's ruins (1815), one by Latrobe himself and one by his stone carver Giovanni Andrei, essentially showing the as-built condition, the vault is depicted as a barrel vault of a five-foot diameter. Sometimes a dimension noted on a drawing might be countermanded later in an informal letter, or a decision may be referred to obliquely, or a design changemay occur as two drawings jump in scale. In some cases I simply could not determine a detail or dimension, in which case I would design an element based on a similar-example by Latrobe, maintaining the spirit of his intentions.

My actual synthesis began by creating a computer model of the architecture as pure geometry. Two things make these geometric pieces look real. One is the texture they have, and the other is the lighting of the computer scene. I created realistic textures using an imaging program and projected them onto the geometry. Projecting the image onto geometry is called texture mapping, which can make a simple gray cube look

like a block of sandstone, for instance. Lighting is the crucial next step, as the lighting of a large interior space with windows, skylights, deflected light, and reflected light is quite complex. When a final scene involving geometry, texture mapping, bump mapping, and lighting is assembled, it's viewed through a software camera that has all the attributes of a real camera, either a still camera or a moving picture camera. The camera, following motion picture standards, can be tracked, panned, dollied, orbited, or zoomed, to achieve the desired composition. Once a camera composition is established, and many settings are fine-tuned, the scene is rendered as a still image or as an animation—now all the data regarding geometry, material, and light is synthesized based on a camera angle and lens opening by the computer's CPU and the computer's memory. The rendering process is roughly equivalent to photographing the final scene, but neither the camera nor the scene actually exists. Camera renders for stills are usually set at larger resolutions, and renders for animation are set at video resolution, knowing that the effects of perception and motion blur will communicate a sequence of frames into believable motion.

## Conclusion

I believe the pre-fire first Hall of the House of Representatives's great beauty derived from its proportional excellence, its simplicity of materials, and its overall restraint. Latrobe as well as others remarked that the streaming light from above through the skylit roof was striking and beautiful. Latrobe describes the work of his two chief stone carvers Giovanni Andrei (specializing in flora) and Giuseppe Franzoni (specializing in figures) as nothing less than brilliant. Certainly the room had flaws. It leaked; water condensed on the skylights; it had reverberation problems; it needed to be expanded before it was even complete.

Was Latrobe's method of lighting the chamber a better solution? We don't know for sure, but through computer imaging I have tested certain results at certain levels. This first version of the Hall of Representatives was acclaimed for its grandeur and beauty. Latrobe was rehired by Madison in 1815 to rebuild the burned Capitol and in the second design, the exterior walls remained virtually the same but the internal chamber changed radically. George Hadfield, an architect of the Capitol in the 1790s (and Maria Cosway's brother), lauded the first House chamber for its republican simplicity and preferred it over the second one, which was finished in 1819.

When the first Hall of the House of Representatives ultimately became a monumental ruin in August 1814, it passed from America's first world-class building into the dreamlike realm worthy of a Greek ruin. Through computer imaging, it can now be seen again.



**RICHARD CHENOWETH, AIA**, is a nationally recognized architect and artist with a deep interest in transit architecture, residential architecture, and historical resources. He received two fellowships from the U.S. Capitol Historical Society to assist his ongoing research into the Capitol as it was before it was burned in the War of 1812.

## Notes

1. Jefferson to Latrobe, Oct. 10, 1809, in *The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, ed. John C. Van Horne and Lee W.

Formwalt, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), 2:776-77. Jefferson wrote: "I think that the work (the Capitol) when finished will be a durable and honorable monument of our infant republic, and will bear favorable comparison with the remains of the same kind of the ancient republics of Greece & Rome."

2. Latrobe to Jefferson, Aug. 13, 1807, *ibid.*, 2:463-65.

3. An idea proposed in James Sterling Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

4. Latrobe to Jefferson, Oct. 29, 1806, Van Horne, ed., *Latrobe Correspondence*, 2:277-81.

5. Latrobe, *A Private Letter to the Individual Members of Congress, On the Subject of The Public Buildings of the United States at Washington*, Nov. 28, 1806, *ibid.*, 2:296-316.

6. Latrobe to Jefferson, May 21, 1807, *ibid.*, 2:427-29.

7. Latrobe, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., Section of south wing; watercolor, ink, wash and graphite

drawing, ADE-UNIT 2462, no. 14, "North-South Section," Benjamin Henry Latrobe Archive, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

8. Synopsis of this discussion from William C. Allen, *History of the United States Capitol: A Chronicle of Design, Construction, and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2001) p. 62.

9. Jefferson to Maria Cosway, Oct. 12, 1786, ed. Julian P. Boyd et al., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 40 vols. to date (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 10:443-55.

10. Latrobe to Jefferson, Oct. 29, 1806, Van Horne, ed., *Latrobe Correspondence*, 2:277-81.

11. Jefferson to Latrobe, Sept. 8, 1805, *ibid.*, 2:140.

12. *National Intelligencer*, Nov. 22, 1807.

13. John H. B. Latrobe, "*The Capitol at Washington at the Beginning of the Present Century*," *An Address by John H. B. Latrobe Before the American Institute of Architects* (Baltimore: William K. Boyle, 1881).

14. Latrobe, Private Letter to Congress (Nov. 28, 1806), Van Horne, ed., *Latrobe Correspondence*, 2:296-316.

**Editor's Note:** The burning of Washington, D.C. during the War of 1812 motivated Philip Freneau, sea captain, newspaper editor, and poet, to write this poem. Freneau had been captured during the Revolution and briefly imprisoned on a British prison ship. No friend of the British, he was outraged by the conflagration of the nation's capital in 1814 and called for reprisals.

# Conflagration of Washington

By Philip Freneau (1752–1832)

August 24, 1814

——— Iam deiphobi debit ampla ruinam,  
Vulcano superante, domus; Iam proximus ardet  
Ucalegon.—VIRGIL<sup>1</sup>

NOW, George the Third rules not alone,  
For George the Vandal shares the throne,  
True flesh of flesh, and bone of bone.

God save us from the fangs of both;  
Or, one a Vandal, one a Goth,  
May roast or broil us into froth.

Like Danes, of old, their fleet they man,  
And rove from Beersheba to Dan,  
To burn, and beard us—where they can.

They say, at George the Fourth's command,  
This vagrant host were sent, to land  
And leave in every house a brand.

An idiot only would require  
Such war—the worst they could desire—  
The felon's war—the war of fire.

The warfare, now, the invaders make,  
Must surely keep us all awake,  
Or life is lost for freedom's sake.

They said to Cockburn, "honest Cock!  
To make a noise and give a shock,  
Push off, and burn their navy-dock:

"Their capitol shall be emblazed!  
How will the buckskins stand amazed,  
And curse the day its walls were raised!"

Six thousand heroes disembark:  
Each left at night his floating ark,  
And Washington was made their mark.

That few would fight them—few or none—  
Was by their leaders clearly shown,  
And, "Down," they said, "with Madison!"

How close they crept along the shore!  
As closely as if Rodgers saw her—  
A frigate to a seventy-four.

A veteran host, by veterans led,  
With Ross and Cockburn at their head,  
They came—they saw—they burn'd—and fled.

But not unpunish'd they retired;  
They something paid, for all they fired,  
In soldiers kill'd, and chiefs expired.

Five hundred veterans bit the dust,  
Who came, inflamed with lucre's lust—  
And so they waste—and so they must.

They left our Congress naked walls—  
Farewell to towers and capitals!  
To lofty roofs and splendid halls!

To courtly domes and glittering things,  
To folly, that too near us clings,  
To courtiers who—'tis well—had wings.

Farewell to all but glorious war,  
Which yet shall guard Potomac's shore,  
And honour lost, and fame restore.

To conquer armies in the field,  
Was, once, the surest method held  
To make a hostile country yield.

The mode is this, now acted on:  
In conflagrating Washington,  
They held our independence gone!

Supposing George's house at Kew  
Were burn'd, (as we intend to do),  
Would that be burning England too?

Supposing, near the silver Thames  
We laid in ashes their Saint James,  
Or Blenheim palace wrapp'd in flames;

Made Hampton Court to fire a prey,  
And meanly, then, to sneak away,  
And never ask them, what's to pay?

Would that be conquering London town?  
Would that subvert the English throne,  
Or bring the royal system down?

With all their glare of guards and guns,  
How would they look like simpletons,  
And not at all the lion's sons!

Supposing, then, we take our turn,  
And make it public law, to burn,  
Would not old English honour spurn

At such a mean, insidious plan,  
Which only suits some savage clan—  
And surely not the Englishman!

A doctrine has prevail'd too long;  
A king, they hold, can do no wrong—  
Merely a pitchfork, without prong:

But de'il may trust such doctrines more;  
One king, that wrong'd us, long before,  
Has wrongs, by hundreds, yet in store.

He wrong'd us forty years ago;  
He wrongs us yet, we surely know;  
He'll wrong us till he gets a blow

That, with a vengeance, will repay  
The mischiefs we lament this day,  
This burning, damn'd, infernal play;

Will send one city to the sky,  
Its buildings low, and buildings high,  
And buildings—built the Lord knows why;

Will give him an eternal check,  
That breaks his heart, or breaks his neck,  
And plants our standard on Quebec.

Source: <http://www.bartleby.com/338/249.html>; from William McCarty, comp., *The American National Song Book* (1842).

1. The epigram is a quotation in Latin from Virgil's *Aeneid* describing the burning of Troy by the Greeks.



William Thornton, original architect of the Capitol, district commissioner, and superintendent of the Patent Office, painted this watercolor image of the conflagration of Washington, D.C. in 1814. The dramatic image captures the fire on the waterfront, probably the Navy Yard, illuminating the evening sky. Ironically, the Navy Yard and U.S. ships under construction were burned by the Americans to prevent the British from seizing valuable military equipment and supplies.

# WASHINGTON'S REBIRTH

## *Benjamin Henry Latrobe and the Rebuilding of the City after the War of 1812*

**By Mark N. Ozer**

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL



*Fig. 1. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, oil portrait by George B. Matthews after C.W. Peale.*

The destruction of the public buildings of Washington, D.C. during the British occupation of August 1814 was one of the most salient events of the War of 1812. The national capital had been in existence for only a short time; with its public buildings still uncompleted, Washington D.C. had little status in a country just recently established. Indeed, its significance was deemed so slight that Secretary of War John Armstrong could not foresee any danger from the British forces ranging freely in the Chesapeake Bay region in the summer of 1814. Yet it was attacked and occupied.

The ultimate result of this degradation of the national capital by the enemy was unexpected. It was perhaps not surprising, in light of its diminished value, that its destruction did not destroy the will of the country to continue to resist. However, after the initial shock, the response was to enhance the value and growth of Washington in the national spirit and to reinforce its importance to a previously unheard of degree.

This was evident in the rapidity with which the rebuilding of the public buildings such as the United States Capitol and the President's House went forward. In addition, for the first time, there was the formation of a less transient local community and a commitment to investment by private interests. Both aspects were in large part due to the work of architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (fig. 1).

As soon as the British left Washington, Congress set to work assessing the damage. A loan was offered by the local banks to assure that the capital would remain in Washington. By March 1815, Latrobe was invited to return to Washington as "Surveyor Architect to the Capitol." In his rebuilding of the Capitol, Latrobe made several changes; many had been ideas he had put forward earlier that had been overruled by President Thomas Jefferson or opposed by District Commissioner William Thornton. The most important change in the Hall of the Representatives was its conversion from an elliptical to a





Fig. 3. The south façade of the dilapidated Van Ness mansion photographed sometime between 1900 and its demolition in 1908 to make way for the Pan American Union Building.

were in the forefront of the local rebuilding effort. They were one of the wealthiest families and they had the most to lose if the federal government moved from Washington. Marcia Burnes was the daughter of the Scottish planter David Burnes upon whose 600-acre Potomac plantation much of the new American seat of government was built. She was enriched as his heir in 1799 as the new city grew up on the city lots bequeathed to her. Well educated for her time, at age twenty in 1802, she married John Peter Van Ness, a wealthy Democratic-Republican congressman from New York. Together and separately, they were inseparable from the history of the City of Washington during their lifetimes. In 1815 she founded the Washington City Female Orphan Home and remained its major supporter. Her husband was a colonel and later the general of the Washington militia, mayor of Washington, and founder of one of the city's first banks.

The site of her family's original farmhouse at 18th Street and Constitution Avenue (then B Street) became the site of their new home, the largest house built thus far in Washington. Completed in 1816 according to a design by Latrobe, it was a sign of faith in the city's future as the national capital that marked the rebirth of the city out of the ashes of war (fig. 3). It became the social center for the legislators living "as though monks" in their boarding houses. Latrobe designed it in the Greek revival style for which he was the foremost early

proponent.

The house Latrobe designed for the Van Nesses was just one of his contributions. His extensive plan for the long-awaited national university at the west end of the National Mall was not fulfilled. However, he helped create the outlines of what still remains as Lafayette Park.

Located between the twin population centers of the Navy Yard and Georgetown, the President's Square was the residential area around the executive office buildings. In the spring of 1815, almost immediately following the Treaty of Ghent, a group of local residents on the west side of town including Van Ness and John Tayloe, owner of the Octagon House, advertised for contractors to build a "Protestant Episcopal Church" according to Latrobe's design. As a result, the cornerstone of St. John's Church (fig. 4) was laid in a Masonic ceremony on September 1815. The *National Intelligencer* noted the symbolic importance of this ceremony in marking the rebirth of that area just one year after the burning of the President's House by the British.

A simple Greek cross of four equal sides, the design originally did not contain a porch or tower, these were added in the 1820s. The center of the church was crowned by a dome with a cupola and lantern. The interior had a gallery along three sides supported by columns. The narrow chancel brought the altar close to the congregation. The church was consecrated in December 1816. Its vestry reflected the leading inhabitants



Fig. 4. Watercolor sketch of St. John's Episcopal Church (1816) by Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Note that the President's House in the background is depicted as a burnt-out shell.

of that area of the city, including Van Ness and Tayloe as well as William Seaton, the editor and proprietor of the *National Intelligencer*. A pew was offered for the use of President James Madison and has since been available for the use of any subsequent president.

In 1818 Decatur House (figs. 5 and 6), also designed by Latrobe, was built at the northwest corner of the President's Park. Almost square, it carried on the architect's strict commitment to simple geometric classical design but did not have the pediments characteristic of the Greek style. Stephen A. Decatur was born in 1779 while his father, a merchant captain, was a naval officer in the Revolutionary War. Decatur joined the U.S. Navy as a midshipman in 1798, serving under Commodore Barry while involved in the Quasi-War with France during President John Adams's administration. He was a lieutenant in the First War with the Barbary Pirates while

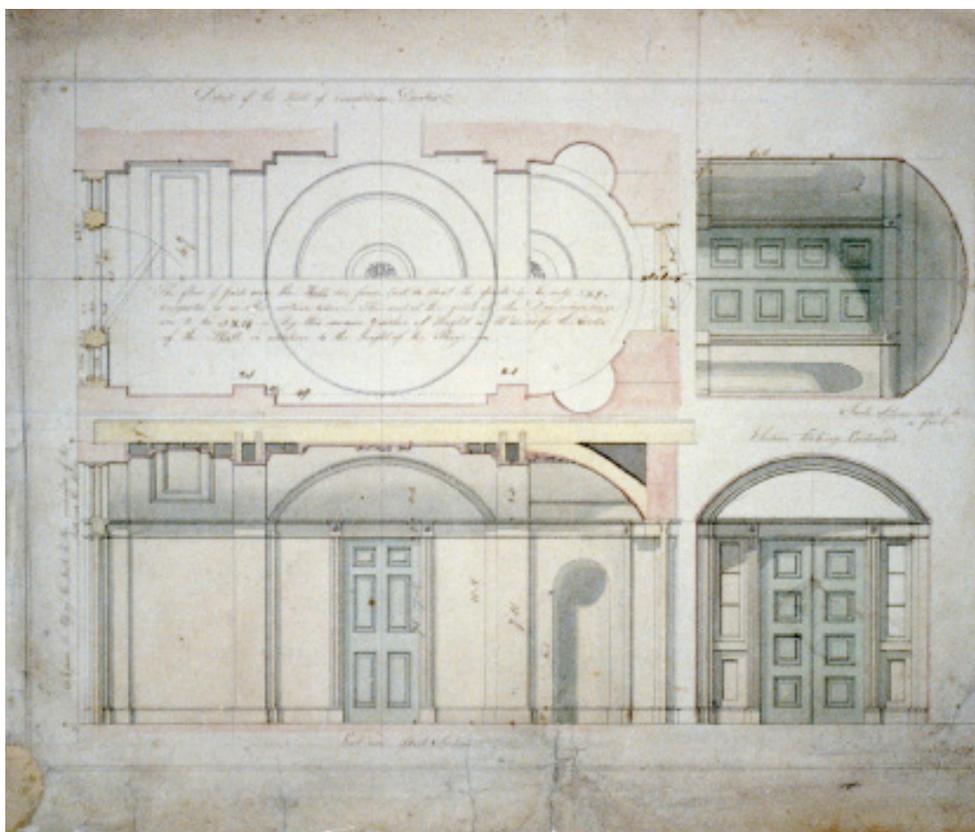


Fig. 5. Hall section, door elevation, and reflected ceiling, watercolor drawing by Benjamin Henry Latrobe for Decatur House, 748 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C.



Fig. 6. Decatur House photographed by Carol Highsmith.

Thomas Jefferson was president, famous for his daring raid on the captured U.S.S. *Philadelphia* in the harbor of Tripoli. He was captain of the USS *United States* in the War of 1812 and was noted for his defeat and capture of the H.M.S. *Macedonian*. As commodore in the Second War with the Barbary Pirates in 1815, he caused the bey of Algiers to sue for peace. In 1816, Decatur moved to Washington where he became a member of the Board of Naval Commissioners.

Wealthy from his prize money, Decatur planned to enjoy his social acceptance with a large mansion designed by the era's leading architect in this most fashionable area of the city. However, he was killed in a duel in 1820 by James Barron, a fellow naval officer, over a slur related to the latter's command of the U.S.S. *Chesapeake* in his losing battle with the H.M.S. *Leopard* in 1806. Mrs. Decatur moved to Georgetown but rented the house to a long list of famous tenants as Lafayette Park became the social center of Washington for the next fifty years.

By 1822, Pennsylvania Avenue finally entered the President's Park and passed in front of the White House, now bounding the President's Square to the south. Portions of the "Ferry Road" that went to Georgetown became H Street, thus framing the President's Square on the north. The area was named Lafayette Square in honor of the 1824 visit of the Marquis de Lafayette (later altered to Lafayette Park). Decatur House had its resurgence after the Civil War when it was bought by Edward (Ned) Beale and remained in his family until the 1950s while Lafayette Park was the social center of Washington.

The third aspect contributed by Latrobe to Lafayette Park was the iconic North Portico of the White House (fig. 7). Designed by him, it was not completed until the 1820s by James Hoban. The Ionic columns with pediment expressed the Grecian revival style that Latrobe contributed to American architecture that would prevail for the next generation. Its beauty and simplicity of unadorned expanses of wall connected with individual freedom from oppression made it the

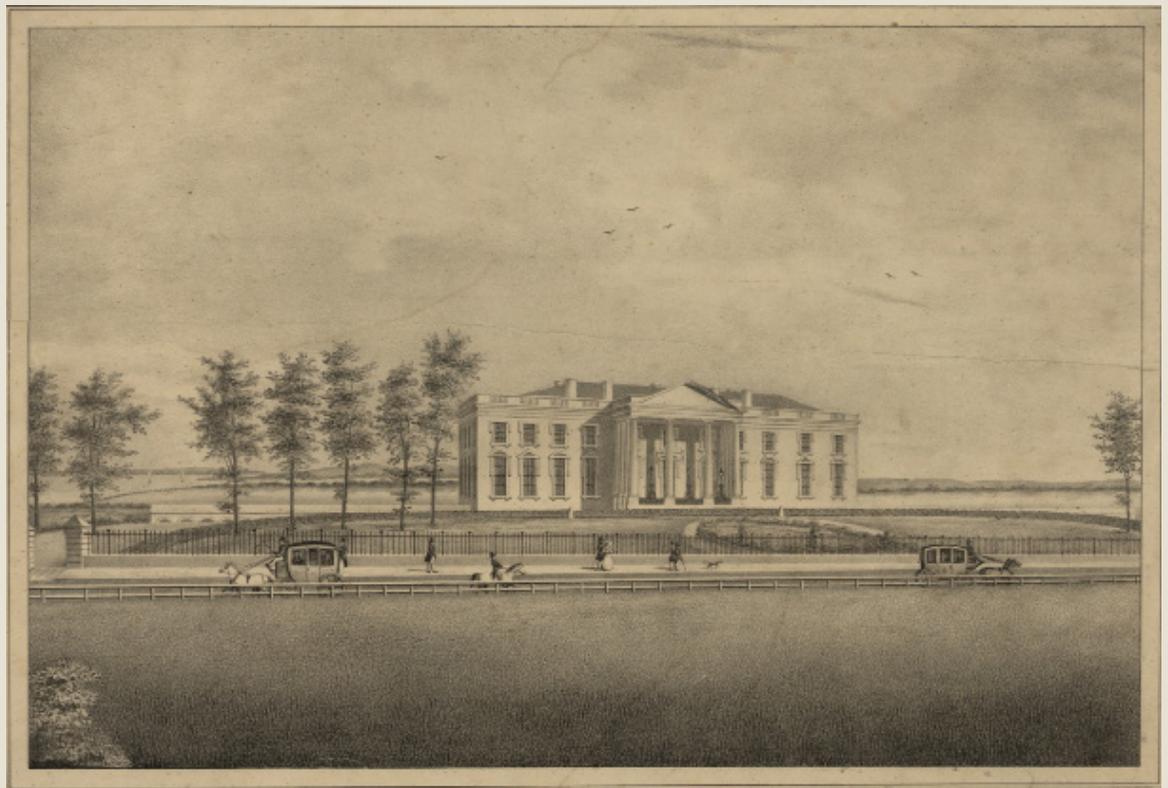


Fig. 7. View of the President's House, Washington, D.C., by D.W. Kellogg and Co., (between 1830 and 1840).



Fig. 8. Construction of the Treasury Building, Washington, D.C., with oxen in foreground on south side, 1860.

first national architectural style. Latrobe's influence on Washington architecture continued in the work of his student and protégé Robert Mills, who President Andrew Jackson appointed as architect to the Treasury in 1836. The Department of the Treasury building (fig. 8), originally designed by George Hadfield and rebuilt by Latrobe after its destruction by the British in 1814, faced directly onto Pennsylvania Avenue. Robert Mills designed a great colonnaded east wing of what was eventually to be a massive building. The columns with Ionic capitals were reminiscent of those of the Erectheum on the Acropolis.

The Ionic colonnade was echoed in subsequent buildings such as the Treasury Department Annex across Pennsylvania Avenue and in the Chamber of Commerce on nearby Lafayette Square, both designed by Cass Gilbert in the early twentieth-century Beaux-Arts style. The style imprinted on Washington by Benjamin Henry Latrobe immediately after the War of 1812 thus still lives on into the twenty-first century.



**MARK N. OZER** is a former professor of neurology at the Georgetown University Medical School. His interest in history, geography, and urban development has resulted in the publication of a series of books, including *Washington, D.C.: Politics and Place* (2009), *Massachusetts Avenue in the Gilded Age* (2010), *Northwest Washington, D.C.: Tales from West of the Park* (2011), and *Washington, D.C.: Streets and Statues* (2012).

# SOCIETY NEWS

## SEPTEMBER SYMPOSIUM COMMEMORATES WAR OF 1812

THIS PAGE: COURTESY BILL DICKINSON



*Conference speakers (from left) Andrew Lambert, Donald Hickey, and Ralph Eshelman continued the discussion after their talks concluded.*

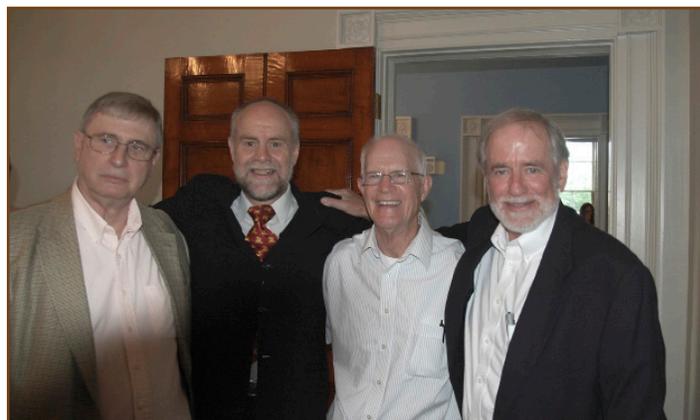
On September 3 and 4, 2014, the U.S. Capitol Historical Society joined with the White House Historical Association and James Madison's Montpelier to conduct a symposium, "America Under Fire: Mr. Madison's War & the Burning of Washington City," on the burning of the public buildings in the Nation's Capital by British forces during the War of 1812. The symposium commemorated the bicentennial of the lowest point in the war, when on the evening of August 24, after having routed American forces at the Battle of Bladensburg, Maryland, combined British army, naval, and marine forces entered Washington, D.C. and set fire to the unfinished Capitol, the President's House, and other public buildings.

Leading scholars from the United States and Great Britain examined the subject from a variety of perspectives. The session on September 3 began with British historian **Andrew Lambert** placing the War of 1812 within the wider context of Great Britain's conflict with Napoleon's France. Two speakers discussed aspects of the Madisons' roles in both the war and specifically in the capture of Washington in 1814. **John A. Stagg** addressed President Madison's role in the war; Catherine Allgor analyzed Dolly Madison's role, especially in the evacuation of the President's House. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian **Alan Taylor** provided a fascinating perspective on the enslaved persons who fled to freedom behind British lines in the Chesapeake and pro-

vided manpower and knowledge of local conditions to the advancing British forces.

In the morning session on September 4, four speakers examined various aspects of the burning of Washington. **Donald Hickey** spoke about the "folly and deception" of American politics that led to the War of 1812; **Steve Vogel** discussed the actions of Admiral Cockburn who commanded the British invasion; **Holly C. Shulman** provided a careful analysis of the various stories about Dolley Madison and the saving of the White House portrait of George Washington; and **Ralph Eshelman** demolished some of the timeworn myths about the burning, including the story that a storm put out the fires and saved the Capitol and White House from total destruction.

The final session of the symposium featured three speakers addressing the aftermath of the burning of the Capitol and White House. **Kenneth R. Bowling** discussed the attempt to remove the capital from Washington, D.C. as a result of the war and how that attempt failed; **Pamela Scott** focused on architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe and the rebuilding of the Capitol; and **William Seale** examined the development of the White House as a national symbol in the nineteenth century. The symposium concluded with **Andrew Burstein** and **Nancy Isenberg** discussing James Madison, the war, and constitutional development.



*Conference speakers (from left) John Stagg, Andrew Lambert, Donald Hickey, and Ralph Eshelman*



Steve Vogel



Holly Schulman

The “America Under Fire” symposium was held one block from the White House in the White House Historical Association’s David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History at Decatur House, the historic home of one of the American naval heroes of the War of 1812, Commodore Stephen Decatur Jr. The symposium was broadcast live by C-SPAN 3 to a much wider audience and was followed by thousands on social media. Videos of the individual presentations can be found at C-Span’s Video Library (<http://www.c-span.org/about/videoLibrary/>) by searching for the name of the speaker. The symposium papers have been prepared for publication by the White House Historical Association and will soon be available for purchase.



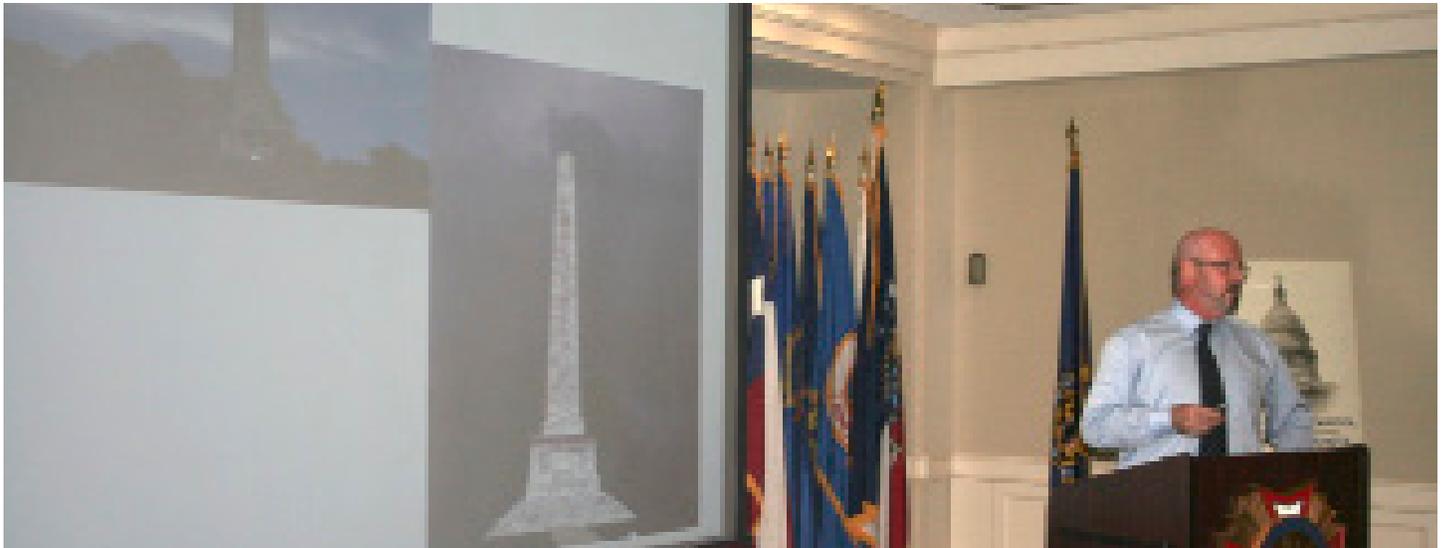
Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein

## Capitol Fellow Program Accepting Applications

Applications are invited for the twenty-ninth year of the United States Capitol Historical Society Fellowship. This fellowship is designed to support research and publication on the history, art, and architecture of the United States Capitol and related buildings. Graduate students and scholars may apply for periods ranging from one to twelve months; the stipend is \$2500.00 per month. (Most awards are for one to three months.) Applications must be postmarked, e-mailed, or faxed by March 15, 2015, for the fellowship period beginning in September 2015 and ending in August 2016. Applications should be mailed to Dr. Donald Kennon, U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 200 Maryland Avenue, NE, Washington, D.C. 20002; faxed to the Architect of the Capitol at (202)-228-4602; or e-mailed in PDF format to [bwolanin@aoc.gov](mailto:bwolanin@aoc.gov) and [dkennon@uschs.org](mailto:dkennon@uschs.org).

Further details can be found at [www.uschs.org](http://www.uschs.org). If you have questions about a potential topic, contact Dr. Barbara Wolanin at (202)-228-2700 or [bwolanin@aoc.gov](mailto:bwolanin@aoc.gov).

# LUNCHTIME LECTURES CONTINUE FOCUS ON WAR OF 1812



*John McCavitt*

The U.S. Capitol Historical Society sponsored two additional talks about the War of 1812. On May 21, **Gene Allen Smith** presented stories from his book, *The Slaves' Gamble*, which investigates the various ways enslaved people used the war to “grab at freedom.” Each person made different choices—choosing to fight or not, to join the British or the Americans—and encountered individual consequences; some found freedom and others additional heartbreak.

On August 6, **John McCavitt** returned to the Society podium to discuss his continuing work on Gen. Robert Ross, this time to question whether Ross deserves the title “Capital Conflagrator.” After walking through the events of the British Chesapeake campaign and Ross’ expectations and actions the night he was in Washington, McCavitt suggested that even though much of Washington burned during Ross’ visit, it wasn’t necessarily a given occurrence or a result of his desire for vengeance—nor was conflagrator a title he actively desired or claimed afterward. For more, see McCavitt’s article in this issue (page 2).



*Gene Allen Smith*

## Calendar of Events

### NOVEMBER

**Lecture by C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa,**

George Mason University

*Wednesday, November 12 at noon*

Ketchum Hall, VFW Building

200 Maryland Ave, NE

Topic: “A Curious Removal: Leta Myers Smart, The Rescue, and The Discovery of America”

RSVP online at [www.uschs.org](http://www.uschs.org)

or call (202) 543-8919 x38.

### 2014 FREEDOM AWARD AND RECEPTION

**Honoring Rep. John Lewis**

*Wednesday, November 19 at 6 pm*

For Cornerstone Members and above

For information or membership inquiries, visit [www.uschs.org](http://www.uschs.org) or call (202) 543-8919 x20.

### USCHS CLOSINGS

November 26–28 (Thanksgiving)

December 24–26 (Christmas)

December 31–January 2 (New Year’s Day)

Visit [www.uschs.org](http://www.uschs.org) for an updated calendar and additional events!

# WE THE PEOPLE CONSTITUTION TOUR: NEW SEASON OF TOURS STARTING NOW



*Kathryn Alwon (center) and her students at Jefferson Academy celebrate their winning entry in the classroom challenge with Al Wallis, executive director of the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest, and Rebecca Evans, vice president for development at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society. Alwon spoke about the tour: “My students had been studying the Constitution & the Bill of Rights, but it wasn’t until we took the tour [that] the document really came alive for them. The information gained on the tour plus the new experiences (i.e. seeing the Constitution for the first time ever) was irreplaceable. I hope that all students are granted enriching opportunities such as this.”*

Since 2005, nearly 14,000 Washington, D.C. 8th grade students from more than 80 public and charter schools have taken the We the People Constitution Tour, and many of them have gone on to participate in the classroom challenge that complements the tour. Students on the tour learn about the first three articles of the Constitution and their home city through a free tour of monumental Washington. The tour strives to make the federal city a part of the lives of D.C.’s underserved students as they learn about American history and government and increase their understanding of the value of citizenship and public service.

Following the tour, teachers and students can participate in interdisciplinary classroom activities for the Classroom Challenge; these activities reinforce the tour’s lessons, promote critical thinking, and approach civics and history from multiple perspectives. The friendly competition encourages teachers to use the tour and its related resources in lesson planning to extend their students’ understanding of the relevance of the Constitution. Thanks are due to the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest for supporting the Challenge.

For the 2014–15 school year, the D.C. Public School system

selected the We the People Constitution Program as one of just five approved 8th grade “experiences.” This selection is confirmation that the school system recognizes that the program is a valuable educational supplement.

Sponsors of the Constitution Program include the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation, the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Verizon Foundation, and International Paper, among others.



*USCHS guide Steve Livengood with 2014 tour group.*

Feedback from a McKinley Middle School teacher:

*“My kids had an awesome awesome time!....They were so into it even through the cold. I can’t wait to see how they incorporate this into their projects and read their reflections. Thank you so much for putting this out there for the social studies teachers. Now, for as long as they live my students will be able to say ‘I’ve been there,’ and as lovers of history we know how important this is. Thanks again!”*

## 2013-14 CHALLENGE WINNERS

Congratulations are in order! **Kathryn Alwon** of Jefferson Academy and **LaTonya Davis** of Paul Public Charter School led their students to the winning entries in the classroom challenge and each won \$300 toward educational resources for their schools. **Monica Shaw** of Brightwood Education Campus brought her students in to second place and \$200 winnings, while **Damon Williams** of Paul PCS and **Sean McGrath** of Stuart Hobson Middle School each won \$100 with their classes.

The submissions showed the hard work and dedication teachers put forth daily to reach their students. The use of technology and the internet, incorporation of hands-on and cooperative learning opportunities, and experiential learning connected classroom work to the tour for all the students who participated in the challenge.



*The Hon. Leon Panetta delivers the keynote address.*



*A group of House Armed Services Committee staff gather to celebrate their accomplishments.*

## DINNER HONORS HISTORY OF HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

As the Hon. **Leon Panetta** finished his keynote address, the Hon. **Ron Sarasin**, president of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society found that “Wow!” was the only word that expressed the feeling of the captivated audience gathered on July 23 to honor the rich history of the House Armed Services Committee. The evening began with a reception where members of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society’s Capitol Committee greeted Members of Congress, Committee staff, and distinguished guests over passed hors d’oeuvres and drinks.

The call to dinner was followed by the Presentation of the Colors by the U.S. Capitol Police Ceremonial Unit. Sarasin welcomed the nearly 150 guests and led them in a toast to the Committee. As those gathered enjoyed dessert, the speakers were introduced to standing ovations.

Current Committee Chairman **Buck McKeon** (CA) emphasized the crucial role of the Committee staff and spoke about the dedicated combat veterans who also served as staff members. Ranking Member **Adam Smith** (WA) highlighted the vast responsibilities of the Committee and the importance of working together. The Hon. Leon Panetta, former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense, was welcomed by the Hon. **Tom Coleman**, Chairman of the Board of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society. Secretary Panetta spoke about the critical issues facing our country and our leaders.

The event was generously supported by Bank of America, The Boeing Company, Express Scripts, General Dynamics, Hewlett-Packard, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



*Chairman Buck McKeon acknowledges the hard work of the Committee staff.*



*Ranking Member Adam Smith discusses the responsibilities of the Committee.*

ALL THESE PAGES: KATIE GARLOCK/PORTRAITIONS





*Lisa Laymen (Brown Rudnick) converses with Rob Lehman.*

## CONGRESSIONAL STAFF BREAKFAST FEATURES CHIEF OF STAFF ROB LEHMAN

Rob Lehman, Chief of Staff for Sen. Rob Portman (OH), was the Society's special guest at the annual Congressional Staff event on July 31. Over breakfast, Lehman spoke informally with the Society's Constitution Signers and Leadership Council members, emphasizing the need for those on Capitol Hill with conflicting views to find common ground and craft solutions to critical issues facing the country. He also responded to questions from Society members about pending legislation and other issues.

A special thanks to Merck for its exclusive support and to Altria for hosting the breakfast in its Rotunda Room overlooking the Capitol.



*Kristen Malinconico (left, Grant Thornton), Scott McCandless (PricewaterhouseCoopers), and Michelle Dimarob (right, Altria)*

## Capitol Committee Update

The U.S. Capitol Historical Society's Capitol Committee is supported by over 110 corporations, associations, and foundations. We would like to welcome our new members to the Committee!

**Constantino Brumidi Society (\$10,000)**  
Herbalife

**Founder Level (\$5,000)**  
NPES

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 terrific benefits available to you as a Capitol Committee member, please contact: Marilyn Green, Director, Corporate Giving at (202) 543-8919 x21 or [mgreen@uschs.org](mailto:mgreen@uschs.org), or Victoria Wolfe, Development Associate, at (202) 543-8919 x23 or [VictoriaWolfe@uschs.org](mailto:VictoriaWolfe@uschs.org).

## 2014 MEET AND GREET



*U.S. Capitol Historical Society members gathered for the 2014 Meet and Greet at the Capitol Hill home of Board Member Connie Tipton.*

On September 16, U.S. Capitol Historical Society members gathered for the 2014 Meet and Greet at the Capitol Hill home of board member Connis Tipton. These intimate events, hosted by board members, provide the opportunity for donors to learn more about the Society's programs and leadership.

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If you are giving a gift membership, please provide the person's name and address below:

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### \*CAPITOL ALUMNI MEMBERSHIP:

The Society recognizes the service of individuals, family members, and descendants of those who have served in the U.S. Congress. Our Capitol Alumni members represent the living history that USCHS is charged to preserve.

*To become a Capitol Alumni member, please tell us your connection with the Capitol.*

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List the events that you wish to attend. Include your name(s) and a phone number and email address at which we may contact you.

**YES, I/WE WILL ATTEND:**

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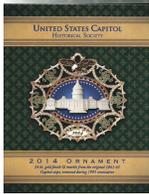
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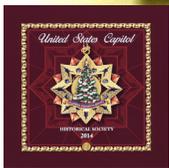
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## 2014 MARBLE CLASSICAL CAPITOL ORNAMENT

This classic Capitol design is crafted from the marble of the east front steps removed in the 1995-96 renovations. The Capitol rests on a navy federalist backdrop surrounded by 24kt gold filigree and enameled design. Elegantly gift boxed with provenance card. (3" x 2.25")

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## 2014 STARBURST ORNAMENT

The Capitol Christmas Tree is surrounded by two layers of a 24kt. plated and hand-crafted etched and enameled metal starburst. Etched into the back of the ornament is the Capitol dome. Beautifully gift boxed with provenance. (3.5" x 3.5")

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(BACK VIEW)



## 5" STATUE OF FREEDOM

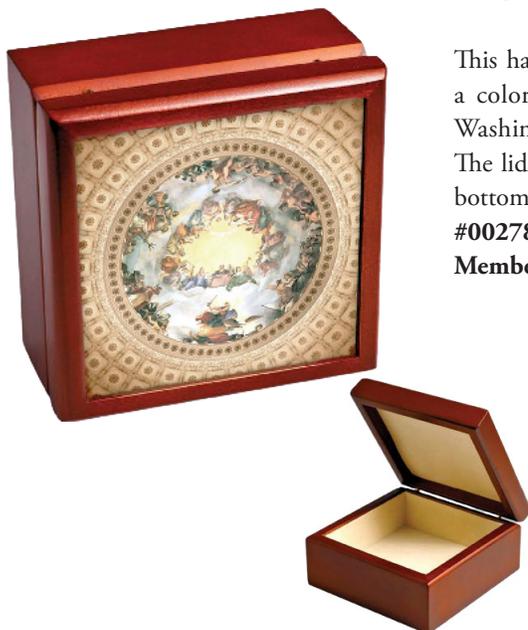
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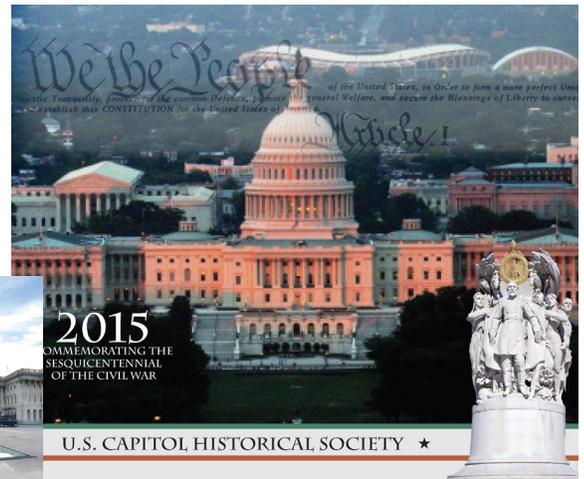
# MARKETPLACE

## 2015 "WE, THE PEOPLE" CALENDAR

Our award-winning "We the People" calendar showcases the talents of local professional photographers. The calendar presents 12 color photographs featuring the Capitol and other major Washington, DC landmarks. It has become a treasured collectible to many because of the annual themes commemorating historic events in American history. The 2015 edition continues to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the U.S. Civil War; it features historic Civil War cameo images on each month and a daily factoid notation from 150 years ago. Shrink-wrapped with chipboard.

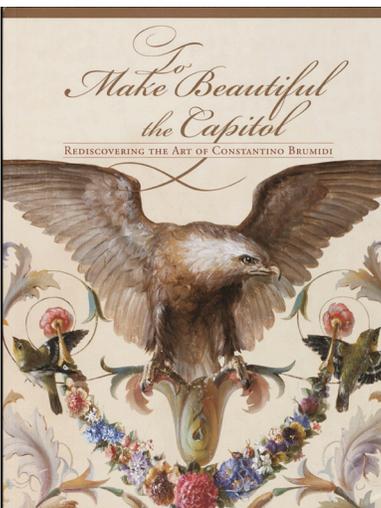
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## TO MAKE BEAUTIFUL THE CAPITOL

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. Paperback, 2014: 137 pp.

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## HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM CAPITOL HILL

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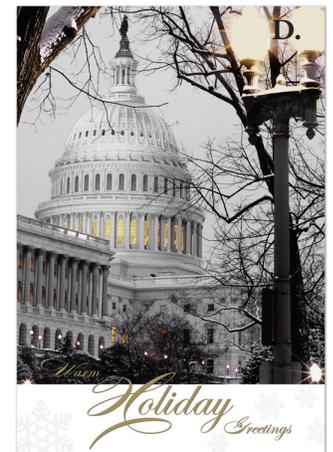
B. #002802      **A Capitol Christmas (HOB-08B)**

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## USCHS 2014 Student Essay Contest Focuses on Voting Rights in American History

As part of its mission to promote the history of the United States Congress and American representative government, the U.S. Capitol Historical Society announces its 2014 Making Democracy Work Student Essay Contest for the 2014–15 school year. The contest is conducted in two divisions, grades 6 to 8 and grades 9 to 12. The top three entries in each division win cash prizes of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250. In addition the two first place winners receive a trip to Washington, D.C. The schools of the two first place winners will also receive a \$1,000 cash award. Entries must be submitted on or before June 5, 2015.

The topic of the 2014–2015 school year contest is: **Why is voting rights an important issue in American History?** The Voting Rights Act of 1965 will be 50 years old in 2015. Why is voting so important to this nation, and why has the extension of voting rights been such an important and controversial issue in American history? For more details on the contest theme and how to enter the contest, go to: <http://www.uschs.org/classroom/2014-making-democracy-work-contest-rules/>.